



Open Library of Humanities

Archaeology Lessons From Lockdown

Katherine A. Crawford, The Cyprus Institute, CY, kathacrawford@gmail.com

Karl Goodwin, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK, kag28@kent.ac.uk

Francesca Mazzilli, University of Bergen, NO, mazzillifra@gmail.com

Blanka Mistic, Champlain College Lennoxville, Canada, Blanka.Mistic.2008@live.rhul.ac.uk

Sarah U. Scoppie, State Office for Cultural Heritage Baden-Württemberg, DE, scheffler.sarah@gmail.com

The editorial of the fourth issue of the *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* (TRAJ) focuses on what we have learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The editors focus on the positive outcome of the pandemic, while emphasising aspects of the TRAC organisation that can be improved in the coming years. In this editorial we highlight TRAC's strong tradition of introspection to bring awareness to how we as a community can continue to improve in terms of diversity and inclusivity.



Introduction

A common theme within Roman archaeology since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a reflection on the pandemic's effect. In many cases this has revealed the underlying issues and inequality implicit within the discipline that have been simmering under the surface for years, but never fully addressed. The pandemic only exacerbated and forced many of these issues to the forefront of discipline discussions. The challenge remains for the field of archaeology of how we address the issues that have come to light over the past two years as the pandemic (hopefully) soon comes to an end. In this editorial, rather than focusing on the issues present within the field of Roman archaeology, and by extension TRAC, we choose to consider what we have learned from the challenges of the past two years and how this can inform how we positively move forward. Despite all the discussions of returning to normalcy, we should not strive to return to the position we were in as a field two years ago, but rather, aim to create a field that is more sustainable, diverse, and inclusive.

Positive Outcomes of COVID for TRAC

Living in a pandemic for the last two years has been challenging for most people, Roman archaeology scholars included. As lockdown measures were imposed, conferences cancelled, and universities, libraries, museums, archives, and archaeological sites closed, scholars found themselves cut off from their research resources and their research communities overnight. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed stark inequalities in many elements of society, including a vital need for more open science approaches and open-access research. While open-access research has become widespread in the Natural Sciences and in certain disciplines in the Social Sciences, it is still an emerging trend in most Humanities disciplines, including the disciplines dedicated to the study of ancient civilizations (exceptions include open science initiatives such as Peer Community in Archaeology and Humanities Commons).

One positive outcome which emerged out of the COVID-19 pandemic is the increased awareness and emphasis on open-access scholarship. However, despite increased efforts to promote open access publications, within Archaeology and humanities more broadly, the cost of publishing in such venues is prohibitive for many scholars that do not have funding to cover such costs or other institutional support. TRAC has been at the forefront of promoting open-access scholarship in Roman archaeology since 2018 when the first volume of the new open-access Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal (TRAJ) was issued, and all previously published TRAC conference proceedings, dating back to the inaugural 1991 conference, were re-released in an electronic open-access format. To date, TRAJ has published four open-access volumes, including two volumes

since the start of the pandemic in early 2020. Of particular note is that in addition to being fully open access, TRAJ, which is under the umbrella of the Open Library of Humanities, does not require any author fees for publishing within our journal. In this way, we aim to promote further equality and accessibility for all voices within Roman archaeology.

Limited access to research resources during lockdown and reduced opportunities for scholarly exchange left in the wake of cancelled conferences spurred the TRAC Standing Committee to widen its commitment to open-access research. In order to stimulate scholarly exchange and foster research communities during lockdown the TRAC Standing Committee created a free Webinar series that took place through Zoom every fortnight from early November 2020 to late April 2021 (<http://trac.org.uk/trac-webinars/>). In true TRAC tradition, the series featured an eclectic collection of papers, employing a diversity of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches, presented by postgraduate, early career, as well as established scholars in the field of Roman archaeology. Many of the webinars reflected on issues that bridge the ancient Roman and present times – populist nationalism, plague and health, globalization, and urbanization, among others. In order to make these important discussions accessible to individuals who were unable to attend the webinars live as well as to future audiences, the webinars were recorded and posted, with permission from the speakers, on a newly-created and publicly-available TRAC YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuLBCPbZyFwTfTAI4Gzeerw>).

Towards a Sustainable Future for TRAC

Through the creation of new digital spaces for the TRAC community, TRAC has moved closer to fulfilling the Agenda 2030 with its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs; <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). Enabling a sustainable future for TRAC goes beyond addressing climate change (SDG 13) and promoting responsible consumption (SDG 12). At previous conferences, the local organising committees have helped participants to cut waste by providing free water bottles and mugs for hot drinks. The TRAC Standing Committee aims to introduce a sustainability policy for all future TRAC sponsored events, which will also continue to encourage the local organisers to use sustainable and responsible providers and thus help society to move towards achieving food security (SDG 2), clean water (SDG 6) and affordable and clean energy (SDG 7).

As the world slowly emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic and in-person academic events resume, one of the key challenges will be in sustaining the open-access trend in Roman archaeology which emerged as a by-product of lockdown. Will the academic world go back to costly conference fees and travel requirements of in-person

conferences? Or will we shift to a more sustainable and inclusive online and in-person hybrid conference format? We hope that it is the latter. In the meantime, TRAC remains committed to promoting inclusive and open-access scholarship in Roman archaeology as well as inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4) through the continued publication of its uncommon free open-access journal (TRAJ) and through a new 2021–2022 series of free webinars. As we move beyond the pandemic times, it is our hope that the open-access research resources the TRAC Standing Committee created (TRAJ, TRAC Webinar series and TRAC YouTube channel) will prove useful to scholars across disciplines (and of particular use to scholars with limited access to library collections and research resources), and that more scholars in Roman archaeology will be encouraged to embrace open-access research. Through the venue of TRAJ, we will also be introducing the possibility of including special issues within our yearly volumes as our next target to continue to promote increased accessibility to open access research on behalf of both researchers and authors. We hope that this helps fill the gap left by discontinuing the TRAC theme series, while ultimately enabling special issue collections to achieve a greater breadth of readership and engagement through virtue of its open access nature.

To provide learning opportunities for all and to work towards ending poverty in all its forms (SDG 1), TRAC remains dedicated to not only offering free open-access scholarship but to also keep conference costs at a minimum and increasing the accessibility of TRAC events. In 2022, TRAC will take place in Split, Croatia, thus moving closer to many of our European participants. We will continue to support participation through bursaries, aimed specifically at students who have to travel further to the conference and/or receive less institutional financial support. In light of the hardships posed by COVID-19, we will also be offering a Covid hardship bursary for the 2022 conference. For the future, TRAC aims to continue encouraging attendance by offering bursaries to help offset otherwise prohibitive attendance costs and by providing an inclusive conference space that caters towards the well-being of all participants, including families and those with special needs (SDG 3).

TRAC – Reflecting on Our Core Values

TRAC was initially conceived to ‘offer an alternative to [the] depressing orthodoxy’ of the study of Roman archaeology in the 1990s and to provide a platform for new ideas and approaches (Scott 1993: 3). Eleanor Scott also stated that TRAC was intended to be primarily a place for the ‘introduction and operation of theory in Roman archaeology’ (1993: 1). Over the past 30 years, this core value has remained a central driving force behind TRAC’s development that has recently included online seminar series, TRAC

workshops, TRAJ, and the publication of themed edited volumes (e.g. González Sánchez and Guglielmi 2017; Parker and McKie 2018; Selsvold and Webb 2020). Throughout its progression, TRAC has championed its longstanding tradition of introspection and reflection to support its original aims and to drive TRAC forward.

The value placed upon TRAC's academic tradition is evidenced by its routine championing in TRAJ's yearly editorials (e.g. Hanscam and Quiery 2018; Michielin et al. 2019; Goodwin and Chavarria 2020). TRAJ's first volume reminds us, for instance, that this journal is the result of around three decades of dialogue, first initiated by Scott's construction of a platform for radical thought to move Roman archaeology onwards (Hanscam and Quiery 2018: 2). In part, this effort focused on the need to bring new voices to the fore and to challenge subject stagnation; this remains key to TRAC's discourse in contemporary socio-political discussions that see these concerns play out across the world. Topics discussed throughout TRAJ and TRAC have, therefore, grown and had a global influence on academia. Discussion themes have also propagated healthy reflections on wider issues such as Roman archaeology's place within social justice movements, inclusivity, post-nationalism, and decolonisation (e.g. Hanscam 2019; Goodwin and Chavarria 2020: 1–2; Garland 2021; Kamash 2021).

We, therefore, invite articles that openly and critically address key issues within Roman archaeology for this is needed to push the discipline forward. As such, we advocate for critical introspection as a means to develop TRAC and TRAJ in a way that benefits Roman archaeology on a global level across theoretical and ethical themes. Two publications in this current volume express the fundamentality of this process (Garland 2021; Kamash 2021). Both papers provide critical insight into current issues faced by TRAC and include analysis on whose voices are platformed and whose are not. Zena Kamash, for example, uses data from previous TRAC conferences to show that participants at our conferences do not proportionately represent wider society (Kamash 2021: 8–9). While 15% of the UK population identifies as different from the dominant white ethnic group, the figure of active participants at TRAC falls dramatically short of that target (Office for National Statistics 2012; Kamash 2021: 8). Both Nicky Garland and Kamash further confirm that the vast majority of those who participate through the conference or publication are predominantly from UK institutions (Garland 2021: 20–23; Kamash 2021: 11–12). However, the editorial from TRAC Volume 2 (Michelin et al. 2019) and a Kamash article (2019 Fig. 5) have shown a growing diversity of delegates' affiliations coming from countries outside the UK. BAME and DAC researchers, however, remain underrepresented (Kamash 2019: Figure 2) despite an increase of BAME and DAC session organisers and paper presenters in TRAC 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 (Kamash 2019: Figure 3). The international diversity has been organically developed in

the TRAC committee standing members from being UK-based to being all from outside the UK, including researchers affiliated to institutions outside Europe (<http://trac.org.uk/about/standing-committee/>).

While TRAC has, since its establishment in 1991, made a lasting impact on Roman archaeology through its reflexivity (Gardner 2016: 1), it is also to be understood that we are part of the wider Roman archaeology field that needs to progress. Thankfully, this aim has been the core reason behind TRAC's longevity, emboldened through our commitment to introspective, reflective, and critical discourse in the field — and thus towards gender equality (SDG 5) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10). We hope that articles like Power's (2020) discussion of intersex visibility and non-binary gender studies within archaeological research are a first step towards addressing gender equality and inclusivity. We have made a clear statement about respecting gender, national, sector and career-level equality and diversity in the choice of speakers in the TRAC Conduct Policy (TRAC 2018a), which has been drawn upon The Inclusive Archaeology Project (n.d.). This aim also needs to extend to the scholarship published within the TRAJ.

TRAC's growing focus on gender diversity is reflected in the TRAC committee members from being predominantly men, with only one woman member up to 2016 and two women one up to 2017, to being only women from 2019 (<http://trac.org.uk/about/standing-committee/>). This is the result of the women voices of the TRAC community standing up for their rights and being interested in being active members of this research community. We do acknowledge, however, that the committee would benefit from greater diversity and hope that this will be reflected in future elections.

TRAC policy is not only focusing on diversity and inclusivity, but it also aims to safeguard any person attending the conference from any harassing behaviour with the Anti-Harassment Policy (TRAC 2018a) and to protect the personal data of speakers, session organisers, and bursary holders. We have complied with General Data Protection Regulations, which has been implemented in every field from May 2018 (TRAC 2018b).

Further biases in TRAC sessions and papers pointed out by Zena Kamash (2019: Figures 6–7) are the unbalanced geographical focus on Britain and Italy and the interests on recurrent common topics in Roman studies, such as material culture, landscape and religion. The source of these issues can be also sought in the teaching materials and teaching staff research interests on these themes (Kamash 2019).

In TRAC policy (TRAC 2018a) we encourage session organisers and speakers to have papers covering a variety of geographical localities and themes, which have received a good response from the TRAC community by looking at the variety of

papers published in the last volumes of TRAJ, in previous and current TRAC Webinar Series (<http://trac.org.uk/2020-2021/> and <http://trac.org.uk/2021-2022/>), and in the upcoming TRAC conference sessions (<http://trac.org.uk/trac-2020/>). They comprise important upcoming inclusive themes and less conventional topics; examples are public archaeology, cultural heritage, gender, Roman Near East, Globalization, and Glocalization, to name a few.

TRAC Moving Forward

Despite the new challenges and the forefront projects and policies that TRAC has so far embarked on, TRAC constantly strives for new goals to improve the current state of research, its accessibility, and to offer an even more equal, inclusive, and safe platform for nurturing ideas between international diverse young scholars and more established researchers.

We will continue to host the annual TRAC conference, however, we will work on implementing solutions that enable it to be more accessible and equitable moving forward. This will hopefully include enabling a hybrid format that will allow a greater diversity of scholarly voices to join. The pandemic has shown the positives of online conferences, in particular enabling participants that previously were excluded from in-person conferences due to a myriad of reasons. A greater balance needs to be implemented that merges the positives of both in-person and online events, which we hope the larger TRAC community can help us develop in the coming years. We will also be introducing a new sustainability policy to be voted on at the next TRAC AGM to help address the unavoidable environmental impact that comes with any in-person event.

We will also continue to run the TRAC webinar series, which thus far has provided a platform for a wide diversity of topics and scholars, many of whom have not previously been involved with TRAC. In combination with our open access efforts with TRAJ, we hope these two initiatives provide one avenue for growing the TRAC community beyond the UK focused conference it began as. We also hope it provides a platform to address the current dominance of Britain and Italy within TRAC research by enabling scholars working on other areas of the Roman empire as well as within related fields to more readily engage with our community.

Taking into account the reflection of TRAJ editorials and Kamash and Garland's articles that have reviewed TRAC progress over the last 30 years of annual conferences, TRAC aims to implement new regulations/actions that address the issues raised. While TRAC has been consistently introspective in terms of editorials and papers written by select scholars engaged with the TRAC community, we hope to widen this approach.

We aim to create greater discussion from the community attending in-person and online events about what is working well with TRAC and what can be improved, and in particular, how we can continue to become more accessible and diverse as an organisation.

In This Issue

The present volume consists of eight articles, and as is common with TRAC they cover a wide range of topics. Two of the articles take an introspective approach to questioning the state of TRAC within the field of Roman archaeology. Zena Kamash, in an expansion of her 2019 TRAC keynote lecture, brings specific attention to the marginal voices that are absent or extremely limited at RAC/TRAC conferences and within the discipline more broadly. This extends not only to the scholars involved in academic discourse, but also to the regions which receive the greatest degree of scholarly attention, notably Britain and Italy. Nicky Garland expands upon this theme in his bibliometric analysis of TRAC's publications over the last 30 years, paying particular attention to how TRAC's diversity can be measured. Notably, both authors offer suggestions for how TRAC can begin to address the issues of diversity and larger discipline biases to positively incite change within TRAC in terms of its in-person events and publication practices.

One of the articles addresses economic practices within Roman Egypt. Paul Kelly questions previous assumptions of Roman Egypt inflation during the third century AD by adopting a quantitative approach. His research indicates the presence of two different markets, one for wheat which corroborates existing views while other commodities saw price increases into the third century.

Three of the articles consider rural and villa life applying extremely different theoretical frameworks. Brain Theng applies social science theory to try and better understand the socio-economic condition of the rural non-elite. Kilian Mallon adopts a taskscape framework to question how mosaics with scenes of labour can inform our understanding of Roman visual narratives and, particularly, the elite power structures that are emphasised through their display. James Dodd considers villas more broadly by taking a spatial perspective to reconsider how the transformation of Roman villas can be assessed during Late Antiquity.

The final two articles consider specific types of Roman material culture. Salvatore Fadda considers how Roman portraiture in combination with literary sources can be used to assess and propose specific medical diagnoses. Elizabeth Webster, alternatively, looks at cultural and technological changes occurring within Britain from the Late Iron Age to the second century AD. Various styles of jewellery are used to try and understand the changes that occurred after the start of the Roman occupation.

All these articles apply an interesting display of different theoretical approaches to address a wide range of topics. Topics, which question and raise issues about the current state and future of TRAC and the field of Roman archaeology. We thank our authors and reviewers for continuing to support TRAC and TRAJ through their scholarly engagement with our community, and for introducing research topics that can help our field improve in terms its research focus but also by furthering an introspective approach to always questing how we can continue to improve as an organization.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

References

- Gardner, A. 2016. Debating Roman imperialism: critique, construct, repeat? In: M. Mandich, T.J. Derrick, S. Gonzalez Sanchez, G. Savani, and E. Zampieri (eds) *TRAC 2015: Proceedings of the 25th Annual theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*. Oxbow: Oxbow Books: 1–14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC2015_1_14
- Garland, N. 2021. TRAC at 30: a bibliometric analysis of the TRAC community. *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 4(1): 1, 1–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/traj.4344>
- González Sánchez, S. and Guglielmi, A. (eds) 2017. *Romans and Barbarians Beyond the Frontiers: Archaeology, Ideology and Identities in the North*. TRAC Themes in Roman Archaeology 1. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Goodwin, K. and Chavarria, S. 2020. Roman archaeology in lockdown. *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 3(1): 10. 1–6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/traj.434>
- Kamash, Z. 2021. Rebalancing Roman archaeology: from disciplinary inertia to decolonial and inclusive action. *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 4(1): 4, 1–41. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/traj.4330>
- Michielin, L., O'Donnell, K. and Astolfi, M. 2019. Increasing international perspectives in Theoretical Roman Archaeology. *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 2(1): 11, 1–7. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/traj.415>
- Office for National Statistics 2012. *2011 Census: population estimates for the United Kingdom, March 2011*. Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/2011censuspopulationestimatesfortheunitedkingdom/2012-12-17> [Last accessed 28 October 2021].
- Parker, A. and McKie, S. (eds) 2018. *Material Approaches to Roman Magic: Occult Objects and Supernatural Substances*. TRAC Themes in Roman Archaeology 2. Oxford: Oxbow Books. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh1dnfj>
- Power, M. 2020. Non-binary and intersex visibility and erasure in Roman archaeology. *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 3(1):10, 1–6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/traj.422>
- Scott, E. 1993. Introduction: TRAC (Theoretical Roman Archaeological Conference) 1991. In: E. Scott (ed.) *Theoretical Roman Archaeology: First Conference Proceedings*. Worldwide Archaeology Series. Aldershot: Avebury/Ashgate: 1–4. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/TRAC1991_1_4
- Selsvold, I. and Webb, L. (eds) 2020. *Beyond the Romans: Posthuman Perspectives in Roman Archaeology*. TRAC Themes in Roman Archaeology 3. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- The Inclusive Archaeology Project. n.d. *The Inclusive Archaeology Project Campaigning for Diversity & Accessibility for Everyone in Archaeology*. Available at <https://inclusivearchaeology.wordpress.com/best-practice-code-of-conduct/> [Last accessed 28 October 2021].

TRAC. 2018a. *Conduct Policy*. Available at <http://trac.org.uk/about/trac-conduct-policy/> [Last accessed 28 October 2021].

TRAC. 2018b. *Private Policy*. Available at <http://trac.org.uk/about/privacy-policy/> [Last accessed 28 October 2021].

United Nations. 2019. *Sustainable Development Goals*. Available at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> [Last accessed 1 November 2021].

