

Sophie Menge: PhD project „*Coarse- and fineware in context. Archive material and new finds from the Forum and the Foro della statua eroica in Ostia*”

Pottery is an important source for interpreting life in the ancient world as it reflects on cultural activity in antiquity, whether as transport or storage vessels, as dining, drinking or cooking utensils or otherwise in secondary use. In addition to the typological identification and, thus, the answer to questions of provenance and chronology, it is to be investigated to what extent these cultural practices are reflected in the respective findings. Consequently, the aim of this PhD thesis is not only a contribution to ceramic research, but particularly a contribution to the research into Ostia's settlement history and its cultural practices in the course of the centuries. The emphasis, thus, lies on the analysis of the contexts (involving mainly the pottery but also all the other finds belonging to the respective context), the taphonomic analysis of the material¹ and the interpretation of the results. The aim is not to create a new 'OFP typology' but to determine the various types with the help of already existing typologies and to then examine the composition of each context regarding the stratigraphy, the origin and dating of the material, as well as the taphonomic processes. The relative chronology resulting from this analysis will be supported by drawing comparisons with local, regional and supra-regional find complexes and by considering supporting dating evidence from the respective context (i. e. coins) and the stratigraphy.

Concerning the ceramic finds themselves, a broad range of pottery will be examined: From republican to late antique material and from so-called fineware to coarse pottery, every find will be included. Due to the excavation history of Ostia antica, republican and late antique pottery is not nearly as well represented in scientific research as their imperial counterparts. Most of the late antique material has been discarded during the excavations in the 19th c. and the first half of the 20th c. and only a few excavation projects were able to explore republican levels and material in Ostia antica. Hence, the in-depth documentation and publication of such material is crucial.

The dissertation is covering four different trenches in the city centre: Three late antique find complexes (IDV1: *Taberna della Venere*, TFR1: *Taberna forum rooms* and the FSE: *Foro della statua eroica*), as well as imperial contexts and a few late republican contexts from TFR2: *Taberna forum rooms*. The contexts vary from levelling layers to destruction layers, building pits and depositions of various kinds (mainly obliteration deposits and foundation sacrifices).

¹ Archaeological taphonomy examines all processes that a find goes through, from the manufacturing to the usage (pre-depositional), from its disposal (depositional) to the changes an object can undergo after its deposition (post-depositional). Human actions as well as natural processes will be considered.

The late antique complexes belong to the latest-built structures in Ostia. They show similar, possibly simultaneous depositions of ceramic material that is a lot older than the creation of the respective contexts. In late antiquity, this use of older material for levelling layers, fillings and repairs is widespread in the centre of Ostia and may be connected to the same 5th c. AD catastrophe. Quite possibly, the old material used for filling or levelling derives from rubbish dumps that existed in the city centre from the 3rd c. AD onwards. This phenomenon will be examined further in the thesis.

The area TFR2 is, at least in imperial times, to be characterised as an open yard belonging to a taberna facing the Decumanus (TFR1). As mentioned above, the republican and imperial contexts from the area TFR2 vary from construction pits to levelling layers to various kinds of depositions (i. e. building sacrifices and obliteration deposits, containing mainly pottery and animal bones). While most of the republican deposits will be analysed by Trine Bak, the deposits from early imperial times will be examined in this thesis. Interestingly, some of the deposits seem to have been used multiple times through the ages. In all levels, the obliteration deposits seem to be located around a (so far) unknown republican sacred structure.