

The Roman Archaeology Conference, 27-30 March 2014

The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies' biennial conference will be taking place at the University of Reading. There will be a reception and keynote welcoming lecture on the Thursday evening, followed by two-and-a-half days of parallel sessions, ending on the Sunday afternoon with an optional excursion to Silchester Roman Town. This year the conference is joined by TRAC, the Study Group for Roman Pottery and the Roman Small Finds Study Group.

Website: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/Conferences/RAC2014/>



Clay and cult; Roman Terracottas and their production and use in domestic, religious and funerary contexts

Session organiser: Elena Martelli (University of Reading, UK)

Portable clay artefacts such as figurines, zoomorphic/anthropomorphic jugs and masks have been regarded as items of secondary importance compared to sculpture and pottery, due to a well rooted culture-historical approach and to a more recent positivistic thought, focused on trade routes and artefacts clearly linked to them (amphorae and Samian ware). During the last decades the significant role played by clay objects in domestic life and funerary practices has been highlighted, together with their significance for the comprehension and interpretation of Roman social structures (Willis & Hingley 2007 Roman finds, context and theory). Research on terracottas has become an independent field of study with its own issues and features, as attested by a considerable bibliography and important conferences (Figurines en context: iconographie et fonction(s) in Lille 2011; and Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas: Mediterranean Networks and Cyprus in Nicosia 2013).

This session endeavours to contribute to a more complete and complex way of examining clay objects' functional and symbolic implications in their contexts. Scholars, with diversified but inter-linking approaches and backgrounds, will deal with issues related to manufacturing techniques, provenance, distribution, find-circumstances, iconography and dating of clay artefacts recovered in Mediterranean sites and beyond. The topics will range from the analysis of patterns of religious and cultural consumption in the domestic sphere, ritual spaces and funerary areas from the centre of the Roman World (Rome and its harbour Ostia) to vital commercial areas (North Africa and the Levant). Attention will be paid to the selection of certain types of terracottas as religious/apotropaic devices in private areas and shrines or as grave goods in burials and their links, in some occasions, with mors immatura (child's death).

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Sunday, G10, Henley Business School

- 9.00 Composite bodies: gods, humans and the anatomical votive in the Republican sanctuary, Emma-Jayne Graham
- 9.30 Clay artefacts from Roman Ostia: overview of patterns of consumption in urban and funerary contexts, Elena Martelli
- 10.00 Iconography related to oriental cults on clay lamps and figurines in the Roman area, Melissa Marani
- 10.30 Coffee
- 11.00 Clay figurines, masks and animal-shaped vessels in children's burials in Roman Imperial Africa, Solenn de Larminat

- 11.30 Terracottas from Roman Palestine: Workshops, Shrines and Tombs, Adi Erlich
- 12.00 Terracottas in a domestic context: the case of the House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos, Cyprus, Demetrios Michaelides, Giorgos Papantoniou and Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou

Composite Bodies: Gods, Humans and the Anatomical Votive in the Republican Sanctuary

Emma-Jayne Graham (Open University, UK)

From the 4th to 1st century BC votive offerings in the form of clay body parts were deposited at sanctuaries across central Italy. Interpreted traditionally as requests for divine healing, it has been argued that this process might be perceived as the disassembly and subsequent remaking of the body. Their use therefore implies that relationships with the gods were performed in bodily terms. This paper will not challenge arguments which correlate anatomical offerings with experiences of healing, but will seek instead to demonstrate that, simultaneously, they provided the material means through which ancient mortal-divine relationships were enacted: deposition of partible human bodies in the sanctuary was paralleled by the permeable healing attributes of gods. This approach, which promotes an understanding of how human-divine personhood was constructed through the nature of their respective bodies, offers a new conceptual backdrop against which to set the experiences of ancient cult participants.

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Clay Artefacts from Roman Ostia (Rome): Overview of Patterns of Consumption in Urban and Funerary Contexts

Elena Martelli (University of Reading, UK)

Ostia, port of Rome, was a collection point for goods, where people from all over the Roman world took part in trade and shared their religious and cultural beliefs. Visual examination of the clay and the analysis of stamps have revealed that *ca.* 500 previously overlooked terracottas from the town and its necropoleis, are physical evidence of these exchanges and products of this multicultural milieu. A new methodology combining the Italian iconographic tradition for the study of the individual piece with British approaches to finds distribution and social identity, has been applied to money boxes, masks, figurines, anthropomorphic vessels and moulds for making plaster objects. This paper presents some results regarding patterns of consumption of these items in the urban and funerary contexts. For instance, money boxes are connected to the domestic sphere and baths; private shrines are present inside shops and workshops. In necropoleis, terracottas are mainly, but not exclusively, associated with children and freedmen.

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Iconography Related to Oriental Cults on Clay Lamps and Figurines in the Roman Area

Melissa Marani (Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Viterbo, Italy)

Oriental cults were widespread in the Roman area in particular during the Imperial period, as documented in ancient literary sources and by the recovery of material evidence. The presence of iconography of oriental gods on clay lamps and figurines fits in well with this trend in Rome and its provinces. Among the finds, there is a considerable number of artefacts decorated with Egyptian gods, fewer with images of Cybele and Attis, and just a small amount with images of Mithras. Thanks to the stamps on the clay lamps the production areas can be identified, while the contexts they were used in, are, in most cases, still uncertain. A larger number of these finds come from funerary contexts, while those from domestic and public buildings have been recovered in just small numbers; nevertheless such data could be affected by the lack of documentation or by the uncertainty about their contexts of provenance.

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Clay Figurines, Masks and Animal-Shaped Vessels in Children's Burials in Roman Imperial Africa

Solenn de Larminat (Université Paris-Sorbonne, France)

Clay figurative artefacts deposited in children's burials in Roman Imperial Africa have mainly been found from the late nineteenth century onwards. Usually dissociated from their archaeological context, these items were well described in publications due to their figurative nature. An inventory of this material has been made and this catalogue allows us to analyse the function of this material based on a large quantitative database. The most common types and their geographical distribution have been highlighted. New excavations in North Africa provide well documented archaeological contexts and give new perspectives on this material through the analysis of the age of the deceased, location of artefacts in the tomb, associated gestures (breaking and reversal), association in the same burial. Multi-disciplinary analysis of these data has sometimes permitted a novel interpretation of the material. This new information and the various areas of research involved allow one to consider the role of these artefacts in African graves from different points of view and highlight regional peculiarities.

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Terracottas from Roman Palestine: Workshops, Shrines and Tombs

Adi Erlich (University of Haifa, Israel)

During Roman times terracotta production in the Levant decreased, and the workshops produced small numbers of terracottas compared to the Western centres. Nevertheless, recent excavations of sites in Israel shed new light on the coroplastic production of the region, and the role clay figurines played in different societies and religions. In Roman Palestine clay figurines are found in the same contexts they are discovered elsewhere: workshops, shrines, tombs, and dwellings. The local industries produced figurines and lamps, such as the workshop at Gerasa (1st-2nd centuries AD) and the workshop at Beit Nattif (3rd-5th centuries AD). Clay figurines were found in two northern temples, the theatre shrine at Scythopolis and the temple at Omrit. Roman terracottas were also found in tombs and in domestic contexts. These items were used by Pagans and Christians, and not by Jews or Samaritans. The types adhere to the *koinè* of the Roman East and the repertoires resemble assemblages from Tarsus and Cyprus.

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Terracottas in a Domestic Context: the Case of the House of Orpheus in Nea Paphos, Cyprus

Demetrios Michaelides, (University of Cyprus), Giorgos Papantoniou (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland), and Maria Dikomitou-Eliadou, (University of Cyprus)

The terracottas from the House of Orpheus form a significant material assemblage that spans from Hellenistic to Roman times. The paper offers an overview of an on-going project that aims at a systematic assessment of these artefacts employing, stylistic, iconographic, physiochemical, computational and theoretical methods of study. The presentation of the material in its archaeological and iconographic context will be followed by its qualitative and quantitative compositional characterisation through the use of pXRF and NAA, two methods of chemical analysis that allowed us to develop arguments regarding the technology of production and the scale of distribution of these figurines. Through the employment of 3D scanning technology, we were, moreover, able to visualise and further explore aspects of the technology and function of the terracottas in a digital form, and provided the groundwork for the creation of moulds to be used for the physical reproduction of selected specimens. The paper will highlight how this interdisciplinary study of the terracottas from the House of Orpheus has led to the enhanced understanding of the function/s of these artefacts in a Cypriot domestic environment.

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