
TRAC Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference

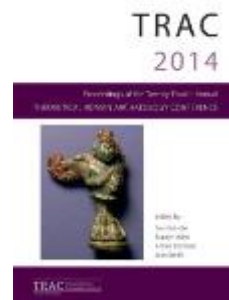
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TRAC 2014

Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual

THEORETICAL ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE

which took place at

The University of Reading

27–30 March 2014

edited by

Tom Brindle, Martyn Allen, Emma Durham and Alex Smith



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Front cover: Early first century AD copper-alloy figurine of Harpocrates, found during the University of Reading's excavations at Silchester. © University of Reading.

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Preface

The twenty-fourth Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (TRAC) was held at the University of Reading between 27th and 30th March 2014, in conjunction with the eleventh Roman Archaeology Conference (RAC). Alongside TRAC/RAC, sessions were also organised by the Study Group for Roman Pottery and the Roman Finds Group. A total of 24 sessions were held during the course of the conference, ten of which were official TRAC sessions, comprising 59 papers. Twenty-five posters were also presented. The conference was attended by just fewer than 400 delegates, making it the largest joint TRAC/RAC yet. This volume contains a selection of papers presented at TRAC 2014, as well as some invited contributions.

In keeping with the aims of TRAC, several of the papers presented here make innovative use of interdisciplinary theory: Darrell Rohl discusses developments in the theory of humanistic geography, philosophy and archaeology and proposes a long-term, place-centred theoretical approach towards the study of Roman monuments; Anna Walas considers how recent work in the field of social psychology can be used to explore social relationships within Roman military communities; and Blanka Misić critically considers the extent to which recent work in the cognitive science of religion can be applied to ancient religions, in particular the cult of Mithras.

A further group of papers share a common theme: the critical interpretation of archaeological evidence. Ed Biddulph argues for a more careful consideration of non-grave good pottery sherds from graves, normally regarded as residual or redeposited, suggesting that these potentially shed light on funerary rites which are usually considered to be invisible; Lisa Lodwick considers how plant remains have traditionally been an understudied aspect of ritual deposits and, focussing in particular upon occurrences of stone pine in Roman Britain, emphasises the importance of examining the taphonomy and context of rare plant species in order to better understand their use; and Nico Roymans and Manuel Fernández-Götz present a new perspective on the Roman conquest of Northern Gaul, drawing together evidence from settlement patterns, environmental data and historical sources in order to consider the negative impact of the conquest.

Two papers present new approaches towards our understanding of space and landscape in the Roman world: Matthew Mandich advocates an Ekistical approach towards the study of the suburbs of ancient Rome, allowing for a better understanding of the '*suburbium*' as a diverse and dynamic space; and Lázaro Lagóstena, María-del-Mar Castro and Ángel Bastos present the preliminary results of an ongoing project exploring the relationship between wetland landscapes and domestic settlements, presenting a case study from Fuente De Piedra Lagoon, Spain.

The hosting of TRAC by the University of Reading in 2014 coincided with the final year of the Department of Archaeology's field school at Silchester Roman town. It seems appropriate therefore to close the volume with a contribution from Prof. Michael Fulford, who, along with Amanda Clarke, directed the field school at Silchester since it began in 1997. Prof. Fulford's paper presents an overview of the excavations at Silchester, reflecting on the challenges and opportunities associated with such a long-term project, as well as considering the development of strategies which enabled the successful completion of the fieldwork.

Readers may note that this volume contains fewer papers than is typical for a TRAC proceedings. The reason for this is that papers from two sessions are currently in the process of being published as respective stand-alone volumes. Papers from the session ‘Small Finds and Ancient Social Practices’ (organised by Alissa Whitmore and Stefanie Hoss) are to be published alongside those from the Roman Finds Group session ‘Roman Metal Small Finds in Context’, whilst papers from the session ‘Romans and Barbarians Beyond the Frontiers: Archaeology, Ideology and Identities in the North’ (organised by Sergio Gonzalez Sanchez and Alexandra Guglielmi) are scheduled to appear as the first volume in a new and exciting series, ‘TRAC Themes in Roman Archaeology’, published by Oxbow Books. The fact that this proceedings is of slightly reduced size is therefore reflective of the continuing success of TRAC as a forum for the presentation of important new ideas, and the independent publication of whole sessions as separate volumes is testament to the quality of the sessions on offer.

Many individuals and organisations contributed to a successful conference and to the production of this volume. Particular thanks must go to John Creighton and Hella Eckardt for their roles in the organisation of the joint conference, and to Sue Beasley, Heather Browning and the many student volunteers who helped the conference to run smoothly. Members of the TRAC Standing Committee provided helpful advice leading up to the conference and during development of the publication. Darrell Rohl of the TRAC Standing Committee kindly chaired the TRAC general session as all of the local organising committee were engaged with presenting papers in other sessions. Thanks are due to the anonymous referees who provided prompt and thorough reviews of papers submitted for the publication. The editorial committee are grateful for the generous financial support provided by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies and Barbican Research Associates which provided bursaries for student speakers, and this was of particular importance for attracting international speakers. We would also like to thank the Social Archaeology Research Group at the University of Reading for funding the typesetting of this volume, and to Val Lamb for undertaking this work. Special thanks are due to Val Lamb and Clare Litt at Oxbow for their help with production of the volume, and to Sarah Lambert-Gates at the University of Reading for providing the cover photograph. Finally, the editors would like to thank the session organisers, speakers, and all who attended TRAC 2014 and contributed to such a stimulating conference.

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