

---

# TRAC Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference

---

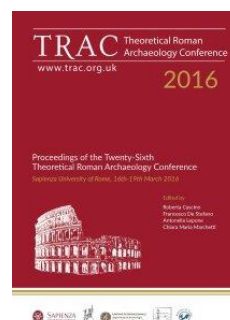
[www.trac.org.uk](http://www.trac.org.uk)

## Paper Information:

Title: Crisis, Marxism and Reconstruction of Time  
Author: Paul Pasieka  
Pages: 165–178

DOI: [http://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2016\\_165\\_178](http://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2016_165_178)

Publication Date: 23/03/2017



## Volume Information:

Cascino, R., De Stefano, F., Lepone, A., and Marchetti, C.M. (eds) 2017.  
*TRAC 2016 Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Theoretical Roman  
Archaeology Conference*. Rome: Edizioni Quasar.

## Copyright and Hardcopy Editions:

The following paper was originally published in print format by Edizioni Quasar for TRAC. Hard copy editions of this volume may still be available, and can be purchased direct from Edizioni Quasar at <https://www.edizioniquasar.it/>.

TRAC has now made this paper available as Open Access through an agreement with the publisher. Copyright remains with TRAC and the individual author(s), and all use or quotation of this paper and/or its contents must be acknowledged. This paper was released in digital Open Access format in April 2019.

---

# Crisis, Marxism and Reconstruction of Time

*Paul Pasiëka*

---

## *Introduction*

In his essay *Weltzeit und Systemgeschichte*, Niklas Luhmann (1972) not only pointed out that the past, the present, and the future stand in a complex relationship with each other, but also stressed that historians constantly face the problem of multiple modalities of time. For example, in the analysis of a past present, other temporal horizons of the then past and future must also be considered. However, a reflexive examination of these multiple modalities is rarely undertaken and will therefore be the focus of my paper. The construction and presentation of the chronological position, order, and the description of change of archaeological entities all allude to different levels of time concepts like those which, for example, Barbara Adam (1994) has distinguished. This highly socially predetermined process of historical interpretation is not a dispassionate order of material remains or historical events. It prefigures the subsequent perception of historical processes in many ways (Sommer 2014). If a crisis is postulated at the end of an historical epoch, not only is an increased historical tempo implied, but also a qualitative judgment is associated with it. My paper then aims to discuss the relationship between Marxist theory and its intrinsic conceptions of time and their specific impact on archaeological research, using the concept of ‘crisis’. To this end the use of the term ‘crisis’ in Marxist reconstructions of the Roman imperial era will be addressed as well as its influence on historical constructions, our perception of Roman society and its temporalities, and historiography in general. I want to highlight the attribution of meaning in the process of historical and archaeological interpretation through the exemplary comparison between Marxist traditions and their specific time concepts in classical archaeology in Italy and the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

Marxism has had a substantial impact on classical studies, helping us focus on long-neglected topics such as inequality, freedom, and power. It also put the economy firmly at the centre of its research agenda (Mölders 2014: 318). However, the influence of Marxism on time theory and time perception have seldom been addressed. Thus, I want to highlight the impact of Marxist theory on time-conceptions and historiographic work. Of particular interest are the time structures applied in the process of historical periodization, here understood as the sequence of different modes of production. Following Johann Gustav Droysen, the practice of classification of history serves the purpose to provide the historical continuum

with a meaningful structure, and is thus an important part of historical interpretation (Droysen 1977: 371; Jaeger 2003: 313). The thesis that Marxist theories of time exerted their greatest influence on the analysis and explanation of historical transformation between historical periods, and that ‘crisis’ as a socio-economic phenomenon is one of its defining motives, shall be exemplified for Roman antiquity. Jonas Grethlein’s (2014) concept of a ‘future past’, based on the famous work of Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft* (1989), provides the analytical framework for my study, as historical narration is decisively influenced by the selection of the vantage point or *telos* from which the past is narrated and, thus, by the temporal horizon of the future of past events:

‘retrospect makes the historians view the past in light of subsequent events. The vantage points chosen by historians influence the selection of the material as well as its arrangement and thereby give historical narratives their specific character.’ (Grethlein 2014: 310).

To approach the questions posed above, I will first briefly examine the different meanings and uses of the term ‘crisis’ in general, and in Marxism in particular, with special emphasis on temporal aspects in the historical-philosophical concepts of Marxism. Subsequently, I am considering the influence Marxism had on the narration of two different descriptions of the Roman Empire. I will start with a discussion of the Marxist traditions in classical studies in Italy and the GDR, in order to analyse the role of crisis in Andrea Carandini’s *L’Anatomia della Scimmia* (1979) and Reimar Müller’s *Kulturgeschichte der Antike 2: Rom* (1978) in more detail. These books were chosen not just because of their nearly contemporaneous release date, but also because they allow for the comparison of a work that emerged in the context of a socialist state with one from a western European country, both of which were committed to a rather orthodox Marxist position. Through this process, I hope to get a clearer picture of the influence of Marxist conceptions of ‘crisis’ and ‘time’.

### *Crisis and Marxism*

Both the work of Marx and Engels are in many ways connected with the ancient world. On the one hand, they both read ancient writers, which exerted a certain influence on them and their work (e.g. Aristotle); they also treated antiquity repeatedly and directly in their writings, assigning it a certain place in their historical-philosophical work. However, on the other hand, the role of antiquity should not be overestimated (Dyson 2003: 33), as the analysis of their own present and immediate past take centre stage in the attempt to provide forecasts for future socio-economic developments. Two dominant strands characterize their relationship with the past. The occupation with the past serves Marx, firstly, as a means to overcome the present and create the future (O’Gormann 2011: 266–271), and secondly, as an insurmountable divide, which separates the industrial society with its capitalist order from all other (past) modes of production (Love 1986; Derrida 1994; Morley 2011: 220). This basic idea was, for example, central to the work of Finley (Shaw 1993; Hobson 2014: 15) and thereby had a lasting influence on debates in classical studies. Nevertheless, Marx, and the subsequent

Marxism, provide a historical-political framework and a terminology which is suited to the analysis of past societies, and correspondingly, for antiquity (Faulkner 2008: 69).

Koselleck made in various publications (Koselleck 1973; Koselleck 1982; Koselleck 2006) the most comprehensive contribution to our understanding of the concept of ‘crisis’ and its history. He gives an overview of the changes of the meanings and semantics of the term ‘crisis’ from antiquity right up to the twentieth century. As Koselleck has pointed out, ‘crisis’ was originally a Greek term, which was along with its meanings translated into Latin almost unaltered (Koselleck 2006: 204). The word ‘crisis’ was primarily limited to juridical, medical and, later, theological spheres, and indicated specifically the point of decision between two extremes. It had by no means a negative connotation, on the contrary, it was perceived as a moment of order ending uncertainty (see also Asmonti 2010). This range of meaning remained stable until about the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the term was applied in new contexts, such as in politics, psychology, history, and economics. Particularly, during the French Revolution, and in its aftermath, ‘crisis’ became the central focal point of historical interpretation and the philosophy of history. Three different semantic possibilities emerged in the historical sciences for the conceptual usage of the term ‘crisis’:

- History as constant crisis leading to the last judgement.
- Crisis as an accelerating process and a catalyst of historical transition (‘Krise als iterativer Periodenbegriff’ Koselleck 2006: 208, 210–212).
- Crisis as the end of the future and last decision of all historical processes – this variety was particularly popular in communist utopias.

It is crucial to note that in each of its different meanings and in every context ‘crisis’ always refers to a theory of time and has an intrinsic temporal implication (Koselleck 2006: 204). Finally, the term ‘crisis’ can be used in the historical sciences as a substitute for decline, losing its temporal aspect of accelerating intensification. Those meanings of ‘crisis’ can be incorporated into the same historical narrative as parallel and often conflicting possibilities, like, for example, in the work of Marx. He exploited the second and third meaning of ‘crisis’ and construed them, accordingly, both as transitional and as an inherent systemic part of society (Koselleck 2006: 213). Marx and Engels also added the layer of economic crises, which stand out due to their cyclical endogenous character as phenomenon of the industrialized capitalistic mode of production. Nonetheless they are in a historical-philosophical sense transitional and can be assigned to the second meaning (Koselleck 1982: 647). His own experience of economic crises was a crucial catalyst of Marx’s thought and significantly affected his work (Krätke 2008).

The basic idea of a cyclical historical development can be found again, even though somewhat abstracted, in Marx’s theory of the historical sequence of modes of production. Every stage is constructed in analogy to a lifecycle, as has been particularly emphasised in the GDR (Weber 1986: 27). After a phase of growth there is always a heyday followed by an unavoidable crisis. The transition between individual historical phases is stressed and constructed as a crisis caused by an imminent aggravation of internal contradictions between means of production and ownership (Weber 1986: 28). Among ancient examples, Marxist scholars identified the institution of slavery and its eventual inhibitory role in the economic

development of the Roman Empire, as leading to the crisis and subsequent dissolution of the economic order (Andreau 2010: 186). Two defining temporal elements are incorporated in the conception of the historical sequence of different modes of production: a cyclic structure of individual historical periods, and a temporal acceleration during the transition between historical periods. The last point especially highlights a central aspect of Marxist constructions of history, namely the perspective of the narrative. Historical periods are understood from their end, and every historical description contains its own transcendence. This is at the same time a dynamic element. Historical societies and their internal stability are always perceived as precarious.

### *Case Study 1: Italy – L’Anatomia della Scimmia*

Marxist ideas and theories exercised a significant influence on classical studies and classical archaeology only after WWII, particularly in Italy, at a time when Marxism enjoyed high popularity in intellectual circles (D’Agostino 1991: 58; Iacono 2014: 1). They soon reached prominence and contributed significantly to a methodical, methodological, and substantive renewal of classical archaeology (Terrenato 1998: 181–184). However, Nicola Terrenato (2005: 40) believes that firmly entrenched idealistic traditions had, nevertheless, a considerable effect on Marxist scholars. Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli with his structural art-historical approach was without doubt the single-most important representative of this Marxist movement directly after WWII (Cella *et al.* 2016: 72–73), as he attempted to reintegrate previously marginalized groups of historical agents in scholarly debates to draw a more holistic picture of Roman society at large; an approach that had a significant and lasting impact outside of Italian scholarship (Bianchi Bandinelli 1967; D’Agostino 1991: 55–57; Hölscher 1995: 215). The 1960s and 1970s saw the climax of this Marxist movement with the establishment of the journal *Dialoghi di Archeologia* in 1967 (Guidi 2002: 355; Iacono 2014: 1), the ambitious large-scale research and publication projects of the Istituto Gramsci (Terrenato 2005: 40) and the excavation of Settefinestre *inter alia* (Dyson 2003: 27). Similar tendencies can be seen in Italian prehistory, which, heavily influenced by the works of V. Gordon Childe and Eastern Bloc scholars, took alongside French prehistory a leading role in the establishment and spread of Marxist theories in western European archaeology (Guidi 2002: 356). Subsequently, orthodox Marxist positions were gradually abandoned in the 1980s and 1990s, and the French and Anglophone impetus stimulated a substantive repositioning (D’Agostino 1991: 61–64; Terrenato 1998: 189). Thus, we can observe a marked decrease in the original Marxist dynamics (Iacono 2014: 6). Some of the leading protagonists, like Andrea Carandini, distanced themselves publicly from Marxism and their earlier opinions (Terrenato 2005: 41; Iacono 2014: 7), and with the termination of the *Dialoghi* in 1992 one of the final points was reached.

The introduction of Marxist theories and perspectives brought both a substantial shift in the priorities of Italian classical archaeological research and a new methodical orientation and, thus, lasting change to Italian archaeology. With a decisive emphasis on economic topics a hitherto totally neglected area was first systematically involved in the research (D’Agostino 1991: 58; Terrenato 1998: 182). These tendencies were accompanied by a research program

that investigated rural production facilities, and the entanglement of the aristocratic lifestyle and agricultural production (Dyson 2003: 9). The excavation of the villa of Settefinestre near Cosa from 1976 to 1981 led by Carandini can be considered a paradigmatic example of this change (Terrenato 1998: 180). Carandini succeeded in the attempt to establish something like a school and to introduce stratigraphic excavation as the dominant excavation method in Italy, which he became acquainted with through the international Carthage project (Carandini and Settis 1979; Terrenato 1998: 179; Carandini 2000: 13–15; Cella *et al.* 2016: 77–79). He follows in his interpretation of the finds of Settefinestre a firmly Marxist agenda, as the theory of historical formation played a crucial role, and Settefinestre was considered a key element in the archaeological, material foundation of the so-called slave mode of production. Particular attention is given to the end of this mode of production in the second century A.D. and the so-called ‘crisis’ of Italian agriculture. This hypothesis has earned a lot of criticism, as the limited dataset and generalizations were considered problematic (Patterson 1987; Dyson 2003: 27; Danckers 2011). Carandini took up a narrative of crisis of Italian agriculture beginning in the first century A.D. promoted by Michail Rostovtzeff (1926), updated it with a complete reversal of the theoretical premises – Rostovtzeff was an outspoken opponent of Marxism and rejected the idea of Late Antique decay (Rostovtzeff 1929) – and put it on a new archaeological basis (apart from the villa of Settefinestre he analysed the production and distribution of amphorae and fine ware ceramics). But his models also attracted critique from a conceptual and theoretical point of view. Finley, who refused the idea of generic and endogenous economic crises for antiquity (Finley 1973: 21–23, 103), rejected not only the model of a slave mode of production, but also doubted the heuristic value of a transformational phase of 300 to 600 years between different modes of production, like here from antiquity to the middle ages (Finley 1984: 6). Furthermore, this model would reproduce known classifications of epochs and overlook both coherent and continuous developments and different regional dynamics, and thus contradict decisively the narrative of crisis (Vera 1994).

Carandini, in his book *L’Anatomia della Scimmia* (The Anatomy of the Ape), published in 1979, deals with Marxism and the theory of a historical sequence of different modes of production from a theoretical point of view, extending systematically earlier reflections on this topic (e.g. Carandini 1976). In a way, this endeavour may be seen as complementary to the work at Settefinestre, which was primarily concerned with excavation practices and is confined to just one mode of production – the so-called ‘slave mode of production’. *L’Anatomia della Scimmia* is not just a theoretical work on the Marxist theory of historical development with particular consideration of Marx’s *Grundrisse*, which were popular in Italy in the 1970s (Tronti 2008: 229), but it also includes a full-length reprint of ‘Forms which precede capitalist production’ in the Italian translation of Giorgio Backhaus, newly annotated by Carandini. He leaves archaeological terrain with this ambitiously designed volume (see also Carandini 1980: 19), even if his own archaeological work is the starting point for a more theoretical discussion of the historical part of Marx’s work (Carandini 1979: 13–15). He also admits his great affinity for Marx: ‘D’altra parte è difficile avvicinarsi a Marx senza subirne il fascino; ho corso pertanto al rischio di identificarmi con l’autore, dimenticando che vivo dopo di lui.’ (Carandini 1979: 20).

The title *L'Anatomia della Scimmia* should be understood in a double sense here. On the one hand it refers specifically to the famous quote by Marx (1973: 105) in the *Grundrisse* that 'human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape'. So the relationship between the present and previous modes of production is established, and it refers to the Marxist method to achieve historical knowledge (Audring 1989: 10–12). It dynamizes this relationship on the other hand and puts the temporal movement in the foreground; the human is, after all, at the end of a long development starting with the ape. This touches central points of the historical-philosophical work of Marx. This temporal aspect, implied by the selection of the title by Carandini, has to be understood programmatically in my opinion (Carandini 1979: 17). Even if we assume, like Wood (2008: 90) did, that Marx did not argue teleologically, a distinct perspective is set, nevertheless. The starting point of the narration is the end and not the beginning of a long development, in this case the human. A prospective perspective dominates the retrospective view. The comparison of the sequence of different modes of production and an archaeological stratigraphy by Carandini, sums up nicely the importance he attributes to the temporal aspect of the historical sequence of the modes of production. Accordingly, special emphasis is put in the following on the temporal aspects of Carandini's description and interpretation of the slave mode of production.

*L'Anatomia della Scimmia* is first and foremost characterized by the direct encounter with the work of Marx with a correspondingly high number of direct quotations and a very close analysis of Marx's texts relevant to pre-modern, and especially Roman, modes of production. These are confronted with both written and archaeological sources. Furthermore, Carandini discusses other contemporary reconstructions of the economic history of antiquity against this background. Most attention is paid to a critique and a reply to Finley's *Ancient Economy* (1973). The theses of Finley are subsequently rejected as primitivistic (Carandini 1979: 215) and substantivistic (Carandini 1979: 211). However, one of the main criticisms is directed against the attempt to understand slavery primarily as an institution and not as a mode of production (Carandini 1979: 216). Carandini elaborates his critique and extends it on Finley's chronological and topographical generalizations (Carandini 1979: 218). In return, he develops a pluralistic model, which tolerates not only mixed modes of production but also simultaneous different developments or retarding moments:

'Vedere solo la faccia della continuità unilineare del mondo antico vuol dire coprire l'altra faccia, ugualmente reale dei perduranti ritardi, degli sviluppi improvvisi, dei miracoli economici e dei vicoli ciechi' (Carandini 1979: 218)

Intensive economic development is located and mostly limited to the coastal area, while the hinterland remains largely traditional in its economic structures (Carandini 1979: 132). The villa system is the material expression of the 'slave mode of production' and its disintegration in the late second and early third century A.D. is considered the clearest manifestation of the 'crisis', which should lead to the downfall of the mode of production of antiquity (Carandini 1979: 128). Carandini distinguishes terminologically between the concepts of *crisi* (crisis) and *decadenza* (decline) and raises the question of the relationship between the crisis of Italian agriculture beginning with the first century A.D. and the decline of the 'slave mode of production' starting in the late second and early third century A.D. (Carandini 1979:



131). He names several archaeological indicators for the crisis of the Roman mode of production: the end of the villa system; the end of arretine ceramics and of certain types of amphorae (Ostia I–IV); the end of *opus reticulatum* as a construction technique; the end of architectural terracottas like Campana plates; the end of Latin literature; the change of funeral rites; the end of naturalistic sculpture; and the perceived simplification of wall paintings (Carandini 1979: 131–133). Here, not only are long lasting, non-concurrent processes with one another intertwined, but certain changes, like in the production of art, are normatively judged. The postulated ‘*decadenza*’ of the Roman Empire (Carandini 1979: 135) is understood as a real decline and includes the whole later Roman Empire, imagined as a mix between the ‘slave mode’ and ‘feudal mode’ of production. Carandini construed, though, a deep crisis before an eventual, slow disintegration of the Roman Empire and its mode of production stretching itself over several centuries. Even the individual indicators mentioned by him are covering a period of time of more than one century. The precise temporal and causal connections remain vague at best.

### *Case Study 2: GDR – Kulturgeschichte der Antike*

‘Ohne antike Sklaverei kein moderner Sozialismus’ (Engels 1962: 168).

The situation in the GDR differs distinctly insofar as it was a state of the Eastern Bloc and Marxism was firmly entrenched as a governing ideology. This had a profound impact on classical studies in the GDR and its self-perception in two ways. Firstly, Marxism-Leninism officially determined the guidelines for historical analysis and interpretation (Oppermann 1986: 20). Many empirical works added only artificially to the ‘official’ Marxist terminology, while the real practical significance was rather low in these cases (Schuller 2005: 84). Secondly, a specific framework of institutions and science policy was deliberately created to break with older traditions (Malycha 2001). A constant reference to the present and its challenges was aimed at (Schindler 1986: 103). This relationship between past and present was explicitly formulated and considered a goal and requirement of classical archaeology:

‘Aus der Öffnung der Klassischen Archäologie für aktuelle Zeit- und Gesellschaftserfordernisse, ihrer zunehmend stärkeren Integration in das Ensemble der marxistisch-leninistischen Gesellschaftswissenschaften erwuchs eine bewußte Realisierung der Einheit von fachlicher und weltanschaulich-gesellschaftlicher Bildung und Erziehung. Sie vollzog sich mit der Grundorientierung der Heranbildung disponibler Kader für Kunstmuseen, wissenschaftlicher Einrichtungen, Verlage und die Praxisfelder sozialistischer Kultur und Kulturpolitik.’ (Kluwe 1985: 20).

To what extent these ideological positions can be attributed to a mandatory lip service or were expressed out of real conviction must be determined on an individual basis. Immediately after the foundation of the GDR, but also later, there was, for example a group of dedicated socialist historians who had a stabilising effect on the whole system (Kloft 2005: 141). The second and the third university reforms were the most important milestones in the devel-



opment of the scientific structures in the GDR. While the second reform in 1951/1952 firmly established Marxism-Leninism as guiding ideology, the third reform was more far-reaching and harmful (see Meißner 2005 for the impact on Leipzig University). The traditional structure of institutes and faculties at the universities was almost completely dissolved and replaced by so-called sections and research complexes. In addition, research and teaching were separated, the former was now located at the Academy of Sciences in Berlin, the latter remained at the universities. Moreover, the third reform was explicitly directed against so-called bourgeois sciences, which led to the dissolution and marginalization of classical archaeological institutes, like in Leipzig (Paul 1994). In addition, the claim of a high scientific standard could not be kept up in many cases, which was structurally caused by exodus of leading scientists after WWII (Schuller 2005: 79), a lack of promotion of young scholars in the so-called Grundwissenschaften (Kloft 2005: 147), travel restrictions (Paul 1994: 3; Willing 2000: 265), and constant underfunding. Thus, many studies lacked an adequate empirical dataset (Kloft 2005: 140). Nonetheless, recent research has highlighted works with innovative approaches and a high scientific standard (Kloft 2005: 147; Schuller 2005: 85; Tompkins 2014).

Karl Christ (2006: 114) divided the history of eastern German Ancient History in three main phases. First, from the middle of the 1940s to the middle of the 1950s, a phase of re-orientation and re-foundation; second, from the middle of the 1950s to 1970, a phase of a deliberate promotion of Marxist scholars and a constant increase of ideological vigour; and lastly, from 1970 to 1989, with firmly established structures and institutions and an unchallenged primacy of Marxist theories. Classical studies in the GDR were by no means isolated from western European developments with their own Marxist approaches. Finley and his correspondence with Heinz Kreißig, Detlev Lotze and Elisabeth Charlotte Welskopf should be mentioned (Tompkins 2014: 437). But also, Bianchi Bandinelli who was bestowed with an honorary doctorate by the University of Jena during the deanship of the archaeologist Robert Heidenreich (Kluwe 1985: 19). Both were well received and Finley's works on economic history were not just regarded as exemplary, but also viewed critically and opposed with alternative positions (Audring 1989: 7, 10–12). Structuralist Marxist approaches to the economy and society of antiquity hardly played a role in Germany after the demise of the GDR, neither in Ancient History (Kloft 2005: 149) nor in classical archaeology. This situation also holds true for prehistory (Mölders 2014: 318), whereas the decidedly Marxist works of Reinhard Bernbeck (e.g. Bernbeck 1994) can be singled out for Near Eastern archaeology.

The economy of antiquity and its analysis were prioritized in classical studies in the GDR, but with significant differences between classical archaeology and ancient history. Traditional elements prevailed in the former, art-historically oriented archaeology. Material remains of the economy played only a minor and secondary role (Oppermann 1986: 17). The reason for this might have been, among other things, that access to most of the archaeological sites in the Mediterranean was blocked. Since 1955 there was an Institute for Greco-Roman Antiquity at the academy in Berlin (das Institut für griechisch-römische Alterskunde), which was transformed in 1969 in the Central Institute for Ancient History and Archaeology (das Zentralinstitut für Alte Geschichte und Archäologie – ZIAGA) at the academy in Berlin

(Willing 2000: 256, 264). More important for our topic is the establishment of a working group on the economy of antiquity in 1963 under the direction of Peter Musiolek at the Institute of Economic History of the Academy of Sciences (Willing 2000: 264). In light of this supposed advantageous institutional situation, it seems peculiar that no economic history of antiquity was written during the 40 years of Socialist rule (Willing 2000: 255). While this desideratum was approached in the final years of the GDR as a collective project at the academy of sciences, it remained nonetheless unfinished (Audring 1989: 7; Schuller 2005: 89).

The ZIAGA carried out a multitude of larger, strongly ideological collective projects. Different specialized disciplines cooperated in these works, but the contributions of individual scholars are not recognizable in the text itself (Stark 2005: 241). One of these projects was the *Kulturgeschichte der Antike* in two volumes (1976 Greece and 1978 Rome), each edited by Reimar Müller. Various different historical sources are linked in the text in order to create a broad picture of the ancient culture and society (Schuller 2005: 79), albeit with distinct ideological undertones. Although Schuller (2005: 86–88) suggests, that the more popular-oriented *Kulturgeschichte der Antike* lacks the standard of contemporaneous scholarship in the GDR and pursued a more dogmatic focus, it seems to me a good example of conceptual, official requirements, regardless of how they were actually enforced by individual researchers in their other works. At least Kluwe (1985: 22) praised it as a paradigmatic example for the state of the art of the classical studies in the GDR (see also Kertész 1982). The conference proceedings *Krise – Krisenbewußtsein – Krisenbewältigung (Wissenschaftsbereich Griechisch-römisches Altertum der Sektion Orient- und Altertumswissenschaften)* (1988) of an international conference in Halle shows, for example, a more differentiated view. Most of the contributions there deal with specific problems and are lacking a distinct Marxist terminology or methodology.

Essential clues for the conceptualization of time in the reconstruction of Roman antiquity are provided by the organization of the *Kulturgeschichte der Antike 2: Rom*:

- I. Das vorantike Italien (2. Jahrtausend-6. Jh. v. u. Z.)
- II. Die Herausbildung der antiken Gesellschaftsformation in Rom (Ende des 6. Jh. – 265 v. u. Z.).
- III. Die Entfaltung der Sklavereordnung in Rom und die Blütezeit der Republik (264–146 v. u. Z.)
- IV. Krisenerscheinungen der römischen Sklavereordnung und das Ende der Republik (145–30 v. u. Z.)
- V. Die Stabilisierung der Sklavereordnung in der Zeit des Prinzipats des Augustus (30 v. u. Z.–14 u. Z.)
- VI. Die weitere Ausbildung des Prinzipats (14 u. Z.–Ende 2. Jh.)
- VII. Die akute Krise der antiken Gesellschaftsformation (Ende des 2. Jh.–284)
- VIII. Der Zerfall der antiken Gesellschaftsformation (Ende des 3. Jh. – Ende des 6. Jh.)

This shows firstly the coincidence of the *histoire evenementielle* and the structuralist Marxist perspective and thus the utilization of the conventional periodization. The focal point

of the presentation is the ‘*Sklavereiordnung*’, whereby a weighting of various historical periods is produced. It results in the peculiarity of comparatively short phases of the realization of the ideal type of the ‘real’ Roman society. The ideal-typical ‘slave mode of production’ covers not even half of the treated time and is besides suspended by a long-lasting crisis in the Late Republic. The periods before and after are just understood as transitional in the overall design; the comparison with lifecycles seems obvious. Such conceptions are easily adopted, because they find parallels in older models. Classical archaeology, for example, used analogous descriptions for the stylistic analysis of ancient art, which are firmly rooted in its own idealistic traditions (Hölscher 1995: 209). The scheme of ‘formation – blossoming – decline’ is even used for the description of sub-phases like the era of the Roman kings. The crisis of the economic and social contradictions leads to the decline of the period. A progressive solution of the contradictions marks the transformation into a new mode of production. Linear and cyclical elements are combined in this manner in the historical narration. Such highly generalizing and normative narratives necessarily pose the question of their heuristic value. It seems also that crises are a constitutive element in the historical narrative. As they covered long periods of time, they lose their aspect of temporal acceleration and are becoming a permanent mode of society. This impression is also confirmed in a more detailed reading, e.g. in the introduction to the chapter on the crisis of the third century it is stated that the crisis of the slave mode of production merely became apparent: ‘Am Ende des 2. Jh. begann die *offene* Krise der Sklavereiordnung und brachte dem Römischen Reich schwere innen- und außenpolitische Erschütterungen, die am Ende zum Untergang der antiken Produktionsweise führte’ (emphasis by the author; Müller 1978: 436). Or to phrase it differently, the mode of crisis switched from immanent to open.

On the one hand, traditional periodization is maintained, but charged with new Marxist meanings with a strongly normative undertone. On the other hand, crisis is constructed as an inherent part of Roman antiquity. This fact is comprehensible if the mode of thinking and the temporal direction of historical construction are taken into consideration. Roman antiquity is understood from the perspective of its failure, the unavoidable ‘crisis’. Every historical description carries, though, its own transcendence. At the same time, Crises lose their aspect of temporal acceleration and decision, instead of constituting the normal state for generations of historical agents.

### *Outlook: Periodization, Temporalities of Crisis and Historical Transformation*

Both of the case studies of Roman history presented here have, despite all their differences, a common aspect, in that ‘crisis’ played a crucial part in the conceptualization of the transformation between different historical periods. The subsequent Late Antiquity plays only a minor role. It is primarily seen in the light of the long-term process of dissolution of the mode of production of antiquity. Characteristically, a perspective is taken which not only emphasizes the failure of an historical epoch, but which also emphasizes the process of failure, the crisis. This is not to say that these positions are necessarily and exclusively Marxist. Many motives of the narratives are widespread and common. Interestingly, in both cases older, idealistic traditions seem to have facilitated the adoption of Marxist conceptions. The concentration on

the crisis of a given historical period predetermines the potential futures of a past present and thus influences and narrows down historical descriptions and interpretations.

The analysis from Michael Sommer (2015: 18–21) of the works of Alföldi on the third century A.D. crisis showed many motives which could also be found in our case studies. This includes the biological conception of rise, flowering, and decline of historical entities as well as the scenario of a world crisis as a turning point of historical development. The dogmatic use of historical periods shown here and of the model of the Roman slave economy as part of the structural historical development prohibits a recovery in Late Antiquity. It follows only slow decline. A concentration on crisis affects the analysis of historical effective factors (see also Demandt 1984: 541–548): conflicts and problems are emphasized to the detriment of stability and success. However, it should not be forgotten that with the periodization of history both the sequence of periods and their transcendence are firmly enshrined (Jaeger 2003: 345).

The substantive and temporal indistinctness of the term crisis, a normative and teleological undertone, and historical constructions that assign the longest chronological part of an historical period to its decline, are the striking deficiencies of the case studies discussed here. At the same time this provides an analysis that asks constantly and systematically for the precariousness of the order of structural factors, institutions, practices and semantics, and which includes the concept of co-evolution (Plumpe 2009), the possibility of a dynamization of historical processes especially in their different development tempos. This conceptual dynamic, evoked through the systematic use of the term ‘crisis’, was not met in the case studies. Rather, the term of the crisis is primarily used as a substitute term for decline. Marc Bloch (2002: 33) speaks in his *Apology of the idol of origin* embraced by some historians. It would be an exaggeration to speak of the idol of crisis, but here, interpretational concepts for Roman antiquity were offered which gave in their meta-positions the most important role to the failure of the period.

Fotothek, German Archaeological Institute, Rome Department

### *Bibliography*

- Adam, B. 1994. Perceptions of Time. In T. Ingold (ed) *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology: Humanity, Culture and Social Life*. London: Routledge: 503–526.
- Andreau, J. 2010. *L'économie du Monde Romain*. Paris: Ellipses.
- Asmonti, L. 2010. What do we Mean by Crisis? The Culture of Confrontation in the Greek City. *Acme. Annali della Facoltà di lettere e filosofia dell'Università degli studi di Milano* 63/1: 279–293.
- Audring, G. 1989. Karl Marx und die antike Ökonomie. In M. M. Mactoux and E. Geny (eds) *Mélanges Pierre Lévêque 2. Anthropologie et société*. Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon 377. Paris: Les Belles Lettres: 7–16.
- Bernbeck, R. 1994. *Die Auflösung der Häuslichen Produktionsweise: Das Beispiel Mesopotamiens*. Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 14. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- Bianchi Bandinelli, R. 1967. Arte plebea. *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 1: 7–19.
- Bloch, M. 2002. *Apologie der Geschichtswissenschaft oder der Beruf des Historikers*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Carandini, A. 1976. Le forme di produzione dell'economia politica e le forme di circolazione dell'antropologia economica. In N. Badaloni, L. Calabi, A. Carandini, G. La Grassa, G. Lukács, C. Luporini, A. Mazzone and A. Schiavone (eds) *Problemi Teorici del Marxismo*. Rome: Editori Riuniti: 215–235.

- Carandini, A. 1979. *L'Anatomia della Scimmia. La Formazione Economica della Società prima del Capitale. Con un Commento alle "Forme che Precedono la Produzione Capitalistica" dai Grundrisse di Marx*. Turin: Einaudi.
- Carandini, A. 1980. Roma imperialistica. Un caso di sviluppo precapitalistico. *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 36: 11–19.
- Carandini, A. 2000. *Storie della Terra. Manuale di Scavo Archeologico* (2nd Edition). Turin: Einaudi.
- Carandini, A. and Settis, S. 1979. *Schiavi e Padroni nell'Etruria Romana. La Villa di Settefinestre dallo Scavo alla Mostra*. Bari: De Donato.
- Cella, E., Gori, M. and Pintucci, A. 2016. The trowel and the sickle. Italian archaeology and its Marxist legacy. *EX NOVO Journal of Archaeology* 1: 71–83.
- Christ, K. 2006. *Klios Wandlungen. Die deutsche Althistorie vom Neuhumanismus bis zur Gegenwart*. München: C. H. Beck.
- D'Agostino, B. 1991. The Italian perspective on theoretical archaeology. In I. Hodder (ed) *Archaeological Theory in Europe: The Last Three Decades*. London: Routledge: 52–64.
- Danckers, J. 2011. The 2nd-century AD crisis in Altinum (Venetia, Northern Italy): A mixture of historiographical determinism and archaeological scarcity? *Bulletin antieke beschaving. Annual Papers on Classical Archaeology* 86: 143–167.
- Demandt, A. 1984. *Der Fall Roms. Die Auflösung des römischen Reiches im Urteil der Nachwelt*. München: C. H. Beck.
- Derrida, J. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. London: Routledge.
- Droysen, J.G. 1977. *Historik*. P. Leyh (ed) *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Band 1: Rekonstruktion der ersten vollständigen Fassung der Vorlesungen (1857), Grundriß der Historik in der ersten handschriftlichen (1857/1858) und in der letzten gedruckten Fassung (1882)*. Stuttgart: Frommann – Holzboog.
- Dyson, S.L. 2003. *The Roman Countryside*. London: Duckworth.
- Engels, F. 1962. *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft*. MEW 20. Berlin: Dietze Verlag.
- Faulkner, N. 2008. Roman archaeology in an epoch of neoliberalism and imperialist war. In C. Fenwick, M. Wiggins and D. Wythe (eds) *TRAC 2007: Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, which took place at University College London and Birkbeck College, University of London, 29 March-1 April 2007*. Oxford: Oxbow Books: 63–73.
- Finley, M.I. 1973. *The Ancient Economy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Finley, M.I. 1984. The study of the ancient economy. Further thoughts. *Opus. Rivista Internazionale per la Storia Economica e Sociale dell'Antichità* 3: 5–11.
- Grethlein, J. 2014. "Future past" time and teleology in (ancient) historiography. *History and Theory* 53/3: 309–330.
- Guidi, A. 2002. An Italian perspective. In P.F. Biehl, A. Gramsch and A. Marciniak (eds) *Archaeologies of Europe: History, Methods and Theories*. Münster: Waxmann: 353–360.
- Hobson, M.S. 2014. A historiography of the study of the Roman economy. Economic growth, development, and neoliberalism. In H. Platts, J. Pearce, C. Barron, J. Lundock and J. Yoo (eds) *TRAC 2013: Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, London 2013*. Oxford: Oxbow Books: 11–26.
- Hölscher, T. 1995. Klassische Archäologie am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts: Tendenzen, Defizite, Illusionen. In E.-R. Schwinge (ed) *Die Wissenschaften am Ende des 2. Jahrtausends n. Chr. 6 Vorträge gehalten auf der Tagung der Mommsen-Gesellschaft 1995 in Marburg*. Stuttgart and Leipzig: B. G. Teubner: 197–229.
- Iacono, F. 2014. A pioneering experiment: Dialoghi di archeologia between Marxism and political activism. *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 24: p.Art. 5. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/bha.245>.
- Jaeger, F. 2003. Epochen als Sinnkonzepte historischer Entwicklung und die Kategorie der Neuzeit. In J. Rüsen (ed) *Zeit deuten. Perspektiven, Epochen, Paradigmen*. Bielefeld: transcript: 313–355.
- Kertész, I. 1982. Zur „Kulturgeschichte Roms“. *Klio* 64/2: 579–582.



- Kloft, H. 2005. Die Ökonomie als Herausforderung. Beobachtungen zu einer antiken Wirtschaftsgeschichte in der DDR. In I. Stark (ed) *Elisabeth Charlotte Welskopf und die Alte Geschichte der DDR. Beiträge der Konferenz vom 21. bis 23. November 2002 in Halle/Saale*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner: 134–152.
- Kluwe, E. 1985. Die Entwicklung der Klassischen Archäologie an der Universität Jena. Trends, Wissenschaftlerpersönlichkeiten und progressive Repräsentanten. In B. Wilhelmi (ed) *Zur Geschichte der Klassischen Archäologie: Jena – Kraków*. Jena: Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena: 6–27.
- Koselleck, R. 1973. *Kritik und Krise. Eine Studie zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.
- Koselleck, R. 1982. Krise. In O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck (eds) *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe 3. H–Me*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta: 617–650.
- Koselleck, R. 1989. *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.
- Koselleck, R. 2006 (1986). Einige Fragen an die Begriffsgeschichte von >Krise<. In R. Koselleck (ed) *Begriffsgeschichten. Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp: 203–218.
- Krätke, M.R. 2008. Marx's 'books of crisis' of 1857-8. In M. Musto (ed) *Karl Marx's Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later*. London: Routledge: 169–177.
- Love, J.R. 1986. Max Weber and the theory of ancient capitalism. *History and Theory* 25/2: 152–172.
- Luhmann, N. 1972. Weltzeit und Systemgeschichte. In P.C. Ludz (ed) *Soziologie und Sozialgeschichte*. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften: 81–115.
- Malycha, A. 2001. Das Verhältnis zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik in der SBZ/DDR von 1945 bis 1961. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B 30-31: 14–21.
- Marx, K. 1973. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Rough Draft). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Meißner, B. 2005. Die Alte Geschichte an der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig: Anmerkungen zum Geschichtsbild Rigobert Günthers. In I. Stark (ed) *Elisabeth Charlotte Welskopf und die Alte Geschichte der DDR. Beiträge der Konferenz vom 21. bis 23. November 2002 in Halle/Saale*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner: 90–108.
- Mölders, D. 2014. Wirtschaftsarchäologie. In D. Mölders and S. Wolfram (eds) *Schlüsselbegriffe der Prähistorischen Archäologie*. Tübinger Archäologische Taschenbücher 11. Münster: Waxmann: 315–319.
- Morley, N. 2011. Monumentality and the meaning of the past in ancient and modern historiography. In A. Lianeri (ed) *The Western Time of Ancient History. Historiographical Encounters with the Greek and Roman Pasts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 210–229.
- Müller, R. 1976. *Kulturgeschichte der Antike 1: Griechenland*. Veröffentlichungen des Zentralinstituts für Alte Geschichte und Archäologie der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR 6/1. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- Müller, R. 1978. *Kulturgeschichte der Antike 2: Rom*. Veröffentlichungen des Zentralinstituts für Alte Geschichte und Archäologie der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR 6/2. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- O’Gorman, E. 2011. Repetition and exemplarity in historical thought. Ancient Rome and the ghosts of modernity. In A. Lianeri (ed) *The Western Time of Ancient History. Historiographical Encounters with the Greek and Roman Pasts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 264–280.
- Oppermann, M. 1986. Gegenstand, Quellen und Methoden der klassischen Archäologie. In J. Irmscher (ed) *Einleitung in die klassischen Altertumswissenschaften. Ein Informationsbuch*. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften: 16–21.
- Patterson, J.R. 1987. Crisis: what crisis? Rural change and urban development in imperial Apennine Italy. *Papers of the British School at Rome* 55: 115–147.
- Paul, E. 1994. Einführung. Die Lehr- und Schausammlung des Leipziger Antikenmuseums in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. In E. Paul and R. Vollkommer (eds) *Antikenrepräsentation in der heutigen Zeit – zwischen Tradition und Zukunft. Internationales Kolloquium 22. Oktober 1994 in Leipzig*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag: 1–5.

- Plumpe, W. 2009. Ökonomisches Denken und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung. Zum Zusammenhang von Wirtschaftsgeschichte und historischer Semantik der Ökonomie. *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsge-  
schichte* 50/1: 27–52.
- Rostovtzeff, M. 1926. *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rostovtzeff, M. 1929. The decay of the ancient world and its economic explanations. *The Economic  
History Review* 2/2: 197–214.
- Schindler, W. 1986. Archäologische Denkmälerkunde. In J. Irmscher (ed) *Einleitung in die klassischen  
Altertumswissenschaften. Ein Informationsbuch*. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissen-  
schaften: 103–105.
- Schuller, W. 2005. Inhalte althistorischer Forschung in der DDR. In I. Stark (ed) *Elisabeth Charlotte  
Welskopf und die Alte Geschichte der DDR. Beiträge der Konferenz vom 21. bis 23. November  
2002 in Halle/Saale*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner: 78–90.
- Shaw, B.D. 1993. The early development of M. I. Finley's thought. The Heichelheim dossier. Including  
an original manuscript of M. I. Finley. *Athenaeum. Studi di Letteratura e Storia dell'Antichità*:  
81: 177–199.
- Sommer, U. 2014. Zeit, Erinnerung und Geschichte. *Forum Kritische Archäologie* 3: 2014: 25–59.
- Sommer, M. 2015. ‚A vast scene of confusion‘ - Die Krise des 3. Jahrhunderts in der Forschung. In  
U. Babusiaux and A. Kolb (eds) *Das Recht der „Soldatenkaiser“*. *Rechtliche Stabilität in Zeiten  
politischen Umbruchs?* Berlin: De Gruyter: 15–31.
- Stark, I. 2005. Die Alte Geschichte in Berlin (DDR): Zur Bedeutung von E. Ch. Welskopf. In I. Stark  
(ed) *Elisabeth Charlotte Welskopf und die Alte Geschichte der DDR. Beiträge der Konferenz vom  
21. bis 23. November 2002 in Halle/Saale*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner: 229–252.
- Terrenato, N. 1998. Fra tradizione e trend. L'ultimo ventennio (1975–1997). In M. Barbanera. *L'Archeo-  
logia degli Italiani. Storia, Metodi e Orientamenti dell'Archeologia Classica in Italia. Con un  
Contributo di Nicola Terrenato*. Rome: Editori Riuniti: 175–193.
- Terrenato, N. 2005. ‚Start the revolution without me‘. Recent debates in Italian classical archaeology. In  
P. Attema, A. Nijboer and A. Zifferero (eds) *Papers in Italian Archaeology VI: Communities and  
Settlements from the Neolithic to the Early Medieval Period: Proceedings of the 6th Conference  
of Italian Archaeology held at the University of Groningen, Groningen Institute of Archaeology,  
The Netherlands, April 15–17, 2003*. British Archaeological Reports International Series 1452.  
Oxford: Archaeopress: 39–43.
- Tompkins, D.P. 2014. What happened in Stockholm? Moses Finley, the Mainz Akademie, and East  
Bloc Historians. *Hyperboreus. Studia Classica* 20/1–2: 436–452.
- Tronti, M. 2008. Italy. In M. Musto (ed) *Karl Marx's Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Polit-  
ical Economy 150 Years Later*. London: Routledge: 229–236.
- Vera, D. 1994. L'Italia agraria nell'età imperiale. Fra crisi e trasformazione. In C. Nicolet (ed) *L'Italie d'Aug-  
uste à Dioclétien: Actes du colloque international organisé par l'École Française de Rome, Rome  
1992*. Collection de l'École Française de Rome 198. Rome: École Française de Rome: 239–248.
- Weber, S. 1986. Die Klassiker des Marxismus-Leninismus über Antike und klassische Altertumswis-  
senschaften. In J. Irmscher (ed) *Einleitung in die klassischen Altertumswissenschaften. Ein Infor-  
mationsbuch*. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften: 26–29.
- Willing, M. 2000. Die DDR-Althistorie im historischen Kontext. *Quaderni di Storia* 52/2: 245–277.
- Wissenschaftsbereich Griechisch-römisches Altertum der Sektion Orient- und Altertumswissenschaften  
(ed) 1988. Krise – Krisenbewußtsein – Krisenbewältigung. Ideologie und geistige Kultur im  
Imperium Romanum während des 3. Jahrhunderts. Konferenzvorträge. Halle (Saale): Martin-  
Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg.
- Wood, E.M. 2008. Historical materialism in ‚forms which precede capitalist production‘. In M. Musto  
(ed) *Karl Marx's Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 years Later*.  
London: Routledge: 79–93.