

Ardle Mac Mahon and Jennifer Price, eds., *Roman Working Lives and Urban Living*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005, Pp vii + 224 incl. index. ISBN: 1842171860. US \$40.00 UK £20.00. Paperback.

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Previously presented in a conference, July of 2001, this collection of twelve articles creates new discussion and methods for reaching the anonymous in Roman society. It is organized in two distinct sections which capture the themes of each article accordingly. The first section contains five articles and is entitled *Urban living and the settings for working lives* (1-87, including bibliographies). The second section entitled, *People at work: owners and artisans, crafts and professions*, contains seven articles, (88-220 including bibliographies).

Section I: Urban living and the settings for working lives.

The first section begins with an article by Simon Esmonde Cleary entitled, “Beating the bounds: ritual and the articulation of urban space in Roman Britain”. While the author discusses the fact that little is known of processions in terms of place, who organized them and their specific meaning, there are some logical explanations of participation and the location at which these important events occurred. Cleary provides suggested processional routes in Silchester, Colchester and Verulamium (8-13). Evidence

of important civic architecture as a focal point for these processions is well identified and demonstrated in these three sample cities. In Dominic Perring's, "Domestic architecture and social discourse in Roman towns", he discusses behavior and architecture under the catalyst of education or rather exposure to upper class lifestyle. He explains that this plays an intrinsic part of household design and function. The need to demonstrate specific aspects of social prowess could be identified by the inclusion of specific architectural features, such as at Silchester (20) which demonstrates regional adaptations in Roman domestic architecture.

In the third chapter by Janet Delaine, "The commercial landscape of Ostia", Delaine initially begins with an important observation of ancient labels attached to specific kinds of architecture to describe their function. Instead of relying on the names to provide evidence of the architecture's function the author expands the research to include all possible locations of commercial transactions. The relevance of this is, that the mobility of markets are accounted for, creating a complex Ostian landscape of seasonal vendors. Also, control of distribution such as in *horrea*, bazaars and the streets provide issues of space and its functionality.

This leads into the final two chapters by Ardle Mac Mahon. The first chapter is "The shops and workshops of Roman Britain". Here one of the many important points expressed is the similarities and differences of *tabernae* in Britain with those of Italy. The

examples of *tabernae* in Britain that do not share party walls, which typifies those of Rome¹, Pompeii and Herculaneum² suggests that space is not the same issue as in Italy. Still, similarities are seen, such as the attachment to a large residence and expansion techniques. The complexities and functionality of *tabernae* to a residence and their expansion is still a misunderstood process and the author addresses this recognizing the simplicity in which we are trying to understand a complex relationship. Yet the illustration of evidence provided by the author creates a plausible commercial environment of vendors. In the concluding chapter of the first section, “The taberna counters of Pompeii and Herculaneum”, the author provides discussion of the items sold in a *tabernae*, especially those where *dolia* were in use. The author clarifies that there is little archaeological evidence to suggest what was sold and that some conclusions previously made are not withstanding simply due to lack of physical remains. The evidence that does exist supports dry goods such as grain, were the typical items for sale (82).

¹ Forma Urbis: <http://formaurbis.stanford.edu/docs/FURdb.html>. *Scriptores Historia Augustae* (1922) Translated by D. Magie. (Loeb Series. London: William Heinemann). Under Nero, after the fire of AD 64, it was decreed that there could no longer be shared walls, XVI - XLIV.

² Examples: Insula of Menander, Pompeii. Ling, R (1997) *The Insula of the Menander at Pompeii, vol 1. The Structures*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press). Cas del Tramezzo di Legno III, 4-12, Herculaneum. Kind, de R.E.L.B. (1998) *Houses in Herculaneum: a new view on the town planning and the building of insulae III and IV. Vol 1*. (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, Publisher) 106.

Section II: People at work: owners and artisans, crafts and professions.

The second section begins with Damian Robinson, “Re-thinking the social organization of trade and industry in first century AD Pompeii”. He assesses the possibility of morality being attached to specific kinds of industry such as hospitality shops verses *tabernae* or textile workshops (89-90). This issue of morality may be identified by the shop’s location to aristocratic housing (see charts 93, 97, 99,100) as this represents spatial relationships. However, he is careful to conclude that the landscape of Pompeii is dynamic and conclusions made by some archaeological evidence or the lack of it limits the scope of our understanding. The following discussion “Of lumberjacks and brick stamps: working with the Tiber as infrastructure” by Shawn Graham provides a solid basis for studying the potential for building materials and its underlying the economic application in Rome and its diaspora. The methodology lends itself to ascertaining an accurate portrayal of the landscape not only in production but how the Tiber functioned as an intricate part of the Rome’s commercial development and diversity.

In Jenny Hall’s discussion, “The shopkeepers and craft-workers of Roman London”, she addresses the commercial aspects

of London through its evidence of industry. There is substantial evidence for a variety of activities. Seventy-four hearths were found during excavations with indications that there were three separate kinds of kiln linings for producing different metal objects (129). Evidence of leatherworking, glass, pottery and many other facets of large and small commercial activities have been found substantiating the author's conclusions. The imagery the author provides well illustrates the activities of commercial Roman London. The next two chapters follow Hall's article well, both discuss crafts and their products in a manner of application to the landscape of commercial activities. The first is by Jeremy Evans, "Pottery in urban Romano-British life". The essential discussion is the general trend of pottery and its dispersion throughout Britain as it relates to its function and manufacturing in the urban environs. The author provides key evidence for the expansion of pottery through the first-century AD. He discusses the trends of consumption, which begin to phase out pre-existing forms of pottery for the more preferred Romano-British typologies. In Jennifer Price's, "Glass working and glassworkers in cities and towns", an insightful discussion of a subject rarely emphasized in its multifarious applications is provided. The evidence presented clearly defines the value of glass in the ancient world as demonstrated by the manner in which a variety of vessels found where stored. While the evidence for glass manufacturing is

abundantly clear in some areas, such as at Cologne and Lyon (173 & 175) locating glass shops in other regions has not, so far proven productive.

In Marina Ciaraldi's, "How many lives depended on plants? Specialization and agricultural production at Pompeii", the specific need and consumption of not only plants as medicine, but also the changing agriculture in and around Pompeii (195-199) were discussed. Even though the article is quite short the evidence provided clearly outlines the authors desire to demonstrate the complexity of plant life and the varieties of its consumption (192). In the concluding chapter by Ralph Jackson, "The role of doctors in the City", the complexity and variance in medical practices in the Roman world is well illustrated. Archaeological evidence along with ancient texts provides a diverse depiction of physicians and their counterparts in Roman cities.

In conclusion these articles are well written and researched providing a full scope of evidence to present their findings. While there are a few grammatical errors this should not affect the reader and the information presented. The range of these articles provide significant evidence and progress to understanding the mass of anonymous people that created the foundation for the Roman Empire. These articles address key issues of ancient terminology and the problem of stereotypical interpretation and application. The complexity of the market and product manufacturing is an

essential study in ancient economics and crucial to interpreting culture. The issues and obstacles hindering our understanding of the market place and shops are well addressed creating a clearer picture of the social complexities in the Roman Empire.