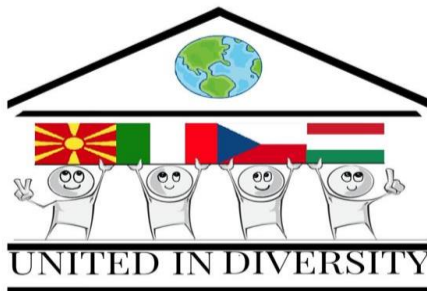




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PAST AND FUTURE OF
OSTIA ANTICA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

OSTIA ANTICA

Ostia Antica is a large archaeological site that was the harbour city of ancient Rome, which is approximately 30 kilometres northeast of the site. "Ostia" in Latin means "mouth". At the mouth of the River Tiber, Ostia was Rome's seaport, but, due to silting, the site now lies 3 kilometres from the sea. The site is well known for the excellent preservation of its ancient buildings and magnificent frescoes.

Origins

Ostia was, perhaps, Rome's first colony. Ostia was said to have been founded by Ancus Marcius, the fourth king of Rome, in the 7th century BC. A later inscription refers to the event: "Ancus Marcius, the fourth of the kings from Romulus after the founding of the city founded this first colony." However the most ancient archaeological remains so far discovered are no older than the 4th century BC.. The most ancient buildings currently visible are from the 3rd century BC, notably the Castrum ; of a slightly later date is the Capitolium. The opus quadratum of the walls of the original castrum at Ostia provide important evidence for the building techniques that were employed in Roman urbanisation during the period of the Middle Republic.

The city of Ostia was so important that a road was built to connect it to the centre of Rome, Via Ostiense. Entering the city, the main road, Decumanus, connects all the most important administrative and religious building. The paved road in Roman Basolato can still be trodden today, under the shade of huge pinetrees, from Porta Roman to Porta Marina.

It contained all the amenities desirable in a Roman city: the Forum for commercial trades, the Baths and a Theatre for entertainments, large block of flats and private villas, a variety of cult monuments and a large quantities of shops and taverns.



Sacking by pirates

In 68 BC, the town was sacked by pirates. During the sacking, the port was set on fire, the consular war fleet was destroyed, and two prominent senators were kidnapped. This attack caused such panic in Rome that Pompey Magnus arranged for the tribune Aulus Gabinius to rise in the Roman Forum and propose a law, the Lex Gabinia, to allow Pompey to raise an army and destroy the pirates. Within a year, the pirates had been defeated.

The town was then re-built, and provided with protective walls by the statesman and orator Marcus Tullius Cicero

Imperial Ostia

The town was further developed during the first century AD under the influence of Tiberius, who ordered the building of the town's first Forum. The town was also soon enriched by the construction of a new harbour on the northern mouths of the Tiber. The new harbour, called Portus from the Latin for "harbour," was excavated from the ground at the orders of the

emperor Claudius. This harbour became silted up and needed to be supplemented later by a harbour built by Trajan, finished in the year AD 113; it has a hexagonal form, in order to reduce the erosive forces of the waves. This took business away from Ostia itself and started its commercial decline..

Ostia itself was provided with all the services a town of the time could require; in particular, a famous lighthouse. Ostia contained the earliest post-diaspora house-synagogue yet identified, an insula refitted as a synagogue in the late second century; it created a stir when it was unearthed in 1960-61. By 1954 eighteen mithraea had also been discovered: The Mithras religion had his largest following among the working population that were the majority of this port town. Archaeologists also discovered the public latrinas, organized for collective use as a series of seats that allow us to imagine today that the function was also a social moment. In addition, Ostia had a large theatre, many public baths, numerous taverns and inns, and a firemen service. .

Trajan too, ordered the building of another harbour, again pointing towards the north. It must be remembered that at a relatively short distance, there was also the harbour of Civitavecchia (Civitas Vetera).



Huge amphoras used to keep goods in the rich storehouses

Ostia's decadence

Ostia grew to 50,000 inhabitants in the 2nd century, reaching a peak of some 75,000 inhabitants in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. In time, naval activities became focused on Portus instead. A slow decadence began in the late Roman era around the time of Constantine I, with the town ceasing to be an active port and instead becoming a popular country retreat for rich aristocrats from Rome itself.

The decaying conditions of the city were mentioned by St. Augustine when he passed there in the late 4th century. With the end of the Roman Empire, Ostia fell slowly into decay, and was finally abandoned in the 9th century due to the repeated invasions and sackings by Arab pirates, including the Battle of Ostia, a naval battle in 849 between Christian and Saracens; the remaining inhabitants moved to Gregoriopolis..

In the Middle Ages, bricks from buildings in Ostia were used for several other occasions. The Leaning Tower of Pisa was entirely built of material originally belonging to Ostia.

A "local sacking" was carried out by baroque architects, who used the remains as a sort of marble storehouse for the palazzi they were building in Rome.. Soon after, foreign explorers came in search of ancient statues and objects.

Excavation and Restoration

Pope Gregory IV tried to create a new town in the area (*Gregoriopoli*) but the results were not inspiring and the area was abandoned due to lack of use and poor health conditions in the area.

Only in the XIX Century there was some interest from the Vatican State over this territory, at the time of Pius VII and then thanks to the Regno d'Italia. In 1909 the excavation and restoration works started, thanks to Guido Calza.

Ostia Antica in Modern Times

A new interest was shown at the time of the Universal Exposition of Rome, which had to take place in 1942: Mussolini wanted Rome to have a port and to be connected to the sea, so he ordered restoration works together with the building of a new road connecting the centre of Rome to the Tyrrhenian Sea, Via Cristoforo Colombo. Under Mussolini massive excavations were undertaken from 1938 to 1942

The first volume of the official series Scavi di Ostia appeared in 1954; and research and excavations continue today. It has been estimated that only two thirds of the ancient town have currently been brought to light.



Mussolini visiting the excavation site.

The Insulae

Ostia's "insulae", the equivalent of our blocks of flats.

The City was also equipped with public toilets, endowed with running water and provided also a meeting point for a pleasurable chat among friends....

Even if it was situated inside of the "Caseggiato dei Triclini" it was used as a latrine for public use. There were about 20 seats and 2 mills: the first one, situated under the seats, was used to drain out the dirty water; in the second one, instead, flowed a miscellaneous of water and vinegar the ancient Romans used to clean themselves.



The Capitolium

The main sacred building of Ostia, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, was built in 120 A.D. It is composed by imposing staircase and podium entirely made of bricks, at the bottom, there is a podium reserved for statues of worship. What has come to the

present day is only the Capitolium's skeleton: originally it was covered with marble which, since the medieval period has been gradually removed to be used for newer buildings

The synagogue

It is one of the oldest synagogues in the world, the oldest synagogue in Europe and the oldest mainstream Jewish synagogue yet uncovered outside Israel. The synagogue building dates from the reign of Claudius and continued in use as a synagogue into the 5th century AD.



The Forum

The centre of Ostia was the Forum where the main buildings of the town were located. It was situated at the junction between Decumanus Maximus and Cardo Maximus, the two main streets. Emperor Tiberius built a temple dedicated to Rome and Augustus in its southern



part, but most of the other buildings and the overall design of the Forum are dated first half of the 2nd century A.D. during the reigns of Emperor Trajan, Hadrian and Antoninus Pius.

The Theatre

The theatre has been built by Emperor Augustus so it's a very old building and with "Piazzale delle Corporazioni" formed a magnificent complex. At the end of the 2nd century Commodus rebuilt the theatre improving its capacity to 4000 spectators. At the end of the 4th century was erected a statue of Rome whose pedestal is still visible.



It follows the Roman architecture model: it is self-standing and surrounded by huge walls. The stage is lower than the seatings. Actors used to wear high heeled shoes to seem taller and masks to amplify their voices and to perform different roles. Women were not allowed on stage, so all parts were played by men.

The Tabernae

Ostia was a rich city, full of shops and wineries. This is a Taberna, where people could stop to eat and drink food, which was kept warm with an intelligent system of hidden fires.



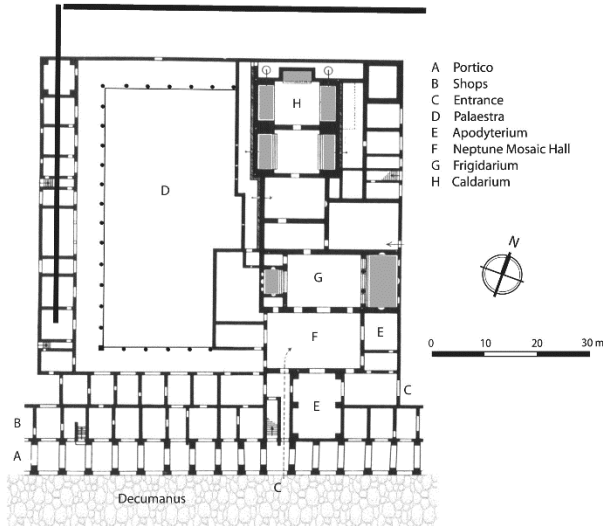
The Fishmonger's Shop with a tank for fish

The Termopolium: a shop selling warm food and drink. On the wall a painting showing poultry and fruit on offer



The Baths Of Neptune

They were built in 239 AD by Emperor Hadrian. According to the typical structure of Roman Baths, they contained cold, lukewarm and hot water tanks, a gym, a library, a walking area, changing rooms, massage rooms



One of the most grandiose mosaics of Ostia Antica , in a space of 28X22 metres, it portrays the triumph of Neptune, riding 4 horses.

What future for Ostia Antica?

This grandiose, unique archaeological site is extremely fragile, under continuous danger of damage from extreme weather conditions and the pressure of large numbers of visits.

From 2017 a total of 187 buildings in Ostia Antica have been restored and opened to visitors, but much is still to be done.

The personnel destined to care for the monuments and the park surrounding them is inadequate and this often results in periods of closure to overcome problems due to heavy rains and falling of branches from the old trees.

The museum, which stores the most precious artifacts found in the excavation process, is old and ill-kept, thus needing a complete restyling and the creation of interactive and audiovisual materials to entertain the many schools from all over the world visiting it every year.

Something has been done, though, in the field of social communication, with the opening of a rich website <https://www.ostiaantica.beniculturali.it/>, the organization of free Sunday visits and of a variety of cultural events.

In July 2019 an official panel of experts and political personalities has been formed to prepare and support the candidature of the Ancient City of Ostia as UNESCO World Heritage Site. The candidature has also been largely supported by illustrious art critics such as Vittorio Sgarbi.

We all support the candidature of Ostia Antica as UNESCO World Heritage Site and we hope to see the UNESCO logo in our archaeological area.

