When the idea for Ancient History Magazine was born, and when we asked some friends what they thought about it, their response was often “Another magazine on the ancient world? Aren’t there enough of those?”

The answer is no. There are popular magazines about the Classics and about archaeology. There are magazines about Greece and Rome. There are magazines about the ancient Near East. We love them all, and we love them sincerely, but we wanted a magazine devoted to the ancient world as a whole.

That is quite a lot of ground to cover. Every issue will therefore concentrate on one specific theme, which we’ll look at from different points of view, with contributions from various disciplines dealing with the ancient world. The first paper issue will be about voyages of discovery: Hanno’s fight with gorillas, the circumnavigation of Africa by Phoenician seafarers, Roman traders along the Amber Road, and so on.

We think it will work. After all, Ancient History Magazine’s sibling Ancient Warfare has also found an audience of casual but informed readers, who prefer something more interesting than what they can readily find on the internet. We will offer them the latest in academic research (without pedantic footnotism) and combinations of various strands of scholarship. Original artwork by talented illustrators will show you what the world looked like when civilization started. You’ll like it.

This digital sample issue is meant to give you an idea of what we intend to make and we invite you to send us your comments at editor@ancienthistorymagazine.com. The next step is launching a fundraising campaign (via kickstarter.com) to raise the money needed to produce a full issue in print. You will read more about it in the coming few weeks. Visit our website at www.ancienthistorymagazine.com to learn more. On the website, you can also subscribe to our newsletter in order to stay abreast of the latest developments.

Josho Brouwers & Jona Lendering
FROM THE MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES IN LEIDEN

A GREEK IN EGYPT

If you stroll through the Egyptian department on the ground floor or the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Netherlands, you will at some point run across the impressive sarcophagus shown on this page. It looks entirely Egyptian. But the inscription on the lid makes clear that this coffin belonged to a man with Greek parents.

By Josho Brouwers

The sarcophagus, which dates to around 600 BC, belonged to a man called Wahibreemakhet (‘Wahibre is the horizon’), who had been mummified and buried in the Egyptian manner. His name refers to the Egyptian king Psamtik I, whose throne name was Wahibre.

What were Greeks doing in Egypt? Mycenaean Greeks may have visited Egypt during the Bronze Age (before 1200 BC). In the eighth century BC, Greeks from Euboea founded a trading post, Al-Mina, in northern Syria. Greeks engaged in trade with the empires of the ancient Near East and some entered into military service there as mercenaries.

The most famous story involves the Egyptian king, Psamtik I (r. 664–610 BC), the founder of the 26th or Saite Dynasty. At the time of his accession, Egypt was under the influence of the Assyrian Empire. He consulted an Oracle who told him to put his faith in men of bronze, which he found a puzzling piece of advice. Herodotus then tells us what happened next (Hdt. 2.152): “When no long time had elapsed, stress of weather compelled some Ionians and Carians (...) to bear away to Egypt; and when they had disembarked and were clad in brazen armour, an Egyptian, who had never before seen men clad in brass, went to Psamtik, and told him that men of brass, having arrived from the sea, were ravaging the plains.”

The Egyptian King immediately went to meet up with these prophesied Ionian and Carian raiders and hired them as mercenaries. They were to prove instrumental in asserting Egyptian sovereignty and removing Assyria as a decisive influence on Egyptian internal politics. Foreign and especially Greek mercenaries would form the core of the Egyptian army from now on.

This was the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship between Greece and Egypt. Greeks were eventually allowed to settle at Naucratis, an important centre for trade and (cultural) exchange. The expensive sarcophagus of Wahibreemakhet shows that at least some Greek families were able to flourish in Egypt.

Dr Josho Brouwers is the editor of Ancient Warfare magazine.

FURTHER READING


The sarcophagus of Wahibreemakhet is absolutely massive, measuring 230cm (7.5 feet) tall and is made entirely from basalt.

© Josho Brouwers
Today the brick-faced complex of Trajan’s Markets, home to curious tourists and idle cats lounging under the Italian sun, offers a peaceful escape from the hurried commotion of modern Rome. In AD 357 however, the sight was very different. On his first visit to Rome, emperor Constantius II marvelled at the city’s many fine buildings, but when he came to the Forum of Trajan: “a construction unique under the heavens (...) and admirable even in the unanimous opinion of the gods, he stood fast in amazement, turning his attention to the gigantic complex about him, beggaring description and never again to be imitated by mortal men” (Amm. Marc. XVI.10.15).

By Joseph Hall

Under Trajan, the Roman Empire had greatly expanded, and as the administrative hub, Rome itself was evolving to reflect this. By Trajan’s reign (r. 98–117) the centre of Rome had been undergoing a century-long process of reconstruction, and as new imperial fora were constructed in areas of the city previously used for trade and commerce, new buildings were needed to replace them. Trajan’s Markets - or the Mercati di Traiano as they are often known - have long been seen as one such building. Located on the side of the Quirinal hill in Rome, it comprises various structures built over six levels with a wide road running through its centre. Numerous rooms within the complex have been assigned the role of tabernae – or shops – and the entire site has often been compared to a modern-day shopping mall. In spite of this modern assumption however, the true function of ‘Trajan’s Markets’ remains frustratingly elusive.

Continuously occupied and modified from Antiquity up until in the early twentieth century, the complex was only cleared of later structures and excavated in the 1920s. In fact, the commonly used name ‘Trajan’s Markets’ was only given to the site during these excavations, due to the number of supposed tabernae it held, with the ancient sources themselves making no mention of a market built by, or named after, the emperor. Indeed, the different parts of the complex are almost exclusively known by their modern names and not their now-lost original ones. The fact that the site was occupied until so recently also means that very little evidence is available regarding ancient finds or installations, which may have helped to pinpoint what activities took place within the various parts of the complex.

Dating the markets

Not only is the function of the building uncertain, but the date of its construction is also still disputed. The poet Martial, a contemporary of Trajan’s predecessor Domitian, referenced three connected fora in his epigrams dated to between AD 87 and 93 (3.3.3–4, 7.65.1–2, 8.44.3–8). In epigrams dated between AD 95 and 96, four are mentioned...
(10.28.56, 10.51.11–12), leading some to believe that the markets were built between these dates, around AD 94, in the reign of Domitian. Archaeological evidence backs up this theory to a degree, with brick-stamps dated to Domitian’s rule found in other works around the base of the Quirinal hill, whose sandstone and tuff was excavated to make room for the markets.

Upon Domitian’s assassination in AD 96, it seems likely that construction was mothballed until Trajan later revisited the idea of building in the area. The chronographer Sextus Aurelius Victor, writing much later, even said that Domitian had begun construction, but that Trajan finished it (Caes. 13.5). Pausanias also credited the complex to Trajan (50.12.6), and Cassius Dio went further in attributing it specifically to Apollodorus; Trajan’s own architect who had also worked on the emperor’s Forum (69.4.1). Indeed, evidence from brick-stamps indicates that the top course of the foundation, plus the entirety of the structure built upon it, dates from at least a decade into Trajan’s reign. Whether Domitian intended to build a market complex on the site is unknown, but his early death allowed Trajan to literally build upon the groundwork laid by his predecessor to construct the impressive buildings which now bear his name.

**Trajan’s ‘Markets’?**
One key question which modern historians have asked of the site is whether it was in fact a market at all. From an architectural standpoint it differs markedly from the typical Roman market – or *macellum* – building. There is an awkward relationship between the various levels, with entrances and staircases being narrow and few in numbers; both of which would inhibit the easy flow of goods and people. Photographs of the original excavation also provide a clue to how the complex became known as a market. The only rooms which retained any original doorframes or thresholds identifiable as accoutrements of *tabernae* were on one side of the northern road named the *Via Biberatica*, yet the excavator’s assumption that the entire site was commercial in nature saw many similar rooms reconstructed in the same way, thus potentially inflating the number of actual *tabernae* present.

Architecturally though, many of the ground-floor rooms at least can be said with some confidence to have fulfilled the role of *tabernae*, if not those above ground level. The *tabernae* present in Trajan’s Markets have small windows above their doorways to allow light and air in whilst providing an outlet for smoke from fires. Although commonly thought of as shops, ancient writers imply that *tabernae* could also have had a residential function, with their owners – or renters –

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**ON THE COVER**
On the cover of this issue, illustrated by Milek Jakubiec, we see a mercantile scene set in the *Via Biberatica* in Trajan’s Market. A fruit seller attempts to sell lemons whilst his freedwoman wife tempts passers-by with grapes from a decorated bowl. The scene is set some time after the opening of the market, and as such the lemons on offer would have been a very exotic item.

The temporary stall has been constructed out of two old folding stools upon which has been placed planks of wood. These planks would be used primarily as shutters to secure a *taberna* at night, and their use may indicate that the seller is working in concert with a *taberna*-owner, who lends (or rents) them to the man so that his stall might drum-up more passing trade. Note also the sheets and shutters protecting the upper rooms from the full force of the sun. These rooms would perhaps have been offices for either private or state business, and may have also housed a document repository for the nearby Forum of Trajan.
also living in the same space, or having their slaves reside there in order to protect stock overnight (Cic. Cat. 4.17). The large open doorways which invited passing trade would be barred upon closing-time by wooden boards, and the name taberna may even be derived from the word tabula or trabs; meaning a board or a length of timber respectively.

Where tabernae have been recognised in other archaeological contexts, their use has never been reliably ascribed to one particular function, and it seems that such spaces were extremely flexible. In her study on shopping in ancient Rome, Claire Holleran concludes the chapter on the form and function of tabernae by highlighting their inherent multi-functionality, listing that they could house retail shops, workshops, and offices, as well as service-industries such as barbers, doctors, fullers, butchers, fish-mongers, bars, and inns. In addition to this, retailers of luxury-goods such as booksellers and jewelers could also be based in tabernae (p.158). Whilst tabernae may have lined the street running through Trajan’s Markets then, the goods and services available may have been more akin to those on offer in a modern high-street than a traditional marketplace.

The retail trade
When compared to other topics, relatively little is known about the day to day workings of street-level trade in the Roman-era, with writings from the ancient world often neglecting subjects such as retail; perhaps due to the low regard with which it was held by the literary elite of the time. Retailers in both Greek and Latin literature were often painted as dishonest and greedy tricksters, and whilst Cicero noted that trade on a grand scale was acceptable, he nevertheless held that to purchase goods from a merchant to retail directly to consumers was, due to the inflation in price required to make a profit, inherently dishonest (De Off. 1.150). In spite of such reticence on the part of the literary evidence, some clues do remain regarding what may have been bought and sold at Trajan’s Markets.

Numerous modern books have taken the view that the street running through Trajan’s Markets – the Via Biberatica – is a distortion of the Latin piper, or pepper. This street name is known from the medieval period and has been taken to mean that the markets sold pepper, with many guides now simply calling the road ‘pepper street’. This is a plausible reading of the evidence, but by the time Trajan’s Markets were built Rome already had a warehouse specifically for goods such as spices, the Horrea Piperataria. The archaeology of this storehouse suggests that not only were spices stored there, but possibly sold as well, and if this was the case then it is perhaps unlikely that Trajan’s complex would itself be

PEOPLING TRAJAN’S MARKET

Whilst as impressive today, albeit for different reasons, as when they were first erected nineteen centuries ago, the buildings comprising Trajan’s Markets are only part of the story. It must be remembered that these rooms were built and occupied by a diverse range of peoples. The funds for the renovation of the forum area, of which the market complex was just one part, came from Trajan’s lucrative war against the Dacians, and undoubtedly many slaves were imported back to Rome in order to bolster the pool of expendable manual labour. Once complete, the scribble and bustle of bureaucrats likely resounded in the upper rooms, as they officiously tended the documents which acted as the empire’s memory. In the tabernae below, shop-owners took deliveries of goods, stocked their shelves, and hawked every commodity under the sun - from pungent spices to gone-over vegetables - and everything in-between. For centuries the crowded Via Biberatica hummed with the sounds of everyday street life; a far-cry from the sullen silence which today haunts the empty basalt road.
a market dedicated exclusively to spices, as some suggest. The name *Biberatica* has also been proposed as deriving from the Latin *bibere* – to drink – a popular reading which nonetheless implies that the tabernae may have been predominantly drinking establishments rather than retail outlets.

If the tabernae in Trajan’s Markets reflected the grand status of the complex itself, it could follow that the commodities on sale there may have been generally more luxury-oriented than the common tabernae found elsewhere in the city, and the Biberatica/piper connection with pepper could lend further weight to this assumption if correct. It must also be remembered that nowhere in the Roman world was there such a concentration of super-rich elite all eager to consume luxury goods as at Rome. Rome was also the hub of the empire, and boasted its own vast port at Ostia – with its hexagonal harbour built by Trajan – which was visited by cargo ships from all over the Mediterranean and beyond. Every commodity imaginable was emptied from the holds of these ships before being taken via barge up the Tiber to the markets of Rome. Some goods, such as spices, would have indeed been expensive luxury items, and would have travelled from as far away as India.

However, whilst other luxury goods such as expensive wines, perfumes, and jewels may also have been sold in the tabernae of Trajan’s Markets, the idea that the extravagant was separate from the basic is perhaps too modern a notion. The grand and beautifully decorated houses at Pompeii were themselves often located cheek-by-jowl with some of the most ramshackle and utilitarian buildings, highlighting the dangers in assuming that luxury was physically separate from necessity in the Roman world. If one taberna in Trajan’s Market sold expensive spices, it cannot be assumed that next-door wouldn’t be owned by a simple fruit vendor, or a retailer of dubious quality fish-sauce.

**Beyond the market**

Aside from the tabernae, modern historians have linked the other rooms which comprise the market complex with the workings of the Roman state in the nearby Forum of Trajan. The numerous interconnected rooms, so the argument goes, can be seen as administrative offices. This idea is an attractive one for a few reasons. Given their layout, the rooms above ground level would have been generally difficult to access for anybody delivering commodities, and similarly awkward for customers to navigate. The complex’s close proximity...
Ancient History Magazine preview

Theme: Trajan’s Market

Further reading


Closing remarks

Many theories have been put forward regarding the exact function (or functions) of the buildings today known as Trajan’s Markets, but part of their enigma is that nothing can be pinned down with certainty. The popular modern notion that the complex was the ancient equivalent of today’s shopping malls doubtless pleases the passing tourist, who can briefly marvel at the similarities between themselves and their ancient counterpart. The fact remains however, that every theory is simply an educated ‘best guess’, based on sketchy data and comparative analyses with other similar sites. Occasionally diligent research will throw up a hidden clue, such as the manuscript which shows state treasury officials working in the area, but more often than not the truth can never be fully revealed, and fragmentary evidence must instead be skilfully worked into a coherent and plausible narrative. Therein lies the appeal, and the challenge, of ancient history.

Joseph Hall works in the UK heritage sector and is a regular contributor to Ancient Warfare magazine.

Joseph Hall

Ancient History Magazine preview

Trajan’s Markets were decorated with a marble frieze showing Victory goddesses performing various religious rites. This one is sacrificing a bull. Cast, now in the Glyptothek, Munich. © Livius.org

Trajan’s Markets were decorated with a marble frieze showing Victory goddesses performing various religious rites. This one is sacrificing a bull. Cast, now in the Glyptothek, Munich.

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To the new forum, which would have generated large amounts of important documents in need of secure filing and storage, also argues for a more administrative function. Indeed, the brick and concrete construction of the markets could even have been designed with this in mind, ensuring that vital state documents were kept safe from the threat of fire which frequently seared other parts of the heavily combustible city.

In addition to this, and in spite of the early twentieth century insistence that the entire complex was a grand marketplace, as early as 1930 some argued that it was rather an official centre for the sale of state-imported produce. The advocate of this theory, Giuseppe Lugli, cited a line in a manuscript fragment which located officials connected to the imperial treasury (archaei Caesariani) in the Forum of Trajan (p. 539). Indeed, three types of archaei are known, and are connected with the public distribution of wine, oil, and grain. An inscription also attests a procurator – a member of the civil administration – based in the building; evidence perhaps of state officials also using the complex as a base for their offices. Whilst no ancient source names the site as Trajan’s Markets, by at least the Severan period it is known from the same inscription that the entire area, including the ‘markets’, was known simply as the Forum of Trajan, and so it is possible that these officials were based within these office style rooms above the tabernae of the market-complex (AE 1995, 190).

Closings remarks

Many theories have been put forward regarding the exact function (or functions) of the buildings today known as Trajan’s Markets, but part of their enigma is that nothing can be pinned down with certainty. The popular modern notion that the complex was the ancient equivalent of today’s shopping malls doubtless pleases the passing tourist, who can briefly marvel at the similarities between themselves and their ancient counterpart. The fact remains however, that every theory is simply an educated ‘best guess’, based on sketchy data and comparative analyses with other similar sites. Occasionally diligent research will throw up a hidden clue, such as the manuscript which shows state treasury officials working in the area, but more often than not the truth can never be fully revealed, and fragmentary evidence must instead be skilfully worked into a coherent and plausible narrative. Therein lies the appeal, and the challenge, of ancient history.

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FURTHER READING


Ancient History Magazine preview
A NEW FRAGMENT OF AN UNKNOWN HISTORY

ALEXANDER, PHILIP, PTOLEMY, OR NEARCHUS?

In the last weeks of 325 BC, Macedonian admiral Nearchus was sailing from the Indus valley to the Persian Gulf, carrying a part of the army of Alexander the Great. It was a massive expedition and it was inevitable that occasionally, something would go wrong. And indeed: in the Arabian Sea, a cargo ship was lost.

By Jona Lendering

Nearchus had just looted a town in southern Iran, close to a promontory called Bageia, where the Sun god was venerated. Here, his men picked up a story told by the natives: that there was a cursed island, Nosala, where people vanished. Once, it had been inhabited by a sea goddess, who made love to all men she met, and changed them into fish. Although the Sun god had put an end to her crimes, people still went missing.

Nearchus was not impressed. He sailed to the island and set foot ashore, proving that there were no risks and the story was a mere fairytale. Having shown that the cargo ship had not vanished through supernatural means, Nearchus convinced his superstitious men to continue their voyage.

This anecdote is told by Arrian (Indica 31) and Strabo (Geography 15.2.13). It illustrates the way the sailors had learned to think, after they had already seen proof that Prometheus had been punished in the Hindu Kush Mountains and that India was the country where Dionysus and Heracles had lived before they came to Greece. These men had grown accustomed to wonderland and were now willing to believe anything. That’s about all we can learn from the story.

New Evidence

But now, there may be a new piece of evidence: three papyrus fragments from the Abbey of Montserrat, belonging to a historiographical text. The handwriting can be dated to the third century BC, while the presence of a woman named Eurydice and somatophylakes (the Macedonian bodyguards) suggests that we are in the world of Alexander the Great. The fact that a military camp is mentioned indicates context; that we’re dealing with a foreign country, is suggested by the fact that the customs of this sacrifice are apparently uncommon.

If we are right to connect the new fragments to Nearchus’ visit to Nosala, we can add to our knowledge about the incident that the admiral sacrificed both on the island of the sea goddess and on the promontory of the Sun god, and received representatives from the town he had just pillaged.

To be fair, it is possible to fit the third fragment over here, but we have no proof. Names like Nearchus, Nosala, and the Sun...
god are absent. We should at least contemplate other possibilities, and the editors of the new fragments offer several suggestions.

**Alternatives**

To begin, Alexander’s crossing of the Hellespont in 334. According to Arrian, Alexander sacrificed to the waters and went up to Troy, where he exchanged his panoply for some weapons that had been kept in the temple of Athena since the days of the Trojan War (Anabasis 1.11.5–7). However, the objects mentioned in the new papyrus do not match the bull that Arrian’s Alexander sacrificed at sea. Worse, we can hardly consider Troy a foreign country with unusual sacrificial customs.

The editors also consider the Eurydice mentioned in the second fragment. She may be the wife of Alexander’s brother Philip Arrhidaeus. Another possible Eurydice was married to Ptolemy, the future king of Egypt. She’s hardly more than a name to us, but the second fragment does contain the intriguing letters ...OLE..., which may or may not be part of her husband’s name.

**The Importance of Provenance**

To sum up, we’re unable to fit the new evidence securely to the existing information. We’re not even certain whether the three fragments, which undoubtedly belong to the same historiographical text, describe the same scene. The reason for this is that we don’t know how these papyri were acquired. It is only certain that they were bought in Egypt by Spanish papyrologist Ramón Roca-Puig, who traveled widely through the Near East, collected many fine ancient Greek and Coptic texts, and bequeathed them in 2001 to the abbey where he spent the last years of his life.

In the end, we’re left with a simple lesson: unprovenanced antiquities are quite useless. Still, they can offer tantalizing glimpses of the distant past. In this case, we’re frustratingly close to a new piece of information about Alexander or one of his successors, but we can only reflect on how much we don’t know.

**Literature**

These fragments were recently published as Papyrus Montserrat Rocca 267. It is papyrus 39 in Sofía Torallas Tovar & Klaas Worp, Greek Papyri from Montserrat (P. Monts. Rocca IV), 2014 Barcelona.

Jona Lendering studied history and will be co-editor of Ancient History Magazine.

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**FRAGMENTS**

*Fragment 1*

“...the coast where they had to stay...”

*Fragment 2*

“...OLE... and of Eurydice, simultaneously taking care of them among the bodyguards, wishing to draw away...”

*Fragment 3, column i*

“...coming down from this sacrifice to the coast, he sailed back to the army camp. Having prepared for the goddess the full-sized female costume he had promised, he offered a sacrifice... a golden bowl with a... from some... an axe and a... dagger made of iron...”

*Fragment 3, column ii*

“...to a woman through this (fem.) in order that the sacrifice would occur according to the norms. And it was ordered to them to offer a hecatomb of goats, sheep, and calves, and to admit the magistrates and the priests and the leaders of the citizenry and all the foreign residents. Once these were sent out at sea on the third day... the sacrifice...”