

From Portus to Fucino (Italy): naval archaeology and symbolism on Torlonia reliefs

Marina Maria Serena Nuovo and Stefania Tuccinardi

Abstract: In the years 1852–1878, during the draining of the Fucino Lake, fragments of a large monumental relief bearing a waterfront landscape with views of a city, a countryside and two floating boats was recovered. Around the same time, during the archaeological excavations at the harbours of Claudius and Trajan in Portus (Rome, Italy), a small relief depicting a boat approaching a harbour was brought to light. The scene combines symbols with many realistic details to represent the boat and harbour. Subject of studies for nearly two centuries, the relief has been approached almost exclusively from an art historical perspective. The original context for both reliefs remains subject of speculation. The analysis of the two depictions—possibly contemporaneous (from the end of the second to the beginning of the third century AD) but different in dimensions, artistic treating of the scenes and probably also patronage—affords an opportunity to clarify the symbolic meaning of the depicted elements and propose new interpretations.

This chapter explores the symbols represented in the two scenes from a naval-archaeological approach. The naval details, together with the symbolic elements and a brief review of the original excavation documentation, assist the authors in presenting a new interpretation of the two reliefs, one which may link them to their original historical, social, and political meaning and significance, while at the same time, reinterpreting their iconography in the most correct and plausible way possible.

Introduction (MMSN, ST)

During the second half of the 1800s, Alessandro Torlonia, an influential banker from Rome, was involved in land reclamations in central Italy, particularly at the mouth of the Tiber River and in the area occupied by Fucino Lake, in the Abruzzi (Figure 6.1). The Torlonias hailed from a village near Lyon and did not have any aristocratic origin, but in exchange, they had a strong flair for business. Alessandro Torlonia continued the social rise of his family through the flourishing economic activities he undertook, and thanks to the draining of Fucino Lake in 1875, he received the title of Prince of Fucino from the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II (Felisini 2019).

The exploitation of the land ownership afforded Alessandro Torlonia the opportunity to carry out archaeological excavations, thanks to which outstanding artefacts were discovered and became part of his private collection of ancient art.¹

These artefacts include the two reliefs which are the subject of this chapter. These reliefs, one from Fucino

Lake and the other from Portus, are exemplary in the field of Roman artistic production in terms of waterfront representations and symbolism connected to ports, ships and maritime activities. Before this analysis, the two reliefs had never been studied together, and this chapter presents them in parallel for the first time. They share a few characteristics: the circumstances of their discovery, that is Alessandro Torlonia's undertakings; the presence of boats; the symbolic and/or realistic representation of a waterfront landscape; and, possibly, their dating. Moreover, they are in some way comparable also because they both comprise a sort of real 'portrait', representing images of where they were found and where they belonged. The areas where they were found, even if not close to one another, are both locations of the remarkable hydraulic undertakings started by the emperor Claudius. These are, namely, the outlet of Fucino Lake and the impressive harbour at the mouth of the Tiber River, and they were later sites of interventions by the emperor Trajan and the economic interests of Alessandro Torlonia. The reliefs differ in their dimensions, artistic treating of the scenes and, probably, also patronage.

Through a naval-archaeological approach, this chapter analyses the symbols depicted in the two reliefs with the ambitious goal of clarifying the symbolic and topographic meaning of the depicted elements in order to link them to their original historical, social and political context and significance. The chapter is organised in three parts. The first describes the topographic context and the iconographic characteristics of the relief from Fucino Lake,

¹ Only the finds from Fucino Lake were acquired by the Italian Government in the 1990s, and they are now exhibited at Castello Piccolomini, in Celano (Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo). The finds from Rome and its hinterland are still part of the Torlonia's collection, which is considered the largest private collection of ancient art in the world. Parts of these masterpieces were displayed to the public during a temporary exhibition in Rome (2020) and Milan (2022) (Settis and Gasparri 2020).



Figure 6.1. Abruzzi, central Italy: Fucino Lake. Image from Google Earth.

the second concerns the Portus relief and the third includes a discussion and conclusions about the two artefacts.

The authors worked as a team; however, in this analysis, M. M. S. Nuovo focussed mainly on the relief from Fucino Lake and naval archaeological topics, while S. Tuccinardi worked principally on the relief from Portus and the symbolism in ancient Roman art. The combined research was an occasion for a general review and updating of the scientific literature published to date, but it can still be considered as a preliminary stage because many questions have not been answered yet, and they will be the object of further detailed investigations.

Fucino Relief: a brief history of the finding context (MMSN)

Before it was drained in 1878, Fucino Lake was the third largest lake in Italy; it was located in Abruzzi, a central Italian region. The absence of an efficient outlet was the reason for changes in the lake level and frequent disastrous overflowing. This problem was already known during Roman times and had been considered by Julius Caesar (see, for example, Letta 1994: 203).² However,

work did not begin until the emperor Claudius promoted the construction of an artificial outlet of the lake, an ingenious and impressive hydraulic work (Suet., *Divus Claudius*, 20, 1). The outlet consisted of a canal bringing the water to the Incile, a complex of basins closed by shutters, from which point water flowed into a 5 km tunnel through Salviano mountain, finally to reach the Liri River (for the technical aspects, see Giuliani 2008: 33–48). Its completion required 11 years of the continuous and constant work of 30,000 workmen (Suet., *Divus Claudius*, 20, 2), and it had substantial costs (Plin., *HN*, 36, 124). A complete draining was not in the project (Letta 1994: 203), in order to retain a local economy based on agriculture, fishing and related activities (Migliorati 2015: 137). Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio (Suet., *Divus Claudius*, 21, 4; Tac., *Hist.*, 12, 56; Cass. Dio, 60, 33, 3–4) note that during the inauguration ceremony for the outlet opening in 52 CE, Claudius organised a *naumachia*, a naval battle performance involving 24 triremes divided in two fleets.³ Despite the great effort spent on this remarkable project, the ancient writer Pliny (Plin., *HN*, 36, 124) states that the emperor Nero did not continue the project because of hatred towards his predecessor Claudius.

² On the coincidence between the projects and works of Julius Caesar and Claudius, see Migliorati 2007: 108–109.

³ There were 50 triremes for each fleet, according to Cassius Dio, 60, 33, 3; Claudius equipped triremes, quadriremes, and nineteen thousand combatants according to Tacitus (Tac., *Hist.*, 12).



Figure 6.2. The relief now consists of five elements, all exhibited at Castello Piccolomini—Collezione Torlonia e Museo d'Arte Sacra della Marsica, in Celano (Abruzzi). Courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

There is not much information about the functioning of the outlet after the reign of Nero. Probably, from Nero to emperor Hadrian, the outlet was kept functioning (Letta 1994: 208) thanks to the presence of a station of *classarii* (a garrison of marines, CIL IX, 3993) from the imperial fleet of Ravenna. However, an inscription, which had unknown provenance and was destroyed by a tremendous earthquake in 1915, commemorated the intervention of the emperor Trajan in 117 AD, who gave back to the owners the lands flooded by Fucino Lake (CIL IX, 3915; Sommella and Tascio 1991: 459–460; Letta 1994: 208, note 64). Finally, according to the laconic sentence of the *Historia Augusta*, the emperor Hadrian ‘Fucinus lacus emisit’ (‘made the Fucino lake flow’). Perhaps Hadrian completed the repairs of the outlet and made it fully operational again or, more likely, he had work done to lower the canal, improving the water flow and realizing a greater extent of land for cultivation (Letta 1994: 208, with previous references).

Probably due to earthquakes dated to the fourth century AD, the outlet stopped working. During the following centuries, it was alternatively cleared and kept functioning or abandoned. After a considerable water rise between 1804 and 1817 (Clemente 1976: 242), efficient restorations were carried out between the 1820s–1830s under the direction of the engineer Carlo Afan de Rivera (Segenni 2003: 56). During these works, many artefacts were discovered. On 29 August 1833, the archaeologist Giuseppe Melchiorri wrote a report to the secretary of Istituto Archeologico in Roma (Archaeological Institute in Rome) communicating the discovery, among other finds, of a limestone relief depicting two boats found near the Incile (Afan de Rivera 1836: 50), reused in a wall separating the first basin from the second one (Clemente 1976: 241). It is unclear whether the relief was removed at

the time of the discovery or was left on site and removed from its location during the time of Alessandro Torlonia.

In 1853, the Court of Auditors and the Società Anonima Regia Napoletana (Neapolitan Limited Royal Company) signed an agreement to restore the Roman outlet. In 1855, Alessandro Torlonia bought all the shares and decided to revamp the original project as a complete sap of the lake.

The works were completed in 1878, and the historian Auguste Geoffroy reported that, in addition to the fragment already known in 1833, three more fragments with reliefs were discovered (Geoffroy 1878: 3) to have been reused in the lower part of a pit (Segenni 2003: 60). A fifth fragment was illustrated for the first time by E. Agostinoni in 1908 (Agostinoni 1908: 13; 16). The same kind of limestone—sourced from local quarries in the area of Fucino Lake (Agostini 2003: 87)—and certain stylistic similarities helped to identify the new fragments as part of the same monument as the previous find. Consequently, the relief currently consists of five elements: two large, nearly complete blocks, two joining fragments and an additional small piece, all exhibited in Celano (the Abruzzi), at Castello Piccolomini—Collezione Torlonia e Museo d'Arte Sacra della Marsica (Figure 6.2).⁴

Fucino's relief (MMSN)

The first block (inv. no. 67501, height 58.4 cm; width 104.5 cm; thickness 20.6 cm) represents a stretch of water cut through by two vessels sailing left (Figure 6.3). Based

⁴ Schäfer (2022: 280) erroneously states the relief is stored at Palazzo Torlonia in Rome.



Figure 6.3. The first block discovered bearing the relief of a stretch of water cut through by two vessels going from right to left. Inv. no. 67501; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

on their characteristics, Beltrame (2003: 83) suggests they can be interpreted as military vessels, of a type generally called long ships or *naves longae* because of their elongated shape. The one to the right is an oar-driven vessel with no sail (Figure 6.4); it has an unusual concave prow, ending with a rhomboidal decoration.⁵ Six human heads, schematically represented, come out from the side of the vessel; they can be interpreted as rowers who look at the *gubernator* (helmsman), who in turn looks back at them while clearly holding a side helm out of the aft cabin. The aft cabin is flanked by two *styloi* and flags. The *styloi* were pointed poles, which were set on units of the Imperial navy alongside the ornamental stern—or *aplustre/apluster*—and carried the standards and the image of the boat’s guardian deity, called *tutela* (for an example, see Casson 1995: 346–347). The *aplustre* curves inwards and ends with a *cheniscus*, a boat decoration in the shape of a goose/swan head used ‘for finishing off the sternpost’ (Casson 1995: 347). There are 13 oars; these do not cross the side of the boat but are represented all at the same level, below what looks like a jutting out bulwark (Beltrame 2003: 83), or a simple balustraded deck, or a side screen to protect the rowers. The latter is very similar to the ones sculptured on the warships on the Trajan’s column (see Pitassi 2011: 138). The oars are more than double in number, relative to the heads of the rowers. It is possible the artist may not

have given the exact number of oars actually used on the boat, but just depicted the idea of a multitude; it is also possible this higher number of oars indicates the presence of two banks of rowers, possibly even superimposed. The raised squares on the oars might be interpreted as tholes. No deck was represented over the rowers.

The relief with the vessel at left (Figure 6.5) is badly damaged in its lower part; however, it is still possible to distinguish the stem ending in an inward volute on top and a pointed cutwater at the bottom. An oblique foremast, the *artemon*, is distinguishable. The *aplustre* ends upwards and, as in the previous boat, it is flanked by *styloi* with flags. Below it, the aft cabin stands, out of which there is the *gubernator*, looking at left. At least eight rowers are preserved, looking at the helmsman; not only their heads, but also their chests and right arms are visible. It is not possible to determine the whole number of oars and rowers because of the poor preservation in this part. Even if incomplete, as in the previous ship, it can be interpreted as a monoreme, or at most as a bireme.⁶ Again, no deck was represented over the rowers. It is also possible the rowers would not in fact have been visible, and the sculptor used an expedient artistic convention to show them onboard (see Pitassi 2011: 136).

⁵ For a parallel, see Maiuri (1958: 24, fig. 3–4).

⁶ Since the end of the first century BC to the beginning of the first century AD, the larger multirow warships were disposed of in favor of smaller types: the quadriremes and the triremes became the larger types, and a variety of smaller ships developed (Pitassi 2011: 115–117).



Figure 6.4. A zoom-in of the right boat. Inv. no. 67501; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.



Figure 6.5. A zoom-in of the left boat. Inv. no. 67501; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

Even if well outlined, the function of these boats remains doubtful because of the absence of clear offensive elements. They are surely military vessels because of their shape and because of the *stilo*i, but at least the one at right has been interpreted as a light non-combatant auxiliary galley (Beltrame 2003: 83). They are less likely merchant

galleys, even if these last could also have a prow ‘ending in a cutwater that jugged forward into a ram-like point’ (Casson 1995: 158).

The central part and a portion of the top left of the block is occupied by water, stylistically rendered through

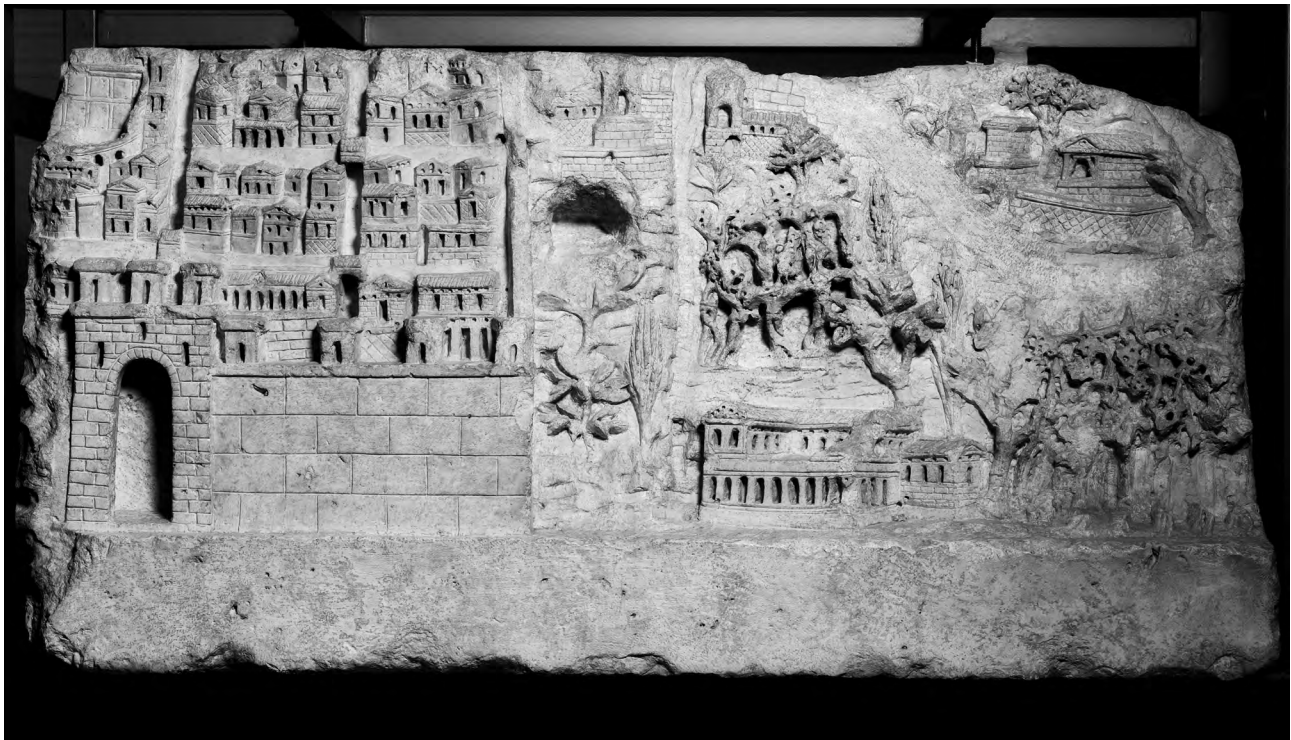


Figure 6.6. The block representing an urban landscape. Inv. no. 67504; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

a series of parallel waves. A couple of aquatic plants (*thypha latifolia*?) come out of the water. On the bank, there are stylised trees. The presence of many small cavities indicate that this part had been worked by a drill to render the thick foliage of the trees. Chisel marks seem to have erased some of the waves in the centre of the relief because, probably by mistake, the waves were initially carved too close to the trees. The upper part of the relief is occupied by a detailed scene which is helpful for understanding the whole context. At the right corner, there are workmen working at a double drum winch, connected to a tripod with a pulley. The detail of the turning of the ropes, well visible in the uppermost part, and the perfect straightness give the idea of the functioning of this lifting machine: one rope goes down, while the other goes up, in a continuous movement (Giuliani 2003a: 81–82). The ropes depicted on the relief descend vertically, giving the idea of a lifting work and not of a work by traction, necessary, for example, to haul a boat, even if the functioning of a hauling winch is the same as a lifting winch (Giuliani, personal communication).

The second block⁷ (inv. no. 67504, height 61 cm; width 123 cm; thickness 28.8 cm) represents the urban landscape of a walled city, organised in regular blocks of houses and streets with a theatre (Figure 6.6). Outside the city walls, at right, there is a stream and a bridge, and below the bridge, there is a street flanked by buildings, perhaps funerary monuments.

⁷ R. Belli Pasqua (2016: 58) erroneously reports the material is marble and not limestone.

The third (inv. no. 67502, height 30.7 cm; width 35.3 cm; thickness 33.2 cm, Figure 6.7) and fourth (inv. no. 67503, height 23.5 cm; width 32cm; thickness 30 cm, Figure 6.4) fragments join. To the left, there is a colonnaded building, very likely a temple, below which, on a terrace, there are four figures which can be interpreted as statues of deities. Next to them, at right, a staircase descends to a lower level, where other elements (Geoffroy 1878: tav. XV.C) were chiselled out between 1878–1883 (Brisse and de Rotou 1883: tav. XXI). The scene may represent the terraced sanctuary of goddess Angitia at Luco dei Marsi, partially built into Salviano Mountain rock, about 3 km south of the Claudian outlet.

The right face of the right fragment bears traces of reworking (Figure 6.8). On this face, there are the remains of soldiers' rows, almost completely erased by levelling with a claw chisel. Fortunately, a few details allow us to distinguish the chest of a soldier wearing a *lorica segmentata*, a segmented armour used by the Roman army since the first decades of the first century AD (Bishop 2002: 23). D. Faccenna dates the scene from the Flavian times onwards because this type of cuirass is known on monuments only from this date (Faccenna 2003: 74). Probably the relief continued further left because the figures are too close to the edge of the block, and the body of the leftmost soldier appears incomplete; consequently, the block was then broken at left and reused on another side. Currently, it is not possible to determine how many times the block was reused, perhaps at least two. However, a detailed study of this block exceeds the scope of this chapter and will be the subject of further investigations.



Figure 6.7. The two joining fragments with the representation of the sanctuary of the goddess Angitia. Inv. nos. 67502 and 67503; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

Finally, the fourth fragment (inv. no.67500, height 22 cm; width 19.8 cm; thickness 13 cm) bears the remains of four buildings, of which three have a gable roof (Figure 6.9).

Discussion on interpretation and dating (MMSN)

The relief is fragmentary, and many elements have been lost, so it is not possible to reconstruct the mutual position of the preserved blocks with absolute certainty. C.F. Giuliani (2003b: 79–81) has proposed a very plausible reconstruction, based on the preserved original faces of the blocks and on the topographic references represented. The monument might have been about 2 m high and 3.5 m width, with an average thickness of the blocks of about 0.25 m (Figure 6.2).

The men at work with the winches provide enough clues to identify them as workmen working at the Claudian outlet and, consequently, the body of water can be interpreted with a certain confidence as Fucino Lake, viewed from south (up) to north. The block with the urban landscape has a large band at the bottom, the base from where the whole scene takes place, and it is the bottom of the relief. If we assume that the two joining fragments represent the sanctuary of Angitia, then this would stand on the top right part of the scene, and it would be the right end of the relief.

The sanctuary was at the southwestern boundary of Fucino Lake.

The urban landscape might be a representation of the ancient city of Marruvium, now San Benedetto dei Marsi, but other hypotheses are also possible.⁸

The whole scene can be interpreted as an astonishingly detailed description of Fucino Lake and its environs, photographed as an instant picture during the works carried out at the outlet during Roman times.

The two boats might be a representation of the *naumachia* organised by Claudius for the inauguration of the outlet of Fucino Lake, as described by Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassio Dio. The hypothesis is extremely fascinating, even if clues are not enough to fully support it, at least at the present state of the research. Compared to the vessels

⁸ Because of the bird's-eye view, the perspective is very compressed, and the real distance between objects has been altered. Consequently, the city represented might have been not directly built on the lake's banks. If so, the view might be from south-southwest, and the city represented might be Alba Fucens, which is indeed surrounded by massive walls and has a theatre in the southern part of the city, as in the representation. The topographic relation with the Incile and the sanctuary of Angitia also matches. This hypothesis will be object of a further study.



Figure 6.8. The right face of inv. no. 67502, bearing traces of reworking with remains of soldiers' ranges, almost completely cancelled by a levelling with a claw chisel. It is possible to distinguish the bust of a soldier wearing a *lorica segmentata*, a segmented armour used by the Roman army since the first decades of the first century AD; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.



Figure 6.9. The fragment with the representation of buildings. The largest building seems organised on three stories and bears a series of holes with unclear function. Inv. no. 67500; courtesy of Ministero della Cultura, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo; unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited.

represented in the *naumachiae* in Pompeii, the ones in the Fucino relief do not have proper or undeniable offensive elements, even if, as stated above, they are military boats. This is supported by C. Beltrame's suggestion (2003: 83) that the ship on the left very closely resembles the vessel represented on coins from the time of Hadrian with the type of *Felicitati Augusti* (see, for example, Amandry *et al.* 2019: 86, no. 963A). Even on the coin, it is possible to distinguish a schematic representation of a military vessel: a few rowers with a multitude of oars, the volute stem, the oblique foremast, the pointed cutwater and not a proper ram, the aplustre flanked by *styloi* and the cabin with the *gubernator*. Moreover, it is important to note that the fast military vessel *liburna* was not necessarily provided with a ram, and it was used as a battleship in the second line for fast raids (Avilia 2002: 132). The ship to the right, which is in actuality in the second line, might have been a *liburna* used in the *naumachia* on the Fucino Lake. The *liburna* could have been rowed as a bireme (see, for example, Pitassi 2011: 141). The *naumachia* organised by Claudius must have been such an extraordinary event, its memory possibly survived for decades. In this regard, it is interesting to note that in the temple of Apollo at Alba Fucens (now the church of St Peter in Albe), there is a graffito dated to the first–second century AD (Nuovo and Tedeschi forthcoming) or the end of the Republican times–beginning of the early Imperial times according to Guarducci (1953: 120) representing a vessel with a ram and the inscription 'navis tetretris longa' (Guarducci 1953: 119–130, Fig. 5; Mertens 1969: 21; 22, Fig. 11). Certainly, it is not possible to determine if the author of the graffito actually saw a *navis longa* in the Fucino Lake, as for example, during the memorable Claudian *naumachia*, or if he was a sailor coming back home or asking for protection from the god.

The hypothesis that the two ships might be auxiliary military vessels used by the *classiarii* for patrols⁹ appears unlikely, as this corps was probably involved in technical aspects of the constant control of the Claudian outlet, more than in proper military operations.

However, even if the representation of Fucino Lake is beyond doubt, it is not sure if the urban landscape is real, imaginary or, most likely, a fusion between reality and imagination. In fact, it is possible the artist was inspired by the real landscape around Fucino Lake, and the care for the details in the urban landscape, as well as in the representation of men at work, attest to this. Nevertheless, at the same time, the artist could have combined the real landscape with iconographic models, widespread during the imperial times, representing landscape as impressions rather than as a topographic map. The composition of a scene with a body of water, vessels and a walled city is very common in wall paintings in Pompeii, for example (Avilia

and Iacobelli 1989). It is generally used in mythological representations or in images with *naumachiae*.

Portus Relief: a brief history of the finding context (ST)

In 42 AD, Emperor Claudius began the construction of a new extensive harbour in a lagoonal area at the mouth of Tiber River, about 2 km north of Ostia. Its construction was a long process which included the excavation of a large extent of the ancient coastline, the construction of enclosing walls and the erection of two artificial piers jutting into the sea (for ancient sources describing the enterprise, see Keay and Millet 2005: 11–14, 315–327; Bergen 2022: 198–203; Bukowiecki and Mimmo 2023). According to Suetonius (Divus Claudius: 20,3), the lighthouse was in deep waters facing the entrance of the harbour. The harbour was inaugurated under the rule of Nero, as demonstrated by the coins minted for the event (Felici 2022: 10–17). Emperor Trajan enhanced the structure by building the outstanding inland hexagonal basin behind the Claudian Complex (Plin., Panegircus, 23.2) and by excavating a channel called Fossa Traiana (CIL XIV, 88), which was critical to the regulation of the Tiber River (Figure 6.10).

The external basin, called *Portus Claudii*, was probably in use even after the sack of Portus by Alaric the Goth (410 AD), while in the fifth century AD, the basin made by Trajan and the central area of the port were surrounded by a defensive wall (Keay 2021: 54); the Fossa Traiana was navigable until the twelfth century (Paroli 2005: 43). The site of Portus was easily identifiable, even after centuries, thanks to the presence of the hexagonal basin. From the Renaissance onwards, the harbour was the object of cartographic and archaeological interest (Bignamini 2003; Felici 2022). In 1856, Alessandro Torlonia purchased land in Portus in which he started the drainage project which in 1878 implemented a real archaeological rediscovery of the place.

The excavation reports, the proceedings of the Pontifical Commission and a series of letters published in the *Bullettino dell' Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* and *Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana* allow us to reconstruct a sequence of important archaeological campaigns, carried out between 1857 and 1870 (for the documents mentioned above, see Tuccinardi 2022: 86–100).

These excavations were carried out in the area occupied by the imposing structure called the Imperial Palace and by the so-called Grandi Magazzini di Settimio Severo (Lanciani 1868: 171), near the Xenodochium of Pammachius, now identified as the Basilica Portuense (Maiorano and Paroli 2013), as well as in the area adjacent to Villa Torlonia. The first archaeological plan of the site is due to Rodolfo Lanciani who, during occasional short visits, was able to document the archaeological excavations undertaken by Alessandro Torlonia; Lanciani's study was fundamental

⁹ It is known the *classiarius* Onesimus erected a small temple between the Incile and the underground tunnel, dedicated to the cult of the Caesar family, of the Lares and of the Fucino (CIL IX, 3887; Sommella and Tascio 1991: 459–460).



Figure 6.10. Lazio, central Italy. Image from Portus Project (<https://www.portusproject.org>).

in defining the topography of the Torlonia excavations at Porto (Lanciani 1868).¹⁰

From 2006 to the present day, the Portus Project, directed by Simon Keay in 2006–2021, has started a new season of systematic investigations in Portus, including extensive geophysical surveys, excavations and geoarchaeological studies. These have produced, as a result, an up-to-date knowledge of the topography and the monumental complexes of the most important port of the Empire (Keay and Millet 2005; Keay 2012, 2021; Keay and Woytek 2022, with previous references; on the geomorphological studies see Bellotti *et al.* 2009: 51–58; Salomon *et al.* 2017: 53–60) (Figure 6.11).

The Portus relief (ST)

Among the numerous marble highlights found during the Torlonia's excavations and included in the Torlonia's collection, the Portus relief (Figure 6.12) is surely one of the best known (Rome, Laboratori Torlonia, Pentelic marble, height 75 cm; width 122 cm).¹¹

¹⁰ Before the surveys of the last decade, fundamental studies about Portus were Lugli and Filibeck 1938 (with cartography by I. Gismondi) and Testaguzza 1970.

¹¹ In the latest edition of the Torlonia Museum catalogue (Visconti 1884, 1885), 52 sculptures are published as originating from Portus. In many

In recent years, thanks to a renewed interest in the Torlonia Collection, the relief has been the topic of several scientific contributions aimed, above all, at interpreting the complex symbology of the representation (Cecamore 2019; Felici 2019a, 2019b; Tuccinardi 2020; Felici 2022; Ugolini 2022: 68–78, *passim*). Beyond a general analysis of the represented symbols, the symbolism connected to the boats' representation, the communicative expedients and the topographical references will be considered in this chapter.

Since the time of its discovery, the port view was interpreted as a representation of the monumental structures in *Portus Claudii* and *Portus Traiani* and, in a time when shipwrecks were not yet investigated, the relief immediately became a source of precious information about shipbuilding and ancient naval engineering, fundamental to reconstructions of the large merchant ships during the Imperial age (see Guglielmotti 1874).

On the left side of the relief, within a frame with a Lesbian kyma, a *navis oneraria* (cargo ship) is approaching the waterfront of the port of Claudius, indicated by the lighthouse. The ship has only sail propulsion: an artemon

cases, however, the stated origins are not reliable (see Tuccinardi 2022: 86–100).

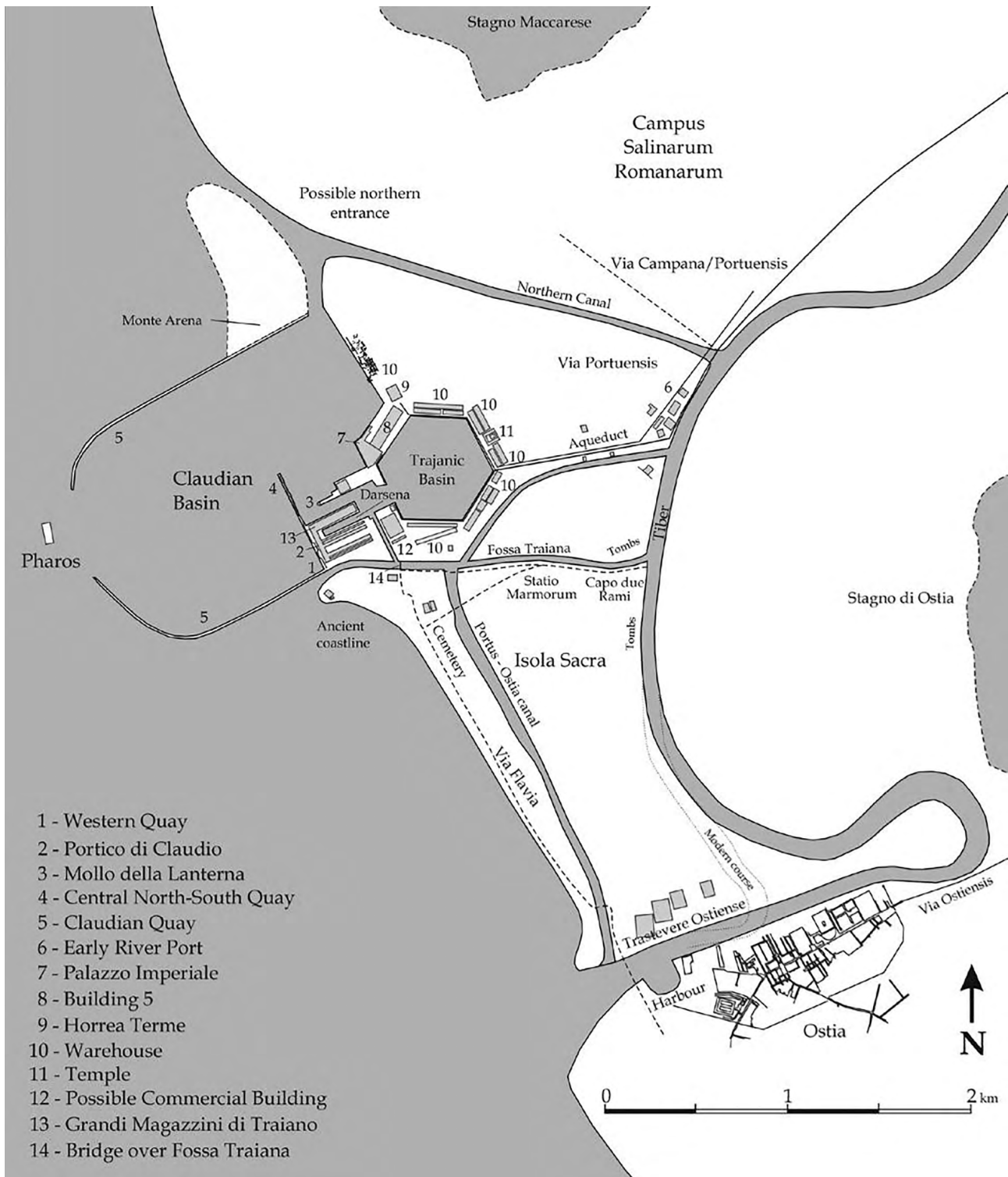


Figure 6.11. Map of Portus, the Isola Sacra and Ostia, showing the location of buildings discovered by the recent research. Image from Portus Project (<https://www.portusproject.org>).

and a main mast equipped with a square sail and a triangular topsail. A small boat flanks the cargo ship, on which a muscular sailor is steering the right helm with a rope passing through two holes in the helm, in order to direct the vessel safely to the entrance of the port. This type of sailor can be compared to modern harbour pilots on pilot boats commanding, for example, large ferries, or

to modern sailors on tugboats.¹² In fact, because of its large dimensions, the vessel had reduced manoeuvrability and needed external support. In the meantime, the mainsail was slackened to make the vessel slow down, while a sailor

¹² On small boats probably operating as tugboats in the Trajan's harbour, see Casson 1965: 33–34.



Figure 6.12. Torlonia Relief n. 430. Image courtesy of Fondazione Torlonia, unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited; photograph by L. De Masi.

with a double-block halyard had probably already furled the sail of the artemon, which is folded next to the prow.¹³ The rest of the crew, composed of four additional sailors onboard, is intensely engaged in various tasks, including the shaping/repair of a piece of wood by a carpenter. On top of the gallery cabin at the stern,¹⁴ a man, probably the owner of the ship, officiates an *apobaterion* ritual, a sacrifice to the gods for the success of the journey (Feuser 2015: 38–39). The owner is accompanied by a woman, perhaps his wife or an attendant, and by another male figure. An additional merchant ship is already docked at a pierced docking stone of the pier. Four muscular sailors are finishing furling the mainsail and topsail, while the gangway is already on the pier, where there are ongoing unloading activities, summarised by a man carrying an amphora. Possibly, this might be the same ship represented as docked inside the Trajan's basin.

The stern of the ship at left is decorated with a Victory holding a wreath, very likely the *tutela navigii*, a patron

¹³ It is also possible this sailor is positioning the gangway (Avilia 2002: 150–151). However, M. M. S. Nuovo (personal communication) emphasises that the gangway is usually represented as a flat plank put on one of the sides of the ship (see, for example, Casson 1965: plate II, Figs. 2 and 3, respectively, a painting and a mosaic, both from Ostia) and not as a curved element in the prow as in the Portus relief. In the docked vessel, the gangway is clearly visible on the right side of the ship; it is crossed by a man carrying an amphora, and behind it is the artemon with the 'curved element' connected to it.

¹⁴ On the religious value of the stern, see Fenet 2016: 264.

deity to help safety throughout a voyage from which the ship often took its name (see Brody 2008: 2–5; Fenet 2016: 318–323). The stern has a small aplustre which ends with a *cheniscus*; another decorative element with unclear function is also present.¹⁵ A refined allegorical representation embellishes the hull, maybe Aurora among the Winds, or a Venus *velificans* between two Erotes (Felici 2022: 33). The mainsail, on which the rings for the sheets are well visible, shows the specular group of a she-wolf with twins on each side of the mast. The top of the mast is surmounted by a winged Victory bearing a wreath. A decoration representing Bacchus with a panther (Di Franco and Merlati 2022: 528–536) is on the prow; it is identical to the representation visible at the top right of the block and similar to the decoration of the prow of the docked ship.

In the background, a view of the most representative monuments of Portus can be identified: the lighthouse of *Portus Claudii* with the bronze statue of an emperor raised on top (Ojeda 2017) and a triumphal arch, recognisable by its attic—seen from the side—and surmounted by a quadriga drawn by elephants, whose attribution and real

¹⁵ This element is interpreted as a lighthouse by E. Felici (2022: 21–26). However, it seems to belong to the ship, rather than being a part of the landscape. An interpretation as a small stern cabin or as a similar structure appears more plausible (Avilia, personal communication and discussion with M. M. S. Nuovo); see also the ship represented in a mosaic from via Nazionale in Rome (Pensa 1999; Salvetti 2002).

location are still debated (De Maria 1988: 247; Fähndrich 2005: 230–232; 236; Tuck 2008: 331–332).

In this symbolic and topographic representation, several well-defined images of deities are present: at the centre, Neptune with a pistrice (marine monster) and the trident (Simon 1994, p. 487, no. 34; Di Franco and Mancini forthcoming: 122–123), Bacchus with a panther to the top right and three Nymphs at the fountain to the bottom right.

On both sides of the lighthouse, on moulded bases, perhaps supported by monumental columns, stand two statues of the deity protecting the place. To the left, there is the Genius Loci of Portus, a youthful togate figure crowned by a lighthouse, with a cornucopia in the left hand and a wreath in the right one (Romeo 1997: 606, n. 35); to the right, there is a bare-chested figure wearing a robe wrapped around the hips, bearing the cornucopia and the wreath, probably identifiable as the Genius Populi Romani (Canciani 1994).

Discussion on interpretation and dating (ST)

Shortly after the discovery of the relief, the archaeologist Alberto Guglielmotti gave sparse information on the exact place of the finding; he says only that it was found in the ruins of the porches around the market of the Roman port, built on the right bank of the Tiber River (Guglielmotti 1874). Archaeological discoveries in the area of the northeast jetty of the hexagonal port confirm the presence of a sacred place dedicated to the cult of the god Liber Pater (Van Haepere 2019: 294–295). For example, in 1864, an inscription was brought to light, dedicated to Liber Pater Commodianus (CIL XIV, 30; EDR n. 149981, R. Marchesini). Furthermore, according to antiquarian sources, a statue of Liber Pater had been found in the area in the fifteenth century, but it was thrown into the sea at the order of Cardinal Bessarione (Volpi 1734: 156).¹⁶ The presence of this temple with rectangular shape was confirmed during the archaeological surveys carried out by Simon Keay (Keay and Millet 2005: 109).

From the analysis of the Portus relief, it is clear the whole view is built on the constant juxtaposition of allegorical images and realistic elements, of allusive figures and explicit representations of the monuments that characterised and made immediately recognisable *Portus Claudii* and *Portus Traiani*. The precise correspondence of the main monuments represented on the Torlonia relief and the ones depicted on the sarcophagus slab at the Vatican Museums (De Maria 1988: 247; Fähndrich 2005: 125–127, pl. 81–82) supports the idea much care was given

to the realistic details. For example, the representation of Neptune could have been either symbolic, as he was the god of the sea, or a precise topographic reference to a real worship place. In fact, the same iconography of the god occurs also in a well-known mosaic found in Ostia with the representation of the lighthouse of Portus (Simon 1994, p. 487, no. 34). Moreover, the effigy of Bacchus should be associated with a cult of Liber Pater, of which, as stated above, a worship place has indeed been identified. Finally, the bathing Nymphs at the bottom right (Figure 6.13), below the Dionysian group, are probably an allusion to a nymphaeum located in Portus, possibly near the temple of Liber. However, even if precise topographic references can be identified, the realism is always combined with the symbolic and allegorical meaning of the relief.

In the case of the man performing the ritual, the face is sufficiently characterised to be considered a real portrait and, perhaps, the owner is the client who ordered the relief. Because of the portraits' modes of execution and the type of hairstyles, a dating in the Severan period can be suggested, a chronology which would also fit well with the marking of the pupil of the large apotropaic eye in the form of a pelta shield (Figure 6.13). Furthermore, although the use of the drill is attested in this period to give greater depth of field and emphasise the contrast between shadows and light (see Belli Pasqua 2022: 43), it is interesting to note the drill is not used everywhere, but only for certain details, like in the relief from Fucino Lake.

A different interpretation of the whole scene was proposed by some scholars (Chevallier 2001: 25; Cecamore 2019: 169), based on the chronology and the presence of symbolic elements like the she-wolf which also have political meanings. The whole scene could represent the imperial ship of Septimius Severus returning to Portus from his trip to Africa in 204 AD. Therefore, according to this interpretation, the relief of Portus would be part of a larger public monument dedicated to Septimius Severus.

However, the parallels found in the portrait (Figure 6.14) might not necessarily be a real representation of the ruler (Balthy 2013), but simply either a *zeitgesicht* (period-face: Zanker 1982) or a *Bildnisangleichnung* (image assimilation: Massner 1982), which implies the imitation of the emperor's portrait by wealthy men or their identification with the image of the emperor.

Moreover, the presence of the she-wolf on the mainsail is not necessarily connected to the imperial ship, and it does not automatically mean it is a realistic element (on the Lupercal in the public and private spheres, see Dardenay 2012: 106–124). The representation of the she-wolf, exclusively symbolic, might be placed in the same semantic context as the large eye, unrelated to the rest of the composition. Both the eye and the she-wolf (Duliere 1979: n. 123) can be interpreted as apotropaic elements. A large eye was commonly used as an apotropaic element on ships because it represents the wider and deeper view which guides the ship through a secure journey and

¹⁶ G.R. Volpi cites the inscription on the statue dedicated by the *Lenuncularii* to Liber Pater, reported by the famous sixteenth-century antiquarian Pirro Ligoro. The *Lenuncularii* was a guild of boatmen that oversaw the driving of the ships across the Tiber River (on *Lenuncularii*, see Casson 1965: 31–36). However, the news about Bessarione seems unfounded, and the inscription, which is not registered in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, may have been invented by Ligorio (see also Lanciani 1868: 181).



Figure 6.13. Torlonia Relief: the apotropaic eye and the three Nymphs at the fountain. Image courtesy of Fondazione Torlonia, unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited; photograph by L. De Masi.

avoids accidents (Meda 2010; Felici 2019a: 7). The she-wolf might also have been a generic symbol of *romanitas* (Zanker 2002: 86, with previous references).

From the times of its discovery, the relief was interpreted as a dedication to Liber Pater offered by a wealthy shipowner to thank the gods for a safe and successful journey.

The frequency of Dionysian images, which deliberately repeat the same statuary type, seems to corroborate the traditional identification of the relief as a votive offering to Liber Pater-Bacchus (and perhaps also to Neptune?) made by a merchant or shipowner; this hypothesis might be confirmed by the interpretation of the letters inscribed on the mainsail. According to some scholars (for example, Feuser 2015: 39) they could be unravelled as V(otum) L(ibero) or as a shortened formula for V(otum) L(ibens animo solvit) (see Meiggs 1973: 165; Dardenay 2012: 122). Recently, Enrico Felici (2022: 43) proposed a different interpretation. These initials represent the name of the ship painted on the sails, which was sometimes the same as the *tutela*, as stated above. Consequently, VL may be the abbreviation for Victoria Libera.

The connection between the symbols of victory, repeated multiple times (Victories and wreaths), and the positive outcome of the navigation is evident (Felici 2022: 43); even Vergilius points out how ships which would successfully return to port were celebrated as victorious (Verg. G. 1, 303–305). The inscription on the sail might call to mind the ritual of embroidering on the sails the best wishes for a good navigation (Tuccinardi 2020: 178), mentioned in Apuleius (Metam., XI, 16), for example.

Reflecting on the symbolic meaning of the ship and rejecting the votive purpose, Felici (2019a, 2022: 23) advances the hypothesis the relief might have been part of a funerary monument. In fact, in antiquity, ships and lighthouses were often connected to funerary contexts as a metaphor of the journey from life to afterlife.¹⁷

However, even if the interpretation of the relief as part of a funerary monument might be plausible, it contrasts

¹⁷ See the mainstream reference in Cumont 1949: 283–286, an overview of the prosaic and spiritual value of boats in funerary representations in Guidetti 2007: 86–87 and the political meaning of the lighthouse as a triumphal monument in Ugolini 2022: 76–77.



Figure 6.14. Torlonia Relief: the cargo ship. Image courtesy of Fondazione Torlonia, unauthorised use, reproduction or alteration is prohibited; photograph by S. Tuccinardi.

with the high probability the slab comes from the so-called second side of the hexagon, where Alessandro Torlonia's archaeological excavations certainly took place and several pieces of evidence suggest the presence of a temple dedicated to Liber Pater (Van Haepere 2019: 294–295). The three Nymphs depicted near the left edge of the slab, in close connection with the image of Bacchus-Liber Pater, may suggest the presence of a scenographic fountain (nymphaeum); this type of architectonic complex may be connected—given the topography of the locations—to the layout of the aqueduct that lies on the second side of the hexagon where the Liber Pater temple is located, offering a new link between the relief and this specific area (Fig. 6.11).

Moreover, representations of the deities in funerary reliefs with work scenes, celebrating the achievement of the deceased from a professional point of view, are rare or completely lacking. Take, for instance, the reliefs from the tomb of Eurysaces at Porta Maggiore (Ciancio Rossetto 1973; Jones 2018) or the monument of Naevoleia Tyche in Pompeii (Kockel 1983, 100–109 no. Sud 22) and the numerous slabs of similar subject from the necropolis of Ostia (on this subject, see Zimmer 1982): in the concreteness of these images, the divine is an offstage spectator.

Final considerations and conclusions (MMSN, ST)

On the basis of the analysis presented here, both iconographic and topographic, it is possible to state

the relief from Fucino Lake is a celebration of the extraordinary feat of engineering represented by the construction of the artificial outlet of the lake. The works to regulate the waters of the lake remained vivid in collective memory for generations because of the great effort in terms of its planning, the implementation of the project and the involvement of thousands of workmen for more than 10 years. The enterprise carried out by Emperor Claudius is clearly evoked in the relief by the presence of the workmen with the winch, which gives information not only on the depicted historical event, but also on the exact topographic location represented, namely, the channel and the tunnel of the artificial outlet. The purpose of a precise topographic representation appears fairly clear, even though the entire scene is only partially preserved: in fact, it is possible to identify a sanctuary; a Romanised city with orthogonal streets and a theatre, surrounded by walls; a road flanked by a necropolis and cultivated fields which survive only thanks to the intervention of the emperor. In this way the landscape itself becomes a symbol of the triumph of order out of chaos, of the capacity for Roman engineering to dominate a messy and uncontrolled nature and an allegory of the good government of a great ruler. If the interpretation of the two boats as an evocation of a *naumachia* is correct, the two vessels contribute to the reconstruction of a precise landscape in a specific moment and with an explicit political message: the memorable and impressive inauguration of the outlet organised by emperor Claudius with the involvement of at least 24

triremes. The view of a multitude of warships at 700 m at sea level—in a mountainous area on the Apennines—must have been such an event, possibly remembered also with a graffito in the temple of Apollo in Alba Fucens. The presence of vessels from the imperial fleet in the context of the Fucino Lake is otherwise unexplainable, and their reading as auxiliary boats appears to be a hypothesis not sufficiently supported by historical and/or archaeological evidence. The *classarii* were involved in the maintenance of the outlet as engineers of the military genius, more than as sailors patrolling the lake.

The unknown artist of the relief had a celebrative intent in his mind: every single element represented contributes to the celebration of Rome and of the greatness of the emperors. The use of a type of limestone available in the area of the outlet (Agostini 2003: 87) indicates a municipal production which exploits both local materials and workshops with their own style and technical abilities. However, even if the artistic language is local, it is possible to argue the client was public or somehow connected with the public, like a wealthy imperial official (a freedman?) or a *procurator*. The relief can be considered as the expression of official art, conveying a message of political propaganda. Its original location remains unknown, but as two large and heavy fragments were reused in the walls of the pit where they were found, it is possible the original location was not far from their replacement location. Perhaps it was a large celebrative monument located near the Incile, maybe in proximity of the tunnel under the Salviano Mountain. Because of the large dimensions and because of its iconography, it is less likely it was a private funerary monument. The stylistic characteristics suggest a date in the second century AD. Consequently, the monument was not built for the inauguration of the outlet, but nearly a century thereafter. The ancient sources mention the involvement of the emperors Trajan and Hadrian for the refunctioning of the outlet, and their interventions in the Fucino Lake area might have been a good occasion to celebrate the works carried out by their predecessor, Claudius. However, the use of chisels and the drill for specific purposes might indicate the late second century AD or early in the beginning of the third century AD,¹⁸ under the rules of the Severii, even if works carried out by this imperial family in the Fucino Lake area are not known.

The relief from the Fucino Lake and the one from Portus can be associated together, not only for the circumstances of their discovery, the presence of detailed ships rich in meticulous particulars and the perfect fusion of realistic and symbolic elements, but also because both the reliefs celebrate great feats of engineering and the magnificent infrastructures built by the Roman emperors (Claudius and Trajan). In the relief from Portus, the symbolic elements seem to refer to actually existing topographic locations and, at the same time, the detailed elements on the large merchant boat are obvious allegories.

Portus was the largest and the most important harbour of the Empire; its monumental layout, known from iconographic sources, was striking in many respects: the lighthouse, the statues on columns, the arch surmounted by a quadriga.¹⁹ As rightly noted, in the Portus relief, the celebration of the empire and beneficent emperors merges with that of the security of the empire's food supply, closely linked to the great harbour of Portus (Felici 2022: 28–33).

The merchant boat itself is a symbol of wealth and prosperity, guaranteed by the Roman empire through the complex food supply system. For the Portus relief, it is possible to suppose a private client, a wealthy merchant offering a vow to the god Liber Pater through a monument with a specific and well-constructed semantic structure and a clear message: only thanks to the strength and the solidity of the empire was it possible to achieve individual goals and carry out fortunate private undertakings. A wise and prudent management of the empire is the basis for the happiness and prosperity of the entire community, just as the success of a sea journey depends on the skill, wisdom, prudence and judgment of the commander.

The owner of the monument, probably an imperial freedman, might have decided to be represented during his flourishing activities on the sea, according to a rather widespread custom. Consequently, there is a coexistence of symbolic and real elements, and the sea journey has the double value of biographical memory and metaphor. On the grounds of the specific topographic references of the finding context and the dense presence of divine elements rarely attested in the funerary repertoire—ruling out the mythological scenes and the cases where the defunct is compared to the divine—the hypothesis of a funerary purpose appears less probable than a votive offering. The propitiatory and apotropaic meaning of numerous symbols, the ritual represented and the large protective eye seem to indicate a ritual function of the relief, that shows the representation of devotional practices related to daily life in Portus and, more generally, to the seafaring world.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Cairolì Fulvio Giuliani for discussing further considerations of the winches in a personal communication; to Luisa Migliorati for general comments and suggestions on the chapter; to Carlo Gasparri and Lorenzo Campagna for the comments about technical and stylistic aspect of the Portus relief; to Filippo Avilia for the productive conversation on *naumachiae*, naval iconography and naval archaeology; to Stefano Medas and Carlo Beltrame for sharing knowledge on naval archaeology; to Daniela Villa for talking on the sanctuary of the goddess Angitia; to Pascal Arnaud for a prolific discussion of the symbolism of the Torlonia relief from

¹⁸ According to T. Schäfer (2022: 280), the relief is dated to the time of the emperor Claudius.

¹⁹ For the imperial monuments at Portus, see Tuck 2008: 325–335; Ugolini 2022: 57–84.

Portus; and to Carlo Gasparri and Lorenzo Campagna for the comments about technical and stylistic aspects of the relief from Portus.

References

- Afan de Rivera, C. 1836. *Progetto della restaurazione dello emissario di Claudio e dello scolo del Fucino [Project for the restoration of the Claudius effluent and the Fucino drainage]*. Napoli: Stamperia e cartiera del Fibreno.
- Agostini, S., 2003. I lapidei [The stonemen]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.) *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 87–89. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Agostinoni, E. 1908. *Il fucino [The forge]*. Bergamo, Italy: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche.
- Amandry, M., Burnett, A., Hostein, A., Mairat, J., Pau Ripollès, P. and Spoerri Butcher, M. 2019. *Roman provincial coinage*, Supplement 5 (vols. I, II, III, VII.1 and IX). Available online: <<http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/supp/rpc-supp-5.pdf>> (accessed 9/3/2023).
- Avilia, F. 2002. *Atlante delle navi greche e romane [Atlas of Greek and Roman ships]*. Formello, Italy: Ireco.
- Avilia, F. and Jacobelli, L. 1989. Le naumachie nelle pitture pompeiane [The naumachie in Pompeian paintings]. *Studi Pompeiani* 3: 131–154.
- Balty, J. C. 2013. Interactions entre la sphère publique et la sphère privée: Types iconographiques et types statuariés (Umbildungen, Zeitgesicht et Privatapotheose) [Interactions between the public sphere and the private sphere: Iconographic types and statuary types (Umbildungen, Zeitgesicht and Privatapotheose)]. In: A. Dardenay and E. Rosso (eds.), *Dialogues entre sphère publique et sphère privée dans l'espace de la cité romaine: Vecteurs, acteurs, significations [Dialogues between the public sphere and the private sphere in the space of the Roman city: Vectors, actors, meanings]*, 275–295. Paris: Ausonius.
- Belli Pasqua, R. 2016. La città rappresentata. Contributo all'analisi dell'immagine della città nella cultura figurativa greca e romana [The city represented. Contribution to the analysis of the image of the city in Greek and Roman figurative culture]. *Thiasos* 5(2): 49–62.
- Belli Pasqua, R. 2022. Dalla tecnica alla forma: Strumenti e trasformazioni della cultura figurativa nella scultura antica [From technique to form: Tools and transformations of figurative culture in ancient sculpture]. *Quaderni di Architettura e Design* 5: 33–52.
- Bellotti, P., Mattei, M., Tortora, P. and Valeri, P. 2009. Geoarchaeological investigations in the area of the imperial harbours of Rome. *Mediterranée* 112: 51–58.
- Beltrame, C. 2003. Le rappresentazioni delle navi [The representations of ships]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 83. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Bergen, C. 2022. *Wegen der Schönheit eurer Häfen: Hafenanlagen der frühen Kaiserzeit—Spiegel städtischer Selbstdarstellung? [Because of the beauty of your ports: Port facilities of the early Imperial period—mirrors of urban self-expression]*. Rahden, Germany: Marie Leidorf GmbH.
- Bignamini, I. 2003. Ostia porto e Isola Sacra. Scoperte e scavi dal medioevo al 1801 [Ostia port and Isola Sacra. Discoveries and excavations from the Middle Ages to 1801]. *Rivista dell'Istituto nazionale d'archeologia e storia dell'arte* 26: 37–78.
- Bukowiecki, E. and Mimmo, M. 2023. Infrastrutture portuali a Portus. Le recenti indagini dell'École française de Rome [Port infrastructure in Portus. Recent investigations by the École française de Rome]. In: M. L. Caldelli, N. Laubry and F. Zevi, (eds.), *Ostia e Portus dalla Repubblica alla Tarda Antichità: Studi di archeologia e di storia urbana sui porti di Roma. Atti del sesto Seminario Ostiense (Ostia Antica-Roma, 10–11 aprile 2019) [Ostia and Portus from the Republic to Late Antiquity: Studies of archaeology and urban history on the ports of Rome. Proceedings of the sixth Ostiense Seminar (Ostia Antica-Rome, 10–11 April 2019)]*, 321–336. Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome.
- Bishop, M. M. C. J. 2002. *Lorica segmentata. A handbook of articulated Roman plate armour*, vol. I. Braemar, Scotland: Armatura Press.
- Brisse, A. and de Rotrou, L. 1883. *Prosciugamento del lago Fucino fatto eseguire da Sua Eccellenza il Principe Alessandro Torlonia. Descrizione storica e tecnica, in due volumi ed un atlante [Drainage of Lake Fucino commissioned by His Excellency Prince Alessandro Torlonia. Historical and technical description, in two volumes and an atlas]*. Roma. (Ristampa in occasione del centenario della prima edizione a cura di D. D'Amato, U. M. Palanza, Avezzano 1983.)
- Brody, A. J. 2008. The specialized religions of ancient Mediterranean seafarers. *Religion Compass* 2: 1–11.
- Canciani, F. 1994. Populus/Populus Romanus. In: H. C. Ackermann and J. Boardman (eds.), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC) [An iconographic dictionary of classical mythology]*, 438–443. Zürich, Switzerland: Artemis.
- Casson, L. 1965. Harbour and river boats of ancient Rome. *Journal of Roman Studies* 55(1–2): 31–39.
- Casson, L. 1995. *Ships and seamanship in the ancient world*. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Originally published in a hardcover edition by Princeton University Press, 1971.)
- Cecamore, C. 2019. Rilievo Torlonia [Torlonia relief]. In: G. Pasquale (ed.), *L'arte di costruire un capolavoro:*

- La colonna Traiana [The art of building a masterpiece: The Trajan column]*, 169. Firenze, Italy: Giunti.
- Chevalier R. 2001. Le ports d'Ostie: Pur une relecture des source [The ports of Ostia: A rereading of the sources]. In: J. P. Descoeurde (ed.), *Ostia: Port et porte de la Rome antique [Ostia: Port and gate of ancient Rome]*, 20–29. Genève, Switzerland: Musées d'art et d'histoire.
- Ciancio Rossetto, P. 1973. *Il sepolcro del fornaio Marco Virgilio Eurisace a Porta Maggiore [The tomb of the baker Marco Virgilio Eurisace at Porta Maggiore]*. Roma: Istituto di studi romani.
- Clemente, V. 1976. Istituto Archeologico Germanico di Roma e i corrispondenti abruzzesi (1829–1838): Spunti per la riscoperta romantica degli Abruzzi [German Archaeological Institute of Rome and its correspondents from Abruzzo (1829–1838): Ideas for the romantic rediscovery of the Abruzzi]. In: *Atti del III Convegno Viaggiatori europei negli Abruzzi e Molise nel XVIII e XIX sec. Teramo-Giulianova, 19–20 settembre 1974 [Proceedings of the III Conference on European travellers in Abruzzo and Molise in the 18th and 19th centuries. Teramo-Giulianova, 19–20 September 1974]*, 183–259. Teramo, Italy: Centro di Ricerche Storiche Abruzzo Teramano.
- Cumont, F. 1949. *Lux perpetua [Perpetual light]*. Paris: P. Geuthner.
- Dardenay, A. 2012. *Images des fondateurs d'Énée à Romulus [Images of the founders from Aeneas to Romulus]*. Bordeaux, France: Ausonius Éditions.
- De Maria, S. 1988. *Gli archi onorari di Roma e dell'Italia romana [The honorary arches of Rome and Roman Italy]*. Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
- Di Franco, L. and Mancini, L. forthcoming. Una testa di Nettuno al Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Taranto. Dalla lettura iconografica alle testimonianze del culto di Poseidon/Neptunus nella colonia greca e romana [A head of Neptune at the National Archaeological Museum of Taranto. From the iconographic reading to the testimonies of the cult of Poseidon/Neptunus in the Greek and Roman colony]. *Mediterranea* 19: 113–140.
- Di Franco, L. and Mermati, F. 2022: Il Bacco da Piacenza: Matteo Camera, Tito Angelini e il contesto di uno scavo borbonico [The Bacchus of Piacenza: Matteo Camera, Tito Angelini and the context of a Bourbon excavation]. *Archeologia Classica* 73: 519–549.
- Dulière, C. 1979. *Lupa Romana: Recherches d'iconographie et essai d'interprétation [Lupa Romana: Iconographic research and interpretation essay]*. Bruxelles: Institut historique belge de Rome.
- Faccenna, D. 2003. I rilievi Torlonia dal Fucino [The Torlonia reliefs from Fucino]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 69–81. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Fähndrich, S. 2005. *Bogenmonumente in der römischen Kunst: Ausstattung, Funktion und Bedeutung antiker Bogen- und Torbauten [Arch monuments in Roman art: Equipment, function and significance of ancient arch and gate structures]*. Rahden, Germany: Leidorf.
- Felici, E. 2019a. Il rilievo Torlonia. Manifesto libertino del commercio marittimo [The Torlonia relief. Libertine manifesto of maritime trade]. *L'archeologo subacqueo* 70(2): 2–32.
- Felici, E. 2019b. Il rilievo Torlonia: Appunti di iconografia portuale [The Torlonia relief: Notes on port iconography]. *Rivista di archeologia* 43: 179–193.
- Felici, E. 2022. Iconografia portuale romana: Note di topografia antica litoranea [Roman port iconography: Notes of ancient coastal topography]. *Rivista di Topografia antica* 22: 7–66.
- Felisini, D. 2019. Giovanni Torlonia. *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 96: 273–276.
- Fenet, A. 2016. *Les dieux olympiens et la mer [The Olympian gods and the sea]*. Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome.
- Feuser, S. 2015. Kult und Kultbautenn in Hafendarstellungen, Hafendarstellungen in Kult und Kultbauten Kult und Kultbauten [Cult and cult buildings in port representations, port representations in cult and cult buildings cult and cult buildings]. In: T. Schmidts and M.M. Vučetić (eds.), *Häfen im 1. Millennium AD: Bauliche Konzepte, herrschaftliche und religiöse Einflüsse [Ports in the 1st millennium AD: Architectural concepts, manorial and religious influences]*, 35–52. Regensburg, Germany: Schnell & Steiner.
- Geoffroy, A. 1878. *L'archéologie du lac Fucin [The archaeology of Lake Fucin]*. Paris: Didier.
- Giuliani, C. F. 2003a. Note sulla composizione dei rilievi Torlonia [Notes on the composition of the Torlonia reliefs]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 81–82. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Giuliani, C. F. 2003b. La rappresentazione degli argani [The representation of the winches]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 79–81. Pescara: Carsa Edizioni.
- Giuliani, C. F. 2008. Sfidando gli Inferi: Problemi di cantiere per l'emissario del Fucino [Challenging the Underworld: Building site problems for the Fucino emissary]. *Anejos de Archivo Español de Arqueología* L: 33–48.
- Guarducci, M. 1953. Alba Fucens: Graffiti nell'antico tempio sul colle di S. Pietro [Alba Fucens: Graffiti in the ancient temple on the hill of S. Pietro]. *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Notizie degli scavi di antichità* 8: 117–125.

- Guglielmotti, A. 1874. *Delle due navi romane: Scolpite sul bassorilievo portuense del principe Torlonia dissertazione del P. M. Alberto Guglielmotti [Of the two Roman ships: Sculpted on the port bas-relief of Prince Torlonia dissertation by the P. M. Alberto Guglielmotti]*. Roma: Cotta e Comp. Tipografi del Senato.
- Guidetti, F. 2007. La tomba di Trimalchione. Saggio di commento archeologico al Satyricon [The tomb of Trimalchio. Archaeological commentary essay on the Satyricon]. In: F. de Angelis (ed.), *I normalisti per Paul Zanker [Normalists for Paul Zanker]*, 77–95. Pisa, Italy: Edizioni della Normale Superiore di Pisa.
- Jones, N. B. 2018. Exemplarity and encyclopedism at the Tomb of Eurysaces. *Classical Antiquity* 37(1): 63–107.
- Keay, S. J. 2012. *Rome, Portus and the Mediterranean*. London: The British School at Rome.
- Keay, S. J. 2021. Reflections upon the challenges in documenting Portus Romae, the maritime port of Imperial Rome. In: L. Chioffi, M. Kajava and S. Örmä (eds.), *Il Mediterraneo e la storia [The Mediterranean and history]*, 51–70. Roma: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae.
- Keay, S. J. and Millet, M. 2005. *Portus. An archaeological survey of the port of Imperial Rome*. London: The British School at Rome.
- Keay, S. J. and Woytek, B. 2022. Portum Traiani: An interdisciplinary approach to the imagery of Trajan's harbour at Portus. *Chapters of the British School at Rome* 90: 63–107.
- Kockel, V. (1983). *Die Grabbauten vor dem Herkulaner Tor in Pompeji [The tombs in front of the Herculaneum Gate in Pompeii]*. Mainz, Germany: P. von Zabern.
- Lanciani, R. 1868. *Ricerche sulla topografia della città di Porto [Research on the topography of the city of Porto]*. Roma: Tipografia Tiberina.
- Letta, C. 1994. Rileggendo le fonti antiche sul Fucino [Re-reading the ancient sources on Fucino]. In: E. Burri (ed.), *Sulle rive della memoria. il Lago Fucino e il suo Emissario [On the shores of memory. Lake Fucino and its outlet]*, 202–212. Pescara, Italy: Carsa Edizioni.
- Lugli, G. and Filibeck, G. 1935. *Il porto di Roma imperiale e l'agro portuense [The port of imperial Rome and the agro portuense]*. Roma: Istituto Italiano Arti Grafiche.
- Maiorano, M., Paroli, L. and Agnoli, N. 2013. *La Basilica Portuense: Scavi 1991–2007 [The Portuense Basilica: Excavations 1991–2007]*. Borgo San Lorenzo, Italy: All'Insegna del Giglio.
- Maiuri, A. 1958. Navalia Pompeiana. *Rend. dell'Accademia di archeologia, lettere e belle arti*, 33: 7–34.
- Massner, A. 1982. *Bildnisangleichung: Untersuchungen zur Entstehungs- und Wirkungsgeschichte der Augustusporträts (43 v.Chr.–68 n.Chr.) [Adaptation of portraits: Studies on the history of the origin and impact of Augustus portraits (43 BC–68 AD)]*. Berlin: Mann.
- Meda, S. 2010. Gli occhi e l'anima propria delle barche: Religiosità e credenze popolari tra antichità e tradizione [The eyes and soul of boats: Religiosity and popular beliefs between antiquity and tradition]. In: E. Acquaro, A. Filippi and S. Medas (eds.), *La devozione dei naviganti. Il culto di Afrodite Ericina nel Mediterraneo [The devotion of sailors. The cult of Aphrodite Ericina in the Mediterranean]*, 11–23. Lugano, Italy: Athenaion, Lumières internationales.
- Meiggs, R. 1973. *Roman Ostia* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mertens, J. 1969. *Alba Fucens. II. raports et études [Alba Fucens. II. reports and studies]*. Bruxelles: Centre Belge de recherches archéologiques en Italie Centrale et Méridionale.
- Migliorati, L. 2007. Peltuinum: Un aggiornamento [Peltuinum: An update]. *Journal of Ancient Topography* XVII: 107–126.
- Migliorati, L. 2015. Lo spazio diacronico: Elementi di riflessione sull'uso del suolo attraverso i secoli [The diachronic space: Elements of reflection on land use through the centuries]. *Roma* 27(2): 129–142.
- Nuovo, M.M.S. and Tedeschi, C. forthcoming. Graffiti di San Pietro in Albe tra Antichità e Alto Medioevo [Graffiti from St. Peter in Albe between Antiquity and Early Middle Age]. In G. Curzi C. D'Alberto, M. Gianandrea and E. Tosti (eds.) *Lungo la via Tiburtina Valeria nel Medioevo [Along the via Tiburtina during Middle Age]*. Proceedings of the conference held in Chieti and Rome, 14–17 November 2023. Rome: Società Romana di Storia Patria.
- Ojeda, D. 2017. Rilievo Torlonia inv. n. 430: L'immagine sul faro [Torlonia relief inv. no. 430: The image on the lighthouse]. *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 118: 85–92.
- Paroli, L. 2005. History of past research at Portus. In S. J. Keay and M. Millet (eds.), *Portus. An archaeological survey of the port of Imperial Rome*, 43–59. London: The British School at Rome.
- Pensa, M. 1999. Moli, fari e pescatori: La tradizione iconografica della città portuale in età romana [Piers, lighthouses and fishermen: The iconographic tradition of the port city in Roman times]. *Rivista di Archeologia* 23: 94–130.
- Pitassi, M. 2011. *Roman warships*. Martlesham, England: Boydell and Brewer.
- Romeo, I. 1997. Genius. In: H.C. Ackermann and J. Boardman (eds.), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC) [An iconographic dictionary of classical mythology]*, 599–607. Zürich, Switzerland: Artemis.
- Salomon, F., Goiran J.-P., Bellotti, P. and Keay, S. 2017. *Géoarchéologie des canaux de Portus - Estimation des*

- gabarits [Geoarchaeology of the canals of Portus—Estimation of dimensions]. In G. Caneva, C. M. Travaglini and C. Virlouvet (eds.), *Roma, Tevere, Litorale. Ricerca tra passato e presente [Rome, Tiber, Coast. Research between past and present]*, 53–60. Roma: École française de Rome, CROMA - Università Roma Tre.
- Salveti, C. 2002. Claudius Claudianus clarissimus vir? Gli scavi per l'apertura di via Nazionale e il ritrovamento del mosaico con scena di porto [Claudius Claudianus, the most famous man? The excavations for the opening of Via Nazionale and the discovery of the mosaic with a port scene]. *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 103: 68–88.
- Schäfer, T. 2022. *Der Reliefzyklus Medinaceli: Von Actium bis Nero: Zeitgeschichte und Selbstverständnis im Principat des Kaisers Claudius [The relief cycle Medinaceli: From Actium to Nero: Contemporary history and self-understanding in the principate of Emperor Claudius]*. Rahden, Germany: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH.
- Segenni, S. 2003. Il prosciugamento del lago Fucino e le scoperte archeologiche [The drying up of Lake Fucino and the archaeological discoveries]. In: A. Campanelli (ed.), *La collezione Torlonia di antichità del Fucino [The Torlonia collection of Fucino antiquities]*, 56–62. Pescara: Carsa Edizioni.
- Settis S. and Gasparri C. (eds.). 2020. *I marmi Torlonia. collezionare capolavori [The Torlonia marbles. Collecting masterpieces]*. Milano, Italy: Electa.
- Simon, E. 1994. Neptunus. In: H.C. Ackermann and J. Boardman (eds.), *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae (LIMC) [An iconographic dictionary of classical mythology]*, 483–497. Zürich, Switzerland: Artemis.
- Sommella, P. and Tascio, M. 1991. Ricerca sull'urbanistica romana nella zona fucense: Marruvium [Research on Roman town planning in the Fucens area: Marruvium]. In: *Il Fucino e le aree limitrofe nell'antichità, atti del Convegno di Archeologia (Avezzano, 10–11 novembre 1989) [Fucino and neighbouring areas in antiquity, proceedings of the archaeology conference (Avezzano, 10–11 November 1989)]*, 456–477. Avezzano: Archeoclub d'Italia—Sezione della Marsica.
- Testaguzza, O. and Peliti R. 1970. *Portus: Illustrazione dei porti di Claudio e Traiano e della città di porto a Fiumicino [Portus: Illustration of the ports of Claudius and Trajan and the port city at Fiumicino]*. Roma: Julia Editrice.
- Tuccinardi, S. 2020. Bassorilievo con veduta del Portus Augusti [Bas-relief with view of the Portus Augusti]. In: S. Settis and C. Gasparri (eds.), *I marmi Torlonia. Collezionare capolavori [The Torlonia marbles. Collected masterpieces]*, 175–178. Milano, Italy: Electa.
- Tuccinardi, S. 2022. *Un tesoro di erudizione e arte. Il Museo Torlonia di scultura antica [A treasure trove of scholarship and art. The Torlonia Museum of ancient sculpture]*. Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.
- Tuck, S. L. 2008. The expansion of triumphal imagery beyond Rome: Imperial monuments at the harbors of Ostia and Leptis Magna. In: R. L. Hohlfelder (ed.), *The maritime world of ancient Rome: Proceedings of 'the maritime world of ancient Rome': Conference held at the American Academy in Rome, 27–29 March 2003*, 325–341. Ann Arbor, MI.: Published for the American Academy in Rome by the University of Michigan Press.
- Ugolini, F. 2020. *Visualizing harbours in the classical world: Iconography and representation around the Mediterranean*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Van Haepelen, F. 2019. *Regio I: Ostie, Porto (fana, templa, delubra. Corpus dei luoghi di culto dell'Italia antica—FTD, 6) [Regio I: Ostie, Porto (fana, templa, delubra. Corpus of places of worship in ancient Italy—FTD, 6)]*. Paris: Collège de France.
- Visconti, P. E. 1884. *I monumenti del Museo Torlonia riprodotti con la fototipia. Vol. II, tavole [The monuments of the Torlonia Museum reproduced with the phototype. Vol. II, plates]*. Roma: Stabilimento Fotografico Danesi.
- Visconti, P. E. 1885. *I monumenti del Museo Torlonia riprodotti con la fototipia. Vol. I, testo [The monuments of the Torlonia Museum reproduced with the phototype. Vol. I, text]*. Roma: Tipografia Tiberina di F. Settis.
- Volpi, G. R. 1734. *Vetus Latium profanum [Old Latin profanity]*. Patavii: [Giovanni Antonio e Gaetano Volpi] excudebat Josephus Cominus.
- Zanker, P. 1982. Herrscherbild und Zeitgesicht [Image of ruler and face of time]. In *Römisches Porträt Wege zur Erforschung eines gesellschaftlichen Phänomens. Wissenschaftliche Konferenz 12–15 Mai 1981 (Römisches Porträt) [Roman portrait ways of researching a social phenomenon. Scientific conference 12–15 May 1981 (Roman portrait)]*, 307–312. Berlin: Humboldt Universität.
- Zanker, P. 2002. *Un'arte per l'impero. funzione e intenzione delle immagini nel mondo romano [An art for the empire. Function and intention of images in the Roman world]*. Roma: Electa.
- Zimmer, G. 1982. *Römische Berufsdarstellungen [Roman job descriptions]*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann.

Maritime material culture and its connection to Eastern Orthodox Christian saints: a preliminary study

Rafail Papadopoulos

Abstract: Christianity has long been associated with water: it acts as a natural barrier in Moses' story, it is a means of spiritual cleansing used by John the Baptist and it is connected to parables and miracles attributed to Jesus and various saints. Water and water-related activities such as fishing and seafaring have been purposefully adopted into faith, spiritual practices and remembrance. Moreover, marine vessels, which have been an important means of transport for Mediterranean civilisations since prehistory, were included in Christian practices in a variety of ways, not just as symbols of saints but also as part of rituals.

This chapter presents a preliminary study of the connection between Christian saints and maritime material culture. The focus is examples from early Christianity, especially Greek Orthodox Christianity, as developed in the eastern Mediterranean during the Mediaeval period and thereafter. The first part of the study assesses written sources associated with saints of the sea such as Nicholas of Myra and Phocas the Gardener. The second section discusses how art and material culture—mainly icons and frescoes, religious works of art—relate to narratives of the saints' lives, associated miracles, local beliefs and spiritual practices. Icons are devotional paintings of Christ or other holy figures typically executed on wood and used ceremonially in the Byzantine and other Eastern Churches, while frescoes are religious murals painted on walls.

Thus, the main purpose of this chapter is to present matters of faith and materiality in maritime context, as expressed through textual evidence and material artefacts from Eastern and Greek Orthodox Christianity. It is hoped this preliminary study will reveal new insights into and connections between maritime material culture, the sea itself and the artefacts, symbols, monumental art, votives and rituals which have been used by Christian maritime communities for over two millennia.

Introduction

Water has been associated with faith and the divine since prehistoric times (Rappenglück 2014). In Europe as early as the Neolithic, it was conceived as the personification and extension of deities (Tvedt and Oestigaard 2006; Oestigaard 2011). This conceptualization inspired cults, beliefs, rituals and practices in many communities. Some of the earliest material evidence for processes linking divinity with water comes from the Mediterranean region and dates to the first millennium BC. Poseidon, the ancient Greek god of the sea, was its embodiment, personification and sole ruler. Temples to Poseidon were built near ports and maritime routes to influence maritime activities and movements and gain the god's patronage and protection (Mylonopoulos 2013). Deities such as Poseidon and mythological events taking place in water were the frequent subjects of sculptures, paintings and other types of artefacts from the period, while rituals and festivals celebrated water-related events such as the 'Navigium Isidis' ['The Voyage of Isis'] of Roman-era Alexandria, the annual reopening of the sailing season (Hanrahan 1962) which memorialised

the links between divinities, aquatic environments and the communities using them.

This deep entanglement between water, religion, material culture and rituals continued into the first millennium AD. In its first five centuries, Christianity, which was then just emerging from and still firmly connected to the Judaic tradition, was closely associated with water and maritime material culture (Goodenough 1943: 408–410; Siegal and Yovel 2023). Water—including sea water—was viewed as means of purification, as well as a symbol for spreading the message of the new religion (see Réau 1955–1959 and Jensen 2000 for a discussion of baptism and iconography in early Christian art). Some of the apostles were fishermen (Matthew 4:18–22), or they spread their message through maritime journeys across the Mediterranean, or they were baptised with water (Acts 2:38). Christian maritime communities built churches and chapels to host and honour icons and relics of saints and gain the saints' patronage and protection (Morgan 2010: 23–24; for a general introduction to early saints and their connections to pre-Christian traditions, see Réau 1955–