

# Introduction

Alice Landskron – Mariarosaria Barbera

Manifold evidence of trade and commerce has come to light in Ostia, such as inscriptions, images on mosaics, reliefs, etc. Epigraphic evidence and images provide information about many club houses and guilds, as well as private financing of public buildings such as baths, sanctuaries, and public gathering places. The mosaics of the Piazzale delle Corporazioni, the court of the guilds, are situated in the *area sacra*. This complex provides unique and comprehensive information regarding economic growth and trade in the harbour town and, further afield, in Rome. The evidence is a unique source of information for the organization of commerce and trade in Ostia, highlighting its importance as a hub city. This area was intended as a place of interaction for both economic and sacred events.

Furthermore, the numerous archaeological and artistic remains feature different kinds of work and spatial areas in which different occupations were practiced. Together, they provide excellent information about how society in Ostia and beyond reacted to the demand for craft and trade, and how such commerce was represented both communally and individually. Researchers have recognized in this a new social class that developed in Roman society and furthermore played a significant role in society, with proud individuals who were well-accepted as skilled craftsmen and professionals. Numerous guilds and guild houses were established in Ostia since early Imperial times. Often, *liberti* became affiliated with guilds and *collegia* in order to enhance and strengthen their social prestige. There is epigraphic evidence for about 60 *collegia* in the Imperial period, most of them situated along the main streets.

The aim of the panel contributions is to discuss what kinds of trade and commerce are represented in written and visual sources and what information exists about the people involved in the economic processes of production, and especially of distribution, in Ostia.

The papers deal with contributions to visualizations as well as epigraphic evidence in the context of trade and commerce in Ostia, and moreover with the individuals involved in these occupations. Furthermore, the contributions focus on forms of representation of merchandising, the function of guilds or infrastructural facilities. In addition, the contributions address questions regarding the value of specific kinds of trade and commerce within Ostian society, as well as the social status and origin of the individuals.

First, Simone Ciambelli discusses the guilds, the *collegia* and the *collegiati* in Ostia and their social status. Next, Ghislaine van der Ploeg investigates migration in the context of trade and how these immigrants were perceived and accepted, and ultimately commemorated in Ostian society. Paola Baldassarri discusses evidence of artistic relationships between Rome, Ostia, and Spain using the example of the decoration in the Roman villa below the Palazzo Valentini in Rome. Ria Berg concentrates on the iconography of the “omnipresent” *modius* as a standard unit for grain in the city of Ostia and records

a large number of images in floor mosaics, reliefs, and the like. Finally, Marcello Turci investigates the infrastructure of Ostia and the coastal region, focussing on the baths, in particular those of the Porta Marina (compare also: A. Landskron – C. Tempesta [eds.], *Trade and Commerce in the Harbour Town of Ostia*, *Keryx* 7 [Graz 2020]).