
This huge volume is the summation of a life-long study on the Oppius-Esquiline in Rome, an area devastated archaeologically at the end of the 19th century, when building houses for the new employees of the young Italian nation was booming business and archaeologists like Rodolfo Lanciani were not able to keep pace with the workmen in recording structures and objects subject to destruction. The former Superintendent of the Communal Archaeological Service of Rome and a great scholar on Roman topography, E. La Rocca, sketches Häuber’s Werdegang, beginning with a PhD thesis on the topic in 1986 (published in 1991) and followed by many contributions (see bibliography, pp. 907-909). Over the last years, the FORTVNA project, executed in collaboration with Franz Xaver Schütz, has enriched the research with the production of careful maps. Häuber explains her work as “holistic”, while taking into account many scholarly disciplines next to archaeology and art history. She hopes to recontextualize old finds from this area by analyzing the potential of texts and maps (pp. 1-27). In the methodological introduction the making of these maps is meticulously explained. The maps are not printed in the volume but can be consulted on a DVD, which is not very practical, when one has no electronic device at hand and considering the rapid outdated of this device.

The book is articulated into two parts: A (with three chapters and ten appendices) being dedicated to the topography, especially of the Horti Maecenatis and some temples, B (with 35 chapters numbered B1 etc.) to selected locations and finds. Two brief contributions on epigraphic matters by E. Gautier di Confiengo and D. ValenTino conclude this huge study. There are indices of ancient sources, inscriptions and selected finds, while the author also provides explanations of the plans in a separate section. The enormous bibliography counts 62 pages (pp. 883-945).

The book has a complicated structure and repeats or picks up identical topics at different places. Despite the cross references and repetitions of arguments the reasoning is no easy reading. After perusing the whole book, I think that it is advisable to read the chapters A I-III and their appendices in combination with B1-35, that is, to integrate the second part into the reasoning of the first part at the moments a cross reference is given. Unfortunately, there is no topographical index (but, happily, there are good internal cross references), so that it is not easy for a reader who cannot consult all 900 pages, to find observations on the specific monument she or he is looking for. Of course the four monuments listed in the subtitle are the main foci, but a lot more comes to the fore. One would like a brief overview of the book’s structure, and a summary of the
results (but see p. 10 and pp. 228-237). It is clear that the long working process as well as the enormous amount of data to be taken into account have left their traces.

The area studied comprises the former properties of Maecenas known as the Horti Maecenatis, more or less circumscribed by the eastern half of the Oppius and Esquiline, between Via Labicana in the south and Via Napoleone III in the north, and Domus Aurea in the West and Via F. Filiberto in the East (see fig. 23). The author does not define a time frame, but it is clear that the chronological focus lies on the time of Augustus and subsequent phases. Some late-antique phases are discussed as well. There is an ample discussion of the temple of Fortuna Virgo (pp. 130-134 and B11-12). This cult, later equal to that of Minerva Medica, was founded by Servius Tullius, and included ritual baths of brides before marriage. In this context, Häuber refuses to see in the 'Venus Esquilina' a portrait of Cleopatra, and interprets her as a bride preparing for a ritual bath during the festivities for Venus Verticordia or, better and in accordance with the topography, Fortuna Virgo. The attractive point is that some other statues of young women (B29, figs 19-20) and the Knucklebone player (fig. 107) stem from this area and might also refer to the girls' passage to adulthood. She dates the Venus to the Antonine period on the basis of various stylistic criteria, which do not convince me. Personally, I see a Claudian-Vesuvian treatment of folds and eyes (cfr. p. 746 note 16). A learned but not entirely relevant section is dedicated to the motif of diadoumenoi, nudity, and the meaning of these aspects.

From smaller and larger 'bits' Häuber is able to reconstruct a huge Iseum on the Oppius (the area was called 'Iis et Serapis' and the monument was the largest Iseum in town, p. 228), including the 'Porticus with piscina' (AI.1), the structures in the Via Pasquale Villari, Vigna Reinach, etc. It was located within the pomerium and probably founded by Nero (pp. 6, 184, 230, and AI.6: maybe Neronian). Various Egyptian and egyptianizing columns (granite, coloured marbles), terracotta cult lamps, statues (e.g. those described in Appendix I, III, B3) were found there from the Renaissance onwards. It is not the same as the Iseum Metellinum individualized by some scholars in Via Pasquale Villari. According to Häuber, these remains are of the Temple of Minerva Medica (p. 110), her second main monument, whereas the Iseum Metellinum would lay on the Caelius (p. 88; AI.5). The relief of the Tomb of the Haterii showing buildings made by this family, includes, as we know, the Arcus ad Isis under which stands a large statue of Minerva. Partly on the basis of other discussions as well as her own detective work, Häuber succeeds in interpreting this image as the entrance to this temple complex from the south (Via Labicana), where it replaced the Porta Querquetulana (cf. p. 790). The statue within the central arch might be connected with that of fig. 118, to be seen as a synnaeos theos of Isis (B31-32), whereas Isis (right) and Osiris (left) stand in the secondary arches (fig. 117A, Appendix VIII). The 'Porticus with Piscina' dates to the era of Commodus, while other elements are much older (e.g. a round Republican nymphaeum inter-

preted as the Fons Muscosus, pp. 75, 79). The Forum of Petronius Maximus came on top of the 'Porticus with Piscina' and possibly the Vigna Reinach in 443-445 (pp. 98, 106) and obliterated pagan remains. Isis' husband and principal Egyptian deity Osiris was probably venerated in the same Iseum. A peculiar statue (fig. 111; B19) represents him as chronokrator, master of time, with a large snake winding up around the lower part of Osiris' body symbolizing Aion.

Drawings of a shoreline railing from the Flavian period (seen, in accordance with other scholars as Neronian by Häuber, p. 155, fig. 7) iconographically refer to the cult of Isis. Häuber misses important clues as to the Isis cult in these images, but she does not take into account that the drawing only presents half of the ceiling, with the now protruding coffers as the central part. Therefore, it originally might contain many more allusions to the cult. So the absence of Serapis (p. 511) does not say that he was not venerated in the complex at that time.

In B16 Häuber tries to reconstruct the cult statue of Isis, parting from a marble base (fig. 9A). Its reliiefs include the virtues of Fortuna and show Roman rather than Egyptian features. In her very learned analysis of the iconography of the reliefs, however, the reader will not find a proof or (at least) plausible hint to the veracity of this hypothesis.

In AII.6 Häuber discusses various female deities venerated next to Minerva and Isis, such as Dea Syria, Astarte and other fertility goddesses. Hitherto Dea Syria was mainly known from a sanctuary in Trastevere. The cult might have been founded by Nero, in the area east from the eastern border of his Golden House properties. Each figure gets its share based on information from various sources, so that the main line of reasoning is heavily obscured by the innumerable details given. AII.6 is dedicated to 'less proven' hypotheses, especially to the famous 'Venus Esquilina' and the Commodus flanked by two Tritons. Both were found hidden on purpose. The Commodus bust was a votive offering and 'Andachtsbild' (p. 227; B25) erected by Septimius Severus. Therefore, it was no prey of what we call damnatio memoriae as is usually thought. The statues must have had large parts of gilding (there is a very long section on gold and gilding). The apples of the Hesperides should form a symbol of divinization, being objects specific of the gods and not merely one of Hercules' deeds. The chapter gives an exhaustive analysis of all constituents (Amazons, globe, Hercules etc.), which I cannot summarize here. Commodus' commitment with Serapis was known from Alexandria and a huge head of this god might have been part of a statue erected by him in the same Iseum on the Oppian Hill (fig. 10, p. 227). All these statues formed part of the statuary adornment of the Iseum (p. 199) of which many pieces disappeared from Rome towards collections in the USA and northern Europe (e.g. 'Esquiline Group', fig. 67, Copenhagen). Häüber tells us about the scandalous art dealing by men like Lanciani, Paul Arndt and Wolfgang Helfig, which was possible. Since the objects belonged to the huge private properties of a certain Mrs Field along nowadays Via Poliziano and Via Merulana, among which Palazzo Field, nowadays
Palazzo Brancaccio (pp. 207-228). A headless marble statue of a River god (fig. 80A; A II.4; B17) might stem from the pediment of the Minerva temple.

Häuber also reconstructs the track of the Servian Wall at the eastern side of the city of Rome, between the Auditorium of Mæcenas’ stretch, along the former Via Curva, and down to the Caelius (map 3). She relies on a 1873 report (p. 111-138; discussed in conjunction with the location of various other monuments; Appendix II; cf. fig. 23 and map 17) and improves previous scholarship, especially that of Funk’s studies. Near the Via Curva, she reconstructs the House of Propertius.

The location of the highly important Fagutal is a hotly debated issue. Häuber summarizes the findings and spots it in the area of the Sette Sale, the highest point of the Oppius, where she also locates the Turris Mæcenaatis (Appendix V). Consequently, there were other prestigious monuments here like the heroon of Servius Tullius and the figilinae, before Mæcenas established his horti in or briefly after 38 (p. 329). Clay pits (figilinae), trees (fagus, birch, from the figutulat) and water conduits provided all material necessary for the production of terracotta objects, both architectural and statuary, during the Republican era.

The infamous puticuli or Republican mass graves were allegedly found throughout the area studied, but Häuber makes clear that part of the deep cavities encountered belonged to watering systems of gardens. She has good reasons to argue that vine yards already existed in Mæcenas’ gardens, and we may refer to their existence in Nero’s Golden House (p. 335). Still, Fronto owned them in the 2nd century. That does not mean that there were no graveyards; the find of ceramics allows for the recognition of tombs from the 6th century BC onwards. Mæcenas’ main domus was in the area of the Auditorium, which later became a property of Tiberius. Häuber suggests that his ancestors were active in the terracotta production, having their ‘industries’ here and in Arrezzo (Appendix X).

For many readers the long-winding discussions are no easy reading, since they literally lose their path among the thicket of the hypotheses put forward. These hypotheses show the fascination, but also the futility of some of these aspects of topographia romana, a field that has reached a high level, but also leads to nonsensical propositions and ideas, relying on the positivistic reading of ancient sources and (scarce) understudied archaeological remains. Of course, I do not want to blame the author, but signal a difficulty of this field of studies.

Häuber’s interest in sculpture is clearly visible on almost all pages and has led to fascinating reconstructions of find spots (and hence antique contexts) and new interpretations and dating proposals of various famous master pieces. Many sculptures were found in ‘statue walls’, viz. compositions of spolia in late-antique or later constructions. Among them stand out pieces like an Aphrodite head of the type ‘Hera Borghese’ and a copy of the Arles Aphrodite (B2, figs 61 and 77a), discussed as alternatives of Isis. Even the Augustus Labicana, found not far from it, might stem from the temple’s properties (pp. 503-504). Cult statues include the colossal Serapis head and Cerberus, huge copies of prototypes created under Commodus (B3, B26, B28, figs 10-11). Under Commodus would have been invented the Serapis type with the seated Cerberus, but this cannot be substantiated.

Three chapters (B22-24) are dedicated to a series of statues with inscribed bases in Copenhagen, known as the ‘Esquilina Group’ (figs 67-73). After a discussion of their provenance, which is important for the context, Häuber tackles the problem of chronology. She rejects suggestions about import from Aphrodisias in the early 4th century AD and connects the high-quality statues with Septimius Severus and his Ludi Sacelli of AD 204 or some other event during his empire. There must have been at least eighteen figures (p. 670, inscriptions and fragments lost; five figures exposed). They might have adorned the porticus of the Iseum (so Lanciani and Häuber), or, as suggested by Mette Møltesen and other scholars, a domus on top of the Sette Sale (pp. 670-672).

Dionysus and Hercules are his tutelary gods, present in the group (pp. 679-680). As to a colossal head of Isis-Aphroditia-Astarte (B4, fig. 2) Häuber is right in dismissing the identification as Cleopatra, and dates it to the Hellenistic era. She warns us for circular reasoning about chronology and function: since it was in the Iseum of the Oppius and had a dorsal pillar, it should be Egyptian rather than Roman. However, I cannot follow her in retusing a Roman date because of the dorsal pillar, which was imitated in Roman egyptianizing sculpture rather frequently. So, the question of the date is not as easily settled as we may wish.

The reconstruction of the original location of the Laocoon in the House of Titus by Volpe and Parisi (BCom 111, 2009 [2010], 81-109) follows Häuber’s work on the group (see B17) and has led to a chain of thoughts connected with this presumably Augustan master piece and other statues belonging to the same area which for her is a building within the Gardens of Mæcenas. Chapter B17 argues that the Laocoon, the pavonazzetto Marsyas, a baroque portrait of Homer and a head of a Centaur were Augustan creations in a baroque style (figs 15, 81-84) made by the same artists who created the statue groups in Sperlonga. On the basis of her previous research and other studies she demonstrates that these statues decorated in an almost royal (Alexandrinian) way Mæcenas’ properties. Laocoön is represented as a priest of Apollo with a laurel wreath (fig. 84b), which would imply according to Häuber a fabrication before Vergil’s conception of Laocoon as a priest of Neptune. Therefore, we should date him to 38-30 and see him as a reference to the Trojan mythology which was in favour during the Augustan era. Although this is plausible, this identity is no definitive argument, because Vergil did not cancel previous or other interpretations. Another famous work is the black ‘fisher man’ in the Louvre (figs 93-94), found before 1594 (p. 538) on the Oppius. Häuber interprets the figure as a votive offering in the sanctuary of the Querquetulanae Virae (next to that of Minerva Media / Fortuna Virgo and the Fons Muscosus); he might represent a person who found health by means of a water cure in these nymphs’ realm. Also well-known are the Venus Medici and the Germanicus or Marcellus in the Louvre discussed in B20 (figs 112-113). The Venus was
found in the third quarter of the 16th century near the Baths of Trajan. The man with the tortoise portrayed as a Hermes Logios stems from the Montalto collection, exposed on the Esquiline. Both have signatures by Kleomenos (p. 646) - two different sculptors! - and are Neo-Attic works from the Augustan era. Next to the Venus the already mentioned Osiris chronokrator (fign. 111A-B; Appendix IX; B19) came to light. Chapter B18 is dedicated to a relief depicting an egyptianizing sanctuary (fig. 120), which is seen as a possible reflection of the Iseum on the Oppius.

The Augustan painting known as the Aldobrandini Wedding is interpreted as the future partners Helena and Paris in the palace of Menelaos (fig. 156; B30). Aphrodite persuades the not so young Helen to give her love to the Trojan prince. Häuber cautiously proposes a connection with the wedding of Maecenas with Terentia (p. 782), metaphorically set into a Trojan ambience to please the Augustan fashion of the day. Here I think there are no proofs or even indications to assess that. Even if we know the original findspot, we cannot say anything about the original circumstances and setting of the frieze which formed a small part of a grander decoration only.

Finally, a large amount of semiprecious stones and gilded bronze ornament, known from previous publications, is ascribed to the residence of Maecenas, who was a great lover of gems (Chapter B34). This would imply that they are much older than usually believed and, therefore require a reassessment of interior decoration in the late 1st century BC.

This lengthy, but in respect to the topic still brief review does not do justice to all problems raised by Häuber, but wants to point out the richness of the book. That it is no easy reading (both physically and mentally) should not prevent scholars interested in Roman topography from studying it. It is a highly recommended work that should find a place, despite the high price, in every serious Rome-oriented library.

Eric M. Moormann


This book examines the genesis, development, and use of subterranean tombs which are commonly known as columbaria, since they contain dovecot-like niches for the installment of cinerary urns. The name is ancient, but it is not entirely clear whether it really describes this specific class of tomb buildings, which is rather restricted to the suburbs of Rome (for Ostia, Puteoli, and some other sites, see pp. 146-152). Borbonus makes clear that subterranean columbaria are an Augustan phenomenon as can be concluded from chronological indications at hand in the monuments and their contents. They could remain in use until the 2nd century A.D., although visitors of later date sometimes left objects like lamps. The columbaria fascinated renaissance and baroque scholars and artists as dramatic monuments of the glorious Roman past which interest has produced a series of beautiful and sometimes very accurate documentaries. Old scholars already made suggestions as to the genesis of the tombs and, as Borbonus makes clear, these hypotheses are so tenacious that they still dominate up to now. The 35 tombs studied in this monograph (Catalog, pp. 163-208) were mainly used by freedmen and slaves and this social delimitations leads to the question whether these people belonged to large families like those of the emperor (see nicknames like 'Columbarium of Livia') or were erected by collegia of people having limited financial means who brought together money for the realization of their ultimate resting places. A peculiarity in comparison with the existing practice is the invisibility of these monuments sub divo: their prestige, if there was a matter of prestige, should be sought in other aspects than external monumentality. The introduction addresses these and other questions and clearly opens the contents of the book to the readers.

Chapter 1 contains a thorough analysis of previous studies and interpretations, starting as early as the 15th century (Pirro Ligorio), and comes to the conclusion that all old proposals contain plausible interpretations, such as the importance of economy, the composition of the tombs' inhabitants, and demography as factors that led to their construction, but Borbonus assesses all single arguments. This leads to a valuable study of this limited, but important class of funerary monuments of the Augustan era. Chapter 2 discusses the tombs' topography and architecture. They were situated along Graberstraßen, and accessible from outside via flights of steps. The interior of a columbarium clearly was much more important than the exterior, the latter being barely visible. Borbonus compares the apparent want of intimacy and closure with the architecture of Augustan closed constructions like the porticus Livia. The interior wanted to strengthen the 'burial collective' (p. 53). Looking for predecessors, Borbonus makes an excursion throughout the Roman Empire and concludes that the subterranean tombs of Alexandria and Rhodes are the best candidates. Immigrants could have brought the custom to Rome in the late 1st century B.C. This is plausible, but firm evidence unfortunately lacks. We do not know, for instance, whether members of these specific groups of immigrants were the first and/or principal users of the tombs.

In Chapter 3, Borbonus analyses the use of the columbaria, which provided identical resting places for the deceased only marked by brief epitaphs. Gradually, the tomb chambers got a more varied appearance by the addition of decorations, the extension of niches and the creation of larger funerary monuments like altars and marble urns. This process probably started in the second quarter of the 1st century AD and implied a certain degree of competition. Good - and well analyzed - examples are the Columbarium Codini 1 and 3, and the Columbarium of Pomponius Hylas (see illustration on the dust jacket of the book). Simultaneously, new columbaria were constructed sub divo, so that the play of public display in the public domain reached this class of users in the late 1st century.

The epigraphic habits are studied in Chapter 4. Here the advantage of the large number of inscriptions is tem-