
TRAC Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference

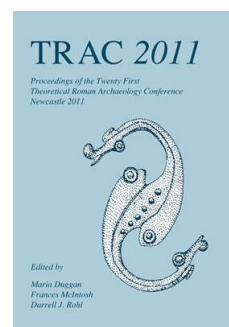
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TRAC 2011

Proceedings of the Twenty First Annual

THEORETICAL ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE

which took place at

The University of Newcastle
14–17 April 2011

edited by

Maria Duggan, Frances McIntosh
and Darrell J. Rohl

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Preface

The twenty-first Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (TRAC) was held in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, between 14–17 April 2011. The conference featured a rich array of sessions—focusing on themes of identity, moved communities and diaspora, gender and masculinity, the Roman army, questions of theory in the works of R.G. Collingwood, Roman trade and consumption, anthropological archaeology approaches to Roman colonialism, and two general sessions loosely focused on matters of landscape and religion—and drew postgraduate, established academic, and professional participants from across the UK, the European continent, the near east, and North America. The result was a lively and diverse extended weekend of discussion, debate, and fun.

While this was the twenty-first occurrence of TRAC, it was also the twentieth anniversary of the very first conference, itself held in Newcastle upon Tyne. For this reason we wanted to include some form of retrospective element to the conference and its proceedings, and inviting Eleanor Scott—TRAC’s founder—provided perspective on how/if TRAC has changed over the years. Our thanks must go to Eleanor, and also to Professors Richard Hingley and Martin Millet, who ensured that Sunday morning’s ‘Retrospective Session’ was lively and useful in evaluating the on-going health of the conference. TRAC is often run by postgraduate students, and is quite rightly seen as a safe environment for postgraduates and early career researchers to present and test ideas, but it also needs to remain relevant in the wider world of Roman studies. Although it has come to provide a valuable opportunity for postgraduates, TRAC is not a ‘postgraduate conference,’ and the continued attendance and input of established archaeologists remain vital to its endurance.

As well as looking back, the retrospective session was meant to prompt us to look forward, to debate how TRAC can continue to be a dynamic arena for new ideas, and how the volume can remain an appealing place for high-quality research to be published. We feel that this can be achieved, at least in part, by continuing the practice of having the papers for the volume reviewed prior to publication. We would also like to suggest that in each volume of TRAC proceedings, there should be a review of the previous volume. The volume is usually reviewed elsewhere, but having an internal review will allow TRAC to become reflective; to learn from mistakes and build on successes. Unfortunately, as this idea came late in the publication timetable, we have been unable to begin this with the current volume, but strongly encourage our successors to offer a critical review of this volume in TRAC 2012.

As others who have organised conferences like TRAC know very well, it is an arduous, involving, yet ultimately very rewarding process. Part of this process includes the selection of papers to include in the programme of sessions. A sign of TRAC’s popularity is the large number of abstracts received from our call for papers. Unfortunately, these exceeded the space and time available for the TRAC 2011 conference, and we had to carefully consider each abstract. A guiding principle in the selection was the degree to which each paper promised to engage with theory; abstracts that were completely devoid of theory were rejected, as we were committed to keeping the ‘theoretical’ emphasis of the ‘Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference.’ In the end, we were very pleased with the standard of papers chosen for the conference.

As with the conference itself, the selection of papers for the present volume was difficult. We received fewer abstracts for this, and were disappointed that some of our favourite papers

from the conference were not submitted, but still had to choose some papers over others. The final decision on which papers to include in the volume was ours alone, but we continued the practice set by our predecessors of having each submitted paper reviewed by experts in the field; thus, we received comments and publication recommendations from eminent Roman archaeologists. These comments—along with our own—were passed along to each author, and papers were improved and narrowed down to those presented here. The volume contains a total of ten papers, plus two specially requested contributions by Eleanor Scott and Lindsay Allason-Jones.

The degree to which each paper in this volume is ‘theoretical’ may become a subject for debate. Some of the papers specifically focus on particular theoretical approaches, and may be considered explicitly theoretical in nature. Most, however, provide more practical application of theory in the context of Roman archaeology than in-depth consideration of the adopted theory itself. In our view, both types of paper provide proper engagement with theory for inclusion in a TRAC volume. These papers, we feel, broadly reflect the tone and themes of the conference. We may not always agree with the ideas or theories put forward in the papers, and they do not all represent definitive findings but, instead, on-going research. TRAC is, however, meant to be a place where new methodologies and theories can be proposed, as long as they are backed up with data, appropriate study, and critical analysis.

Eleanor Scott’s introduction to this volume describes a particular success of TRAC in helping to provide an equal forum for male and female researchers. Her involvement in the conference and the publication has been both beneficial and revealing. In a meeting she casually asked the two female members of the editorial committee whether the papers in the volume were equally split by gender. That it had not occurred to us to query this is clearly testament to the changes in Roman archaeology since she organised the first conference; consideration of the attendance and participation at the recent TRAC conferences reveals its continuing egalitarian nature. Additionally, whilst the gender split in the 2012 Roman Archaeology Conference might not be exactly equal, it reflects the influence TRAC has had on the composition of ‘mainstream’ Roman research.

Quite unintentionally, the papers presented at TRAC 2011, and those published in the volume, were from a roughly equal number of male and female researchers. However, the review panel for the volume was predominantly made up of male academics. This probably reflects inequalities in the structure of academia more than lingering sexism in the discipline, but also suggests that it might take time for the influence of TRAC to be reflected in the Roman archaeology ‘establishment.’ Scott’s introduction to the first proceedings described how female scholars who attempted to remain in Roman archaeology received ‘no patronage, but have been merely patronised.’ That this is no longer the case is—in part—a product of twenty-one years of TRAC.

Following Scott’s introduction, **Lindsay Allason-Jones** provides a summary of her exceptional plenary lecture, considering the importance of theory and TRAC’s contribution to Roman archaeology, with useful advice and an important call for the current TRAC generation to move forward with boldness. The ten papers then begin with **Stephen Leach**, who considers the ideas of British philosopher and historian R.G. Collingwood to identify possible seeds of contemporary archaeological theory. **Darrell J. Rohl** introduces the ancient tradition of chorography, identifying its theoretical foundations and considering its potential for new approaches to archaeologies of place. **Karim Mata** brings anthropological archaeology perspectives to bear on Roman colonialism and globalisation in the lower Rhineland. **Astrid Van Oyen** considers the potential of actor-network-theory in archaeology, using the example

of analysis of knowledge systems in *terra sigillata* production. **Meike Weber** focuses on the fine details and potters' stamps of samian ware to consider questions of production and consumer choice in the Roman economy. **Edward Biddulph** raises the Darwinian evolution-inspired memetics to consider the role of cultural evolution in Roman funerary traditions. **Nicky Garland** uses the evidence from Chichester and its surroundings to consider the hybrid functional/social/symbolic significance of constructed boundaries in the landscapes of the Late Iron Age-Roman transition period of Britain. **Elizabeth M. Greene** considers the social role of women on military frontiers through a cross-cultural comparison of Sulpicia Lepidina and Elizabeth Custer. **Carol van Driel-Murray** challenges the view of local recruitment in the Roman army, highlighting the evidence for extreme mobility among Batavian units. The volume ends with **Michael Mulryan**, who rethinks the map and movement networks of late antique and early medieval Rome, arguing that the establishment of early Christian devotional pathways stem from earlier pagan traditions. These papers cover a broad range of topics, all of which are relevant to current work in Roman archaeology.

To conclude, we would like to offer thanks to all those members of the TRAC 2011 organising committee, and to all the students and volunteers who helped to make the conference a success. Special thanks to Professor Ian Haynes, Dr. Jane Webster, Dr. Kevin Greene, Lindsay Allason-Jones, and the members of the TRAC Standing Committee for their support, advice, and assistance throughout the conference and editorial process. Thanks to all of our anonymous reviewers, whose expertise was essential in helping us with final paper selection and in helping individual authors strengthen the papers. We also thank Oxbow Books for continuing to support TRAC through the publication of our proceedings, and especially thank our individual authors for their stimulating ideas and research.

Maria Duggan, Frances McIntosh, and Darrell J. Rohl