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River port, *navalia* and harbour temple at Ostia: new results of a DAI-AAR Project

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Since 1996 the German Archaeological Institute and the American Academy in Rome have been conducting a joint urbanism project on the unexcavated parts of Rome's port city.¹ The combined use of geophysical surveys of large areas, systematic analysis of aerial photographs, and selected stratigraphic sondages has not only complemented the previously known plan of the city but also brought much new information on the urbanistic development of previously unknown sectors. One of the most important results of the 2000 and 2001 seasons is the proof that a harbor basin existed just inside the ancient mouth of the Tiber. On the E side of that basin we investigated an unusual structure: a large terraced construction the vaulted substructure of which seems to have served in part as shipsheds and in part as storage and commercial space, and, above, a marble temple, oriented toward the mouth of the Tiber and surrounded by porticos.

The river harbor basin

Because of the geographical conditions at the mouth of the Tiber, from its foundation Ostia was purely a river harbor. As it lacked a natural bay, prior to the construction of Claudian-Trajanic Portus all sea-going ships with deep draft had to put into the mouth of the Tiber and to transfer their Rome-bound cargoes onto shallower river boats. However, even after the construction of the artificial harbor 2 km to the north, there was still extensive trans-shipment of merchandise at Ostia itself. This is shown by the building and economic boom of Ostia in the 2nd c. which brought a massive development of storage and commercial spaces. Intensive shipping operations took place at Ostia at least until the early 3rd c., when a gradual shift of all trade activities toward Portus began and both banks of the river became artificially lined at least as far as the river's first bend. However, until now nothing was known of the ancient shore and harbor installations. Post-antique changes to the course of the river and modern embankments have destroyed large tracts beyond recovery, particularly in the W part of the city. In the E part of the city, some of the ancient arrangement of the shoreline could be recovered during survey work in 2001 in the ancient stretch of the river (north of the Theatre) that had dried up in 1557 ('fiume morto'), although no excavations were undertaken there.

It is fortunate, therefore, that a small part of this original infrastructure, in the form of a river harbor basin situated within the city plan, could be revealed in the NW part of *Regio III*, between the supposed ancient lighthouse ('Tor Boacciana') and the so-called 'Palazzo Imperiale'. As early as the 19th c., the existence of a harbor, or at least of a landing-place with an *emporium*, was suspected here because a trough-shaped depression sloping down to the Tiber distinguishes the area from the rest of the ruins (fig. 3).² However, the idea was not taken up

1 For the previous seasons of the project, cf. M. Heinzelmann, H. Becker, K. Eder and M. Stephani, *RömMitt* 104 (1997) 537 ff.; M. Heinzelmann, *RömMitt* 105 (1998) 425 ff.; A. Bauer, M. Heinzelmann, A. Martin and A. Schaub, *RömMitt* 106 (1999) 289 ff.; A. Bauer and M. Heinzelmann, *JRA* 12 (1999) 342 ff.; A. Bauer, M. Heinzelmann and A. Martin, *RömMitt* 107 (2000) 375 ff.; M. Heinzelmann and A. Martin, *MAAR* 45 (2000) 277 ff.; also see <http://www.dainst.de/de/pro/ostia.html>.

2 L. Canina shows a dip in the surface here and in his plans of 1829 reconstructs a landing-place with an *emporium* (cfr. G. Calza *et al.*, *Scavi di Ostia 1. Topografia generale* [Rome 1953] 50 fig. 12 [C] and 53 fig. 13 [N]), although he has no structural remains at all to support it. The idea was taken up again by I. Gismondi in his plaster model of Ostia, in which he reconstructs a landing-place here. How easily, before the erection of the dyke, the conformation of the area could be understood as a possible harbor area is shown by the description (apparently inspired in part by Canina's plan) given by a visitor to Ostia in the late 19th c. as he looked from the 'Palazzo Imperiale' to the west: "Rechts gewahren wir abermals den Tiber und links sehen wir über ein ebenes Feld. In weitem Halbkreis wird es von Ruinen