III

PERFORMING CIVIC COMMUNITY IN THE EMPIRE
This study of ‘civic rituals’ belongs to a larger investigation of the ‘civic identity’ of Roman Ostia. The overall objective requires a thorough exploration of questions such as to what extent inhabitants identified with the town, or to what extent they felt that they lived in a suburb of Rome, and how Ostia’s function as Rome’s main port made an impact on its civic life.

Towns like Oenoanda and Ephesus in Asia Minor, which have been the object of studies of ‘civic identity’ in the past, handsomely repaid the efforts of their authors, and it seems warranted to harbour similar expectations with regard to Ostia. Ostia was one of the most important towns in the Roman world, with perhaps 50.000 inhabitants.\footnote{For instance, in N. Morley, Metropolis and Hinterland. The City of Rome and the Italian Economy, 200 B.C. - A.D. 200 (Cambridge 1996), 83 f., Ostia is included in the “immediate hinterland” of Rome, while A.-K. Rieger, Heiligtümer in Ostia (München 2004), 22, considers Ostia to have been a “Vorstadt” of Rome during the Republic, yet not without its own character.}

\footnote{Another major Italian port was recently the subject of a similar study, see C. Sotinel, Identité civique et Christianisme. Aquilée du IIIe au VIe siècle (Rome 2005), although here the sources were mainly literary ones from Late Antiquity.}

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inhabitants, and over 6,500 inscriptions survive\textsuperscript{4} to give us an account of the life of its people.

Having here chosen to focus on a narrower topic, I use the concept of ‘civic rituals’ to denote activities that have the function of strengthening the historical memory of a population and its awareness of ‘belonging’, by creating and recreating communal experiences and mutual bonds. There is a certain affinity with the explorations of the ‘political culture’ (of the Roman Republic) as recently carried out by Karl-Joachim HÖLKESKAMP and other German scholars.\textsuperscript{5}

By way of further introduction, it needs to be said that the situation regarding Ostian civic identity is not as straightforward as one might imagine. In Roman towns (whether with or without a pre-Roman past), one normally encounters a situation where individuals had a complex identity, with loyalties to their own town and towards Rome (and, during the empire, towards the emperor). The evidence ranges from Cicero’s \textit{duas censeo esse patrias} to the younger Pliny’s \textit{illa nostra Italia},\textsuperscript{6} and includes a host of epigraphic texts showing local munificence.\textsuperscript{7}

It has been argued that at Ostia the situation was different. Ostia underwent enormous growth from the late Flavian period onwards and must have been a town where the proportion of newcomers was conspicuous. Many residents had no previous ties to the place and they were often too busily engaged in commercial ventures to have time to focus on civic activities, or so it seems. A detachment can be

\textsuperscript{4} This figure for surviving inscriptions can be found in \textit{EpiLat 5}.


\textsuperscript{7} It is of course true to say with Nicholas Purcell that from the Flavian emperors to Commodus “it is scarcely surprising that Italy does not in this period display any signs of regional fragmentation” (‘Rome and Italy’, in: \textit{The Cambridge Ancient History} XI [Cambridge 2000, 2nd ed.], 405-443, esp. 430). But it is equally true that municipal elites and patrons residing in Rome, mindful of their \textit{ultima origo}, expended vast sums of money in Italian towns, surely not without some feelings of ‘patriotism’ and often boosting the recipient’s position in the competition with its neighbours.
observed for instance in the urbanistic structure of the town. Michael Heinzelmann has recently promoted the idea of an “urbanistisches Defizit”: relatively few new public buildings can be attributed to the period of rapid expansion, there are no new temples or venues of entertainment built in this period, and there seems to have been little interest in embellishing the town on a scale one finds elsewhere, or in other energetic activities.\(^8\)

Against this background, it becomes particularly significant to look for activities in the field of Ostian ideology: were the Ostians just soulless residents in a suburb of Rome, intent on maximizing their individual profit? Or are there signs that those who played some role in the town, the elite, were engaged in creating a fellow spirit – a spirit of, as it were, ‘Ostianess’, ‘Ostianity’, or indeed ‘Ostiensitas’ (not a word found in the Oxford Latin Dictionary)\(^9\)? If such a spirit was present, what about rituals in that context?

1. Living History in Ostia

First of all, history was present at Ostia in many ways. Tradition has it that Ostia was founded by Rome’s fourth king Ancus Marcius in the period 640-616 BCE, according to the Livian chronology (Livy 1.33.9). Ostia in fact enjoyed the honour of being Rome’s first colonia. It is beyond doubt that in origin Ostia was an urban entity separate from Rome – one must not be deceived by its near-suburban status today. Urban communities were small and tightly spaced in the early and middle Republic; Rome had many neighbours and later allies that were much closer, such as Antemnae, Fidenae and so on.

There is a remarkable amount of evidence that, for the Ostians of the imperial period, these historical roots were important; to judge from the evidence, more so than what seems to be the case in other communities (admittedly an argument e silentio). That the Ostians cared about the national myth of Rome is shown, for instance, by the


\(^9\) It is obvious that a certain local spirit is bound to develop in any urban area (at least in premodern times), and that such territorial feelings may include a specific city region or even just the quarter or block where an individual resided. In the absence of sources that would enable us to study such phenomena on the microlevel, I will focus on the general level at which urban leaders operated.
well-known ‘Ostia altar’ dedicated to Silvanus, which is decorated with a frieze showing the she-wolf, Romulus and Remus. In Roman Italy it is surprisingly rare to find iconographic representations referring to events in Livy’s Book 1. Representations of Greek myths are much more common, as is for instance shown by the wall paintings in Pompeii.

Titus Livius counted time ab urbe condita, but this chronology is rarely encountered in the epigraphic evidence from Italy. Consular datings and, sometimes, local eras are found instead. In Ostia and its surroundings, however, the phrase ab urbe condita appears on a number of occasions. So, for instance, an elogium from a central location in Ostia celebrates the fact that Ancus Marcius urbe


11 In general on the wall paintings in Pompeii see K. Schefold, *Die Wände Pompejis. Topographisches Verzeichnis der Bildmotive* (Berlin 1957), 366-373 (with a list of motives); even Egyptian motives are more common than those from Roman myth, legend, and history. As shown by Weigel 1992, op. cit. (n. 10), the twins and the she-wolf motive appear in three instances from Ostia (294 nos. 15, 18, 19), which is more than from any other place except Rome. The composition is found once in Pompeii, in the well-known wall painting from the House of M. Fabius Secundus, which refers to early Roman myth in multiple ways (ibid. 293 f. no. 7); on this see recently R. Cappelli, ‘Questioni di iconografia’, in: A. Carandini – R. Cappelli (eds.), *Roma, Romolo, Remo e la fondazione della città. Exhibition catalogue Rome 2000* (Milan 2000), 151-183, esp. 166-176. See also J. Penny Small, ‘Romulus et Remus’, in: *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* VII (Zürich 1994) 639-644, which shows the rarity of representations of the adult Romulus; with the exception of a wall painting from Pompeii (641 no. 7, the House of Fabius Ululitremulus) no instances are known outside Rome. Greek myth in contrast is overwhelmingly popular, while Vergil’s *Aeneid* (like Livy) seems to have provided little inspiration in the Roman world, at least when it comes to mosaic decorations, as shown by D. Stefanou, *Darstellungen aus dem Epos und Drama auf kaiserzeitlichen und spätantiken Bodenmosaiken* (Münster 2006), 11-50: not a single case is known from Italy.

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condit[a] / [pri]mum colon[iam c(ivium) Rom(animorum) / dedux[it].\(^\text{13}\)

The foundation of Rome seems to have been part of the general mentality at Ostia in a way that has no parallel anywhere else.\(^\text{14}\)

Another example of how history, and Ostia’s closeness to Rome, was celebrated are the two great inscriptions decorating the main city gate, the so-called Porta Romana. These identical inscriptions, from the 2nd century CE, in Fausto Zevi’s sensational restoration, reminded the people of Ostia that it had originally been Marcus Tullius Cicero the consul, followed by the tribunus plebis Publius Clodius, who gave Ostia its walls.\(^\text{15}\) All such inscriptions and iconographic documents can be said to have promoted a sense of Ostia’s place in the Roman world, referring as they did to past experiences, to local history and achievements.

2. The Benefactions of Lucilius Gamala the Elder

From this brief sketch of the presence, in the Ostian environment, of national myth, Roman history, and Ostia’s role in it, we move to actual events in the town, which engaged its residents and had an impact on their perceptions of their role in the Roman world. A natural starting point is constituted by the two large stelae recording the careers and the deeds of two prominent Ostians, several

\(^{13}\) See now EpiLat 73 f. no. 1 (= AE 2000, 266 = CIL XIV 4338, incomplete); referred to also in R. Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* (Oxford 1973, 2nd ed.), 16.

\(^{14}\) Examples include CIL XIV 472; Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità 1953, 248 f. no. 16 = Studi Classici e Orientali 11 (1962), 210; EpiLat 300 f. no. 94.1 = AE 1977, 153; and E.V. Thomas, ‘AB URBE CONDITA TR[...] a New Commemoration of the Imperial Tribunician Powers from the Imperial vicus (Castelporziano)’, in: M.G. Lauro (ed.), *Castelporziano 3: Campagne di scavo e restauro 1987-1991* (Rome 1998), 137-149 (= AE 1998, 278a; this inscription celebrates the tribuniae potestates of the early Julio-Claudians, which is another way of tying the Ostian area to the national capital).

generations apart: the Publii Lucilii Gamalae. For the first of these men, who was active in the last century BCE, most likely during the triumviral or even the Augustan period, an inscription (CIL XIV 375), which is much later, from well into the Imperial period, records a number of public activities, among which appear: cum accepisset public(e?) / lucar remisit et de suo erogati/onem fecit / ... [id]em epulum trichilinis CCXVII / colonis dedit / [id]em prandium sua pecunia coloni[s] / Ostie(n)sibus bis dedit. In addition, the last lines of the inscription record that he was granted a funus publicum by the decurions. These were all public events, and while I will come back to the lucar (probably a sum with which actors were rewarded), I shall not devote more attention here to the public meals and feasts, which, while they certainly are prime examples of civic rituals, have recently been the object of a thorough study by John D’ARMS, followed by other contributions.

The most debated event in Gamala senior’s inscription (the erection of which was obviously a public manifestation as well), is the reference to a pollicitatio belli navalis (lines 40-43), “a promise in relation to a naval war/battle” (the exact translation is the issue here). We are told that when the town was preparing to sell some real estate in order to provide the money, Gamala instead donated the necessary sum. A majority of scholars relate this to a naval battle in the Mediterranean during the civil or triumviral wars of the first century BCE, but there has been some disagreement in the past.

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17 “When he had received public money to pay out to actors he gave it back and paid the sum from his own resources; he offered the citizens of Ostia a public feast on 217 dining couches; he twice offered a public meal to the Ostian citizens at his own expense”.


21 See Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 497 f., including references to L.R. Taylor and other earlier scholars (with criticism of their occasionally erroneous interpretations).
Recently, Olli SALOMIES has presented a strong argument in favour of a different view, namely that the passage refers to a naumachia, a mock sea-battle, probably on the Tiber.\(^\text{22}\) This is an interpretation which Fausto ZEVI has always refuted.\(^\text{23}\) However, to my mind SALOMIES has presented irrefutable arguments for why the Latin expression pollicitatio belli navalis cannot refer to a military campaign.\(^\text{24}\) This view leads to the conclusion that a naumachia, a mock sea-battle of some kind, was staged at Ostia during the triumviral or Augustan period. The rather modest sum, 15,200 sestertii, also points in this direction.\(^\text{25}\) How would the government in Rome have looked at such a paltry contribution to a major national enterprise? We can compare this with an inscription from Iguvium dating to the Augustan period, in which half of this sum, 7,750 HS, is donated in ludos victoriae Caesaris Augusti.\(^\text{26}\) 15,000 HS for spectacles thus seems plausible.

3. Spectacles in Ostia

Gamala senior’s inscription thus introduces the question of public spectacles in Ostia, a potentially important topic when exploring political culture and rituals. Kathleen COLEMAN has shown that historical events could often be re-enacted at games in the amphitheatre and at naumachiae.\(^\text{27}\) What shall we imagine that the


\(^{\text{23}}\) Zevi 2004, op.cit. (n. 18), 50 f. n. 10.

\(^{\text{24}}\) Salomies 2003, op. cit. (n. 22), among other things points out that that in Latin, the verb polliceor takes a direct object – “I promise something, e.g. the war” – which means that the noun pollicitatio is followed by an object genitive. In inscriptions, pollicitatio often appears in the context of municipal euergetism.


\(^{\text{26}}\) See CIL XI 5820 = ILS 5531, mentioned by R.P. Duncan-Jones, The Economy of the Roman Empire. Quantitative Studies (Cambridge 1982, 2nd. ed.), 201 no. 1079 (who gives some other examples on pp. 200 f.). The donation was given by one Cn. Satrius Cn. f. Rufus IIIvir iur. dic. The same man gave a smaller sum, 3,450 HS, in conmeatum legionibus – but one must note that he was a private individual, while in Ostia we are dealing with expenses authorized by the city council.

\(^{\text{27}}\) K.M. Coleman, ‘Fatal charades: Roman executions staged as mythological enactments’, Journal of Roman Studies 80 (1990), 44-73, esp. 64 f., 71 f.; ead.,
Ostian spectators of the *bellum navale* were presented with? Was it Athenians against Persians, Romans defeating the Carthaginians, or was it perhaps an evocation of some of the recent events of Roman history, in which Ostia had been concerned? We know, for instance, that Ostia had been attacked by pirates in 67 BCE, while Pompey the Great conquered the pirate fleets soon after, and we know that some Ostians had played leading roles in maritime campaigns of the late Republic, as is illustrated by another famous funerary monument, that of Cartilius Poplicola still visible outside the Porta Marina, which in itself constituted another visible historical record in the Ostian collective memory. In the absence of hard evidence, one can only speculate on the nature of the mock sea battles that were staged in Ostia. It is, however, possible to explore the question of spectacles somewhat further. The *bellum navale* is not the only reference of this kind in Gamala the Elder’s inscription. The text also records that he received and handed back the *lucar* “in public”, (*publice*, as I believe), and that he was involved in *ludi*; perhaps the two events were connected.

An important question here is where the Ostians gathered to enjoy spectacles. They had a theatre, which was built by Marcus Agrippa and later enlarged by Commodus and Septimius Severus, but that seems to be the only local structure built for the purpose of gathering large crowds (the theatre could be used for *ludi scaenici*, which are attested in Ostia). No traces of an amphitheatre have been found,

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30 The text is not clear, and it is uncertain whether it reads *accepisset public(um) lucar* or *accepisset publice* (in public) *lucar*; cf. Zevi 2004, op. cit. (n. 18), 48 (the drawing of the text by Pirro Ligorio), and 52. For the meaning of *publice*, see *Oxford Latin Dictionary* s.v. ‘publice’ nos. 3-5. Even in the former case we are likely dealing with an action that took place in public.


nor traces of a *circus*. This remains the case even after the recent German electromagnetic investigation of the Ostian Trastevere, the unexcavated right bank of the Tiber.\footnote{M. Heinzelmann et al., ‘Ostia Regio III. Untersuchungen zu den unausgegrabenen Bereichen des Stadtgebietes. Vorbericht zur dritten Grabungskampagne 2000’, *Römische Mitteilungen* 108 (2001), 313-328.} There are references in several inscriptions to games sponsored by members of the local elite,\footnote{See *CIL* XIV 376 (P. Lucilius Gamalai junior: *hic ludos omnes quos fecit amplificavit impensa sua idem munus gladiatorium ded(it)*); *CIL* XIV 409 (Cn. Sentius Felix *curator lusus iuvenalis*); *FOst* 50 for 152 CE (someone familiar with *gladiatorial munus venationis legitima edidit*); *EpiLat* 300 f. no. 94.1 (= *CIL* XIV 4616 + 5381 + additional fragments).} and scholars think that some temporary structures may have been erected on such occasions.\footnote{Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 427 f.} It is reasonable to assume that at these events local cohesion was furthered and that the theme of ‘Ostianity’ somehow came to the fore, in some more or less ritualistic way. A particular thought should be devoted to the *lusus iuvenalis* or *iuvenum*, games in which the local youth took place; they were obviously of a nature very different from gladiatorial games. There are only a few references to this kind of games in which probably the youth of the local elite competed,\footnote{Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 334; see further the next note.} but I think they were significant in generating a local spirit. Certainly events which occur during an individual’s formative period, in his or her youth, tend to leave deep impressions. We know a few local *curatores iuvenum*, who surely had a hand in organizing this kind of activity.\footnote{The titles employed vary slightly, see recently F. Zevi, ‘Q. Asinio Marcello e un recente libro su Ostia’, *Archeologia Classica* 56 (2005), 533-541, esp. 537 f. (a local notable, Asinius Marcellus, was honoured by the *iuvenes decurionum*, while M. Acilius Priscus Egrilius Plarianus was *patronus coloniae [et] iuvenum*). Cn. Sentius Felix was *quaestor iuvenum*, *patronus iuvenum cisianorum* and *curator lusus iuvenalis* (*CIL* XIV 409). Another *curator lusus iuvenalis* named Hostilianus appears in *EpiLat* 300 f. no. 94.1. On Hostilianus and Asinius Marcellus, see also M. Fora, *Epigrafia anfiteatrale dell’occidente romano IV. Regio Italiae I: Latium* (Rome 1996), 64-66, 79 f.} The absence of permanent venues for spectacles is important, because this is a factor which points to the influence from the capital. Ostia was a large urban community with a population that surely was eager for entertainment. One must consider the possibility that the Ostians frequently went up to Rome for races and games. Surely no one will doubt that the major games and races in Rome fascinated the
Ostians, for news and rumours travelled in antiquity too. For proof we might turn to a recent paper by Marilena D’ASDIA, who has shown that a floor mosaic celebrating the famous Roman charioteer Musclosus once decorated a room in the so-called Domus di Apuleio between the theatre and the four small Republican temples (the ‘Quattro tempietti’) in Ostia. 38

Travel to Rome is surely plausible, even when considering the means of communication in Roman times, for it was possible to travel the somewhat over 20 km (15 miles) from Ostia to Rome in less than a day, either by land or on the river. 39 Returning the same day may have been a different matter, although perhaps travel downstream on the river was a convenient option. There are parallels for spectators travelling far in search of entertainment. The Romans who went out to the amphitheatre at Fidenae under Tiberius’ austere reign (Tacitus, *Annales* 4.62 f.) made a shorter trip, but the situation in the Gulf of Naples shows that much greater distances could be covered. On the walls of Pompeii we find painted advertisements for *ludi* taking place in many other towns, such as Herculaneum, Nola, and Cales, and as far away as in Puteoli and Cumae. 40 Even though Pompeii had an amphitheatre of its own, people were clearly expected to travel. If and when this was frequently occurring behaviour, it will have reduced the feeling of ‘Ostianness’. Rituals at *ludi* may often have been attended in Rome, not at home in Ostia.

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39 Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 426 f. does not agree that people found it easy to travel. He also held the belief that an amphitheatre must have existed somewhere, even though none has been found (cf. n. 33 above: this now seems unlikely). And “races may occasionally have been held near the sea coast on the southern plain” (ibid. p. 427 f.). Meiggs 1973, 344 f. also advances the idea that Statius may refer to a ceremonial horse-race in Ostia in *Silvae* 5.2.113-117.

4. *Imperial Travel to or through Ostia*

A follow-up question imposes itself naturally, related to travel in the other direction, from Rome to Ostia. What about about emperors or high officials and priests travelling down to the port, or members of the imperial family and military commanders passing through and staging processions, public sacrifices and similar events in Ostia itself? Such activities are the very essence of civic rituals.

There is a recent study by Joanne Spurza on imperial visits,\(^{41}\) which shows that we have explicit references only from the first century, for which there are literary sources, and not particularly much information at that. Texts such as Suetonius’ imperial biographies provide information that in particular the emperor Claudius stayed in Ostia on several occasions. He departed for his British campaign from Ostia, but his return gave origin to a diplomatic crisis, because he felt that the Ostians had not paid him the proper respect (Suetonius, *divus Claudius* 38.1). That Claudius devoted special attention to Ostia is of course to be expected, because of the construction of the new harbour at Portus. For most of the Julio-Claudians, we have explicit references at least to their passing through Ostia; for instance, Caligula brought the ashes of his mother Agrippina back to Rome via Ostia on a bireme with much theatrical display (Suetonius, *Caligula* 15.1).

For the second century, when literary sources are scarce, we unfortunately have no specific information on ceremonies involving emperors. The interest shown in Ostia by the second century-emperors is not in doubt: the building projects in Portus and Ostia under Trajan, Hadrian, Pius and so on show that imperial benefactions continued to flow.\(^{42}\) As for *adventus*, ceremonies, sacrifices, there is, however, no explicit evidence, although one would expect visits to have been frequent.\(^ {43}\) What we know indicates

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\(^{42}\) The chapter on “Imperial Control” in Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 298-310 does not really do justice to this important topic. There is place for more work, cf. n. 44 below.
\(^{43}\) The closest we can come an event of this kind is a mention in the *Fasti Ostienses*, probably under 142, of a visit by the Iberian king Pharasmanes with wife and son (see *FOst* 45), although one cannot exclude that they had travelled from Brundisium along the Via Appia.
that the emperors devoted particular attention to Ostia and that a number of events took place that tended to pull Ostia closely into the sphere of the capital.44

5. A Special Ostian Feature: the Fasti Ostienses

An essential and rather unique aspect of Ostian traditions and customs will be discussed next: the Fasti Ostienses. This yearly record of events, inscribed on marble slabs, is unique among epigraphic sources from the Roman world. The Fasti Ostienses survive in fragments dating from 49 BCE to 175 CE.45 We are dealing with a period of two centuries, while the surviving sections of the Fasti cover 79 years in whole or in part.46

First of all, it is obvious that the public erection of the Fasti in itself is a prime example of ritualistic behaviour. For at least two centuries, but probably for an even longer period, a text was produced annually and affixed in a central public space47 – perhaps in the Forum, or perhaps in connection with the temple of Vulcanus, Ostia’s chief deity (the site of which has still not been identified48). This text drew attention to matters that we are already familiar with: the Roman state, Ostia’s close association with Rome, and the town itself.

The redaction of the Fasti followed a simple annalistic principle. For each year, the consuls were recorded first, after which followed

44 The particular interest of the imperial government in Ostia and Portus appears not least from the numerous investments in the urban infrastructure documented by lead pipes stamped with the emperor’s name, an often neglected source of information; see C. Bruun, ‘L’amministrazione imperiale di Ostia e Portus’, in: Bruun – Gallina Zevi 2002, op.cit. (n. 8), 161-192.
45 See most recently FOst; earlier and still fundamental is L. Vidman, Fasti Ostienses (Prague 1982).
46 The Ostian Fasti are worth a more thorough treatment than is possible here. For a recent study on the appearance of Trajan in the text, see A. Fraschetti, ‘Traiano nei Fasti Ostienses’, in: J. González (ed.), Trajano emperador de Roma (Rome 2000), 141-154.
47 The matter is discussed in FOst 11-13: Vidman thought that the open space outside the Porta Marina had been reserved for the Fasti, but since the space was only built under Hadrian, they need to have been placed elsewhere before, and in any case one can assume that they had a connection to the temple of Vulcanus (the pontifex Volkani was likely responsible for their redaction). The central Forum would seem the most likely place for the Fasti.
48 Zevi 2004, op. cit. (n. 18), 57, and see further below n. 57.
some events on the ‘national’ level. Then the *duoviri* in Ostia were listed, sometimes but not always accompanied by some Ostian events. The ‘national’ events are largely of two kinds. Briefly put, events relating to the imperial family are often included, as in *M. Cocceius Nerva imperator appellatus est* (96 CE) or *Nero togam sumpsit* (20 CE), as well as some items about the highest government officials (*Afranius Dexter cos. in domo sua examinis inventus*, 103 CE). Secondly, public events of various kinds that took place in Rome are mentioned: the distribution of *congiaria*, very often the staging of games, even scenes such as *complures in scalis Gemoniis iacuerunt* (33 CE, relating to the execution of allies of Seianus). The choice of recorded events is sometimes surprising, but most of them are such that they may have been witnessed by some or even by many Ostians, or in any case were of concern to Ostians (such as *horrea Aemiliana arserunt*, 38 CE, important for businessmen and those in the shipping trade).

Ostian events are, surprisingly enough, much less frequently recorded. Besides elections (to the chief priesthood of *pontifex Volkani*) I have found notices for nine years only, and it is clear that many years recorded no Ostian events at all. The following events were recorded (all dates are CE):

- 2: the body of L. Caesar arriving from Massilia landed in Ostia, and was solemnly received by thousands of citizens and the local magistrates.
- 91: *in [fundo?] Volusiano / arb[os ful]/mine ic[t]a; cond[itum per] / aedilicios*. 49
- 94: the Crypta Terentiana was restored.
- 112: *aedis Volkani vetustate corrupta / [restituta or]nato opere dedicata est*.
- 115: *incendium ortum in v[ico? ---] / et praedia complura de-uesta sunt*.
- 140: *sta[tua M. Aureli Ca[esaris ---] / publice po[sita ---]*.

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49 Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 338 refers this event to Ostia. The reference occurs before the *duoviri* of that year.
152: The most extensive narrative appears in 152: a private citizen, whose name has not been preserved, dedicated a basilica, and on this occasion also offered a munus gladiatorium with a venatio legitima, and he dedicated two statues, apparently of the Genius and the Fortuna populi Ostiensis, quas pos(uit) s(ua) p(ecunia) in [foro] – in fulfillment of a vow he had made four years earlier.

In general, the Fasti Ostienses reinforce the picture of Ostia which has emerged so far. The town had close ties to Rome, and day-to-day events in the capital, mainly public spectacles which can be included under the heading ‘rituals’, seem to have been of importance for Ostians. The principles that guided the choice of which Ostian events to include escape us, and it is surprising that so few local entries appear in the Fasti. It cannot be a question of a representative selection of public events in Rome’s port. Even so, some information is provided on public ceremonies in Ostia that fulfilled the function of strengthening local cohesion.

One aspect still needs to be addressed in connection with the Fasti Ostienses: when did the Ostians abandon this ritual, and why? The question is important, but I am not aware of any definite answer. The marble slabs of the Fasti were later broken up and reused; it used to be thought that this happened in Late Antiquity, perhaps as Christianity took over. But a recent suggestion considers that some fragments may have been re-employed possibly as early as the Severan period, which seems odd. The question needs to be investigated further.

6. The Ostian Cult of the Dioscuri

Among the events recorded in the Fasti Ostienses many belong to the religious sphere, and religious events are of course intimately connected with the topic of ritual. In fact, as studies on Oenoanda and Ephesus have demonstrated, an ancient city’s civic identity was fundamentally connected to religious aspects. The question of religious practices in Ostia is much too large to be addressed here in

50 See FOst 14, where the authors attribute to Patrizio Pensabene the idea that the re-employment of some fragments of the Fasti is of Severan or a slightly later date. Any judgment on ancient marble by an authority such as Professor Pensabene must be taken seriously, but no publication in this matter is known to me, and so the question has to remain somewhat open for the time being.
and I will mainly restrict myself to some comments on the cult of Castor and Pollux. Among their several functions, the Dioscuri were also the protectors of sailors, and this is surely the reason why they were among the chief deities of Ostia.52

It is known that regularly, on January 27, the cult of Castor and Pollux was celebrated at Ostia, and that Rome’s praetor urbanus officiated on this occasion. Chariot races were part of the celebrations, as stated in an inscription from around 200 CE (CIL XIV 1).53 As late as in 359 CE, we hear about a sacrifice at the Ostian temple of the Castores performed by the City Prefect of Rome at the time of a grain shortage (Ammianus Marcellinus 19.10.4), and solemn ceremonies conducted by Roman magistrates in front of the people are mentioned in a little known text by a fifth-century grammarian.54 Finally, an inscription shows that oracles were given in the temple of Castor and Pollux.55 It used to be the case that the site of the temple was unknown. After the recent German archaeological investigations and the electromagnetic survey of Ostia this may no longer be so. The river harbour of Ostia has been identified, as well as the remains of a temple on top of what seems to have been the navalia, in which ships were kept. It is certainly a very plausible suggestion that this temple, located in an environment with


52 Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 344.


55 A brief mention in Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 346; for a detailed discussion, see G. Barbieri, ‘Settimio Nestore’, Athenaeum 31 (1953), 158-169 = idem, Scritti minori (Rome 1988), 325-336, who suggested that the temple may have been located on the corner of the Decumanus and the Via dei Molini. Ostia may have had more than one temple of the Dioscuri.
nautical connotations, is the temple of the Dioscuri. The rituals which we know took place in connection with the temple of the Castores were probably played out very much in the public eye, in a highly visible location.

7. Topography, religion, and ritual

This insight serves as the departure for some final topographical reflections on rituals and civic identity. It seems likely that this river harbour complex with the temple of Castor and Pollux, if that is what it is, can be identified as one focal point for ritual and civic life in Ostia. The temple of Volcanus too ought to have been of major importance, but its site is unfortunately not known. The suggestion that it stood in the Forum has not found general approval. In any case, one must attribute an important role to the central Forum and the so-called Capitolium, and, at the opposite end of that open space, the temple of Roma and Augustus, another reminder of Ostia’s mission in the world, as one might say: as a loyal assistant of Rome.


57 A. Pellegrino, ‘Il culto di Vulcano ad Ostia. Nuove testimonianze’, Miscellanea Greca e Romana 10 (1986), 289-301, esp. 298-301 argues for the existence of two temples, the older of which located outside the Porta Marina, the other in the immediate vicinity of the theatre. Rieger 2004, op. cit. (n. 1), 219-225, proposes a location for the (main) temple of Vulcanus at the north side of the republican forum, but Pensabene 2005, op. cit. (n. 51), 500-502, advances serious objections. Another centrally located temple is the one in the Piazzale delle Corporazioni, which Rieger 2004, op. cit. (n. 1), 243-249, suggests was dedicated to Tiberinus Pater, while she (somewhat imprecisely) credits Pellegrino with proposing Vulcanus. Again there is no solid evidence for the attribution to Tiberinus, as pointed out by Pensabene 2005, op. cit. (n. 51), 502, who suggests a temple for the imperial cult instead.

Another site must surely have loomed large in the consciousness of many Ostians, not least the wealthy and influential ones: the famous so-called Piazzale delle Corporazioni, where the trading companies and shippers conducted their business in their appropriately identified and decorated stalls. When the adjacent theatre and the nearby Baths of Neptune are added to this topographical context, one might well argue that this ought to have been the real heart and soul of the town. It would be very helpful to know more about public events and rituals here.

What can be said is that all these sites were closely connected. Ostia had a clearly delineated Decumanus Maximus, leading from the Porta Romana past the theatre and the Piazzale delle Corporazioni to the Forum and the local Capitolium, which was rebuilt in the imperial period on a slightly raised platform.\textsuperscript{59} After the Decumanus crossed the Forum, it split up in two, one road leading to the Porta Marina, the other up towards the Tiber and the river harbour and, probably, the temple of the Dioscuri. This stretch, or at least part of it, must have been the main route of any procession of city-wide importance, and, to go back to Gamala the Elder’s inscription, we know that the section that crossed the Forum had been paved by him, because the inscription mentions that he \textit{viam silice stravit quae est iuncta Foro ab arcu ad arcum. Arcus} here refers to monumentalized former gates in the fourth-century BCE \textit{castrum} walls.\textsuperscript{60} Much later, under Caracalla, a proper arch was built along this route, next to the theatre. Early in the second century the route had been given a more dignified appearance, when a row of porticoes was built along its first stretch (they were rebuilt by Gamala iunior: \textit{CIL XIV 376}).\textsuperscript{61}

What has been outlined here are of course merely circumstantial architectural and topographical details, lacking the essential

\textsuperscript{59} Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 380 wrote “If Ostia had a Capitolium, its natural place was in the Forum”, while also pointing out that the \textit{cella} was not tripartitioned, and that no proof exists that the Capitoline triad in fact was venerated in the temple. The best source is an inscription mentioning an \textit{aedituus Capitoli} (\textit{CIL XIV 32 = ILS 6153}).

\textsuperscript{60} Thus Meiggs 1973, op. cit. (n. 13), 501. Zevi 2004, op. cit. (n. 18), 55, however considers the \textit{arcus} to have spanned the \textit{cardo maximus} of Ostia.

\textsuperscript{61} On the porticoes, see C. Pavolini, \textit{Ostia. Guida archeologica Laterza} (Rome – Bari 1989), 51-55, on the Arch of Caracalla, see ibid., 63 f.
information about how often there were processions and what their character might have been. I can do no better here than to point to some analogies. The festivals (or rituals) which are described in the epigraphic documents from Oenoanda and Ephesos describe in some detail how the officiating priests, magistrates and assistants were to organize the public events in connection with the games and sacrifices that were established by the local benefactors. The document from Oenoanda prescribes a procession through the theatre,\(^{62}\) while at Ephesos one finds passages like the following:

After the assemblies have been dismissed, the type statues and the images should be carried back to the sanctuary of Artemis and should be handed over by the guards, two of the neopoioi and a beadle attending, to Mousaios, sacred slave of Artemis, custodian of the things deposited, the ephebes receiving and escorting from the Magnesian Gate into the theatre, and from the theatre right to the Koressian Gate with all due dignity.\(^{63}\)

Many of the same elements can be found in Ostia: a monumentalized city gate, an obvious route for the procession, and the theatre. There were also statues. In the Ephesian passage the reference must be to cult statues and smaller statues that could be carried, and these must have existed in Ostia too.\(^{64}\) In addition, Ostian inscriptions mention a large number of statues of deserving individuals erected by public decree and in public places (as was the case with Lucilius Gamala senior), and the archaeological evidence is there for everyone to see. These images were hardly carried in annual processions, but solemn inauguration rituals would have been the rule, and, once erected, the statues reminded the population of local notables (as well as of imperial officials and members of the imperial house).\(^{65}\)

A locality which the excavators of Ostia found to be particularly rich in statues was the area of the so-called oriental cults, the

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\(^{62}\) Wörrle 1988, op. cit. (n. 2), 12 f.


\(^{64}\) The information available only relates to ‘oriental’ cults; see Rieger 2004, op. cit. (n. 1), 143-146 for a series of silver statuettes, some 20 cm tall, that represented Magna Mater, Attis, Virtus, Silvanus etc. They had been donated by pious worshippers and surely qualify as the kind of cult images that could easily be carried in a procession.

triangular space by the Porta Laurentina to the south. Numerous statues of members of the imperial family draw attention to Ostia’s close relation with the centre of power. Sculptures directly relating to the cults of Magna Mater, Attis, Dionysos, and other deities, together with inscriptions of devoted Ostians, demonstrate without doubt the vitality of these cults from, at least, the second century CE onwards. This fact has lead Rieger to discuss the public manifestations of the cult in Ostia, above all in the form of the well-known processions of the followers of Magna Mater, the hastiferi, dendrophori, and others. The evidence is, once again, taken from other localities, but one cannot doubt that these public manifestations took place, and that these cults, all of which at some point had been introduced to Ostia from elsewhere, had an important role to play in creating and maintaining a sense of community in Ostia.

8. Conclusion

Even though there are gaps in our evidence from Ostia, we have some information relating to a number of features that belong to the wide topic of civic rituals. Briefly put, the evidence underlines the particular role that Ostia had as the main port of Rome in close proximity to the capital. The pull of the metropolis was undoubtedly strong in many ways. Yet we find indications that the particular role of Ostia, established since the town’s earliest origins, was remembered, although the population during the Principate had changed more or less completely.

There were clear attempts at establishing and keeping up a local character through a number of rituals, unfortunately incompletely known, but spanning areas such as epigraphic records of historic events, public feasts, games and spectacles of various kinds, the Fasti Ostienses, religious manifestations, and statues of deserving members of the local elite. On the other hand, Ostia and the Ostians could obviously never escape the impact of the nearby capital, not to say the impact of Empire.

Toronto, March 2008

68 See Rieger 2004, op.cit. (n. 1), 154-159 for processions.