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Ostia's visual connection to Rome

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Several spaces, buildings, statues, images and inscriptions in Ostia, Rome's main port, refer to Rome or parts of Rome. They were created by Romans from Rome in order to strengthen the relation between the capital and the colonia.

Archaeologists (for example Boin 2013,1; Sewell 2010, 72-73; Steuernagel 2004, 68-69, 155) have often used a text of Aulus Gellius to suggest that Roman *coloniae* were *quasi effigies parvae et simulacra* ('as it were small replicas and images') of the their founding city, Rome (Appendix, text 1). According to Gellius, who wrote around AD 165, *coloniae* reflect 'the greatness and majesty of the Roman people.' Gellius, however, only deals with the rights and institutions of *municipia* and *coloniae*, not with their physical form. Nevertheless, we are entitled to interpret spaces and buildings as miniatures of Rome or parts of Rome since already Cicero (*Att.* 5.2.2; cf. *Pro Fonteio* 13) looked upon *Cumanum*, his villa between Cumae and Puteoli, as a *pusilla Roma* ('a very little Rome'). In addition, *regiones* and *vici* in some Republican colonies have been called after areas in Rome (Bispham 2000, 176 n. 5). Ausonius (*Ordo urbium nobilium* 6.61-63; 4.29; 4.74) calls Capua *Roma alter* ('the other Rome') and Arles *Gallula Roma Arelas* ('Arelas, the little Rome of Gaul'). So my questions are: does the *colonia ostiensis* show copies of parts of Rome? More broadly, what were Ostia's visual connections to Rome? Therefore, we have to look for spaces, buildings, statues, images and inscriptions which have a connection to the capital. It is interesting to see where the references are made, by whom and why.

Ostia as we see it nowadays, mostly dates to the second century AD (fig. 1; for Ostia in general see Meiggs 1973²; Pavolini 2006; <http://www.ostia-antica.org>). It covers many spaces and buildings from earlier periods. It has only very partly been excavated as we know from Michael Heinzelmann's geophysical prospections (1996-2001).

First some words about Ostia's early development. According to Livy Ostia was founded as *urbs* and according to other ancient authors as *colonia* by Rome's fourth king, Ancus Marcius, between 640 and 616 BC. This is, however, not (yet) confirmed by archaeological evidence.

The first stone settlement was a rectangular stone fortification, a *castrum*, which was occupied by soldiers from

Rome. It was built around 300 BC. Its foundation is not mentioned by ancient authors. It lost its function after the Second Punic War. From then on Ostia's river harbor, a square basin on the left bank, near the sea, got a more commercial function. It became of great importance for the storing and transfer of grain and other goods to Rome.

In the second half of the second century BC Ostia was still dependent on Rome as is testified by the *locus publicus* (usually incorrectly called *ager publicus*) between the Tiber and the *decumanus*, public land which was earmarked by travertine boundary stones (fig. 1, nos. 1 and 12; *CIL* XIV 4702; Cébeillac *et al.* 2006, 82-83, no. 4; 2010, 88-89 no. 5; Pensabene 2007, 9 (c. 150-125 BC)). The *cippi* or *termini* mention the name of Gaius Caninius, *praetor urbanus* of Rome (Cébeillac *et al.* 2006, 94-95 no. 10; 2010, 98-99 no. 10. Bargagli and Grosso 1997, 9 (c. 130-100 BC)). The public space was used for the storing of goods and grain in *horrea*. Rome had similar public spaces: the banks of the Tiber (Cébeillac *et al.* 2010, 135-136), *poemia*, and the Campus Martius which lies between the Tiber and the so-called Servian city walls.

Probably at the end of the second century BC Ostia became independent from Rome (Cébeillac *et al.* 2006, 94-95 no. 10; 2010, 98-99 no. 10; Bargagli and Grosso 1997, 9 (c. 130-100 BC)). Rome, however, kept the supervision of the grain import and guaranteed Ostia's safety.

Ostia's earliest visual reference to Rome can be dated around 63 BC when Cicero, as consul, built and took care of the city walls and gates. His adversary, the *tribunus plebis* Clodius Pulcher, completed and approved these in 58 BC (Appendix, text 2). Fragments of two identical inscriptions from the attics of the Porta Romana mention the *Senatus Populusque Romanus* as donor and the *colonia Ostiensis* as recipient (fig. 1, no. 2; Cébeillac *et al.* 2006, 90-92, no. 8; 2010, 95-7 no. 8. Pensabene 2007, 184-191). The gate was restored around AD 100 but the inscriptions probably partly copy the Republican ones. Henner von Hesberg dates the marble statue of the winged Minerva, which was found behind the gate, to the time of Cicero (Von Hesberg 1998. Pavolini 2006, 53. Contra: Pensabene 2007, 190-191 dates Minerva as late Flavian). Therefore, Fausto Zevi assumes that it belonged to the Republican gate, also in view of Cicero's

dedication of a statue of Minerva as *phylax* ('(city) guardian') on the Capitoline hill in Rome, in 58 BC (Plut., *Cic.* 31.5. F. Zevi, in: Gallina Zevi and Humphrey 2004, 30-31).

Other references to Rome are the marble *Fasti Ostienses* which have been displayed from at least 49-44 BC onward (Bargagli and Grosso 1997, 8-9). The year calendar mentions first the consuls and events in Rome, then the names of the *duoviri* and events in Ostia.

The man who gave Ostia some urban flavour was Augustus' general and friend, Marcus Agrippa. He built the Theatre (made of marble, travertine, brick and tufa) and its *post scaenam porticus* in the *locus publicus* along the *decumanus* between 18 and 12 BC (fig. 1, no. 6; *CIL* XIV 82 and a fragment: [*M(arcus) Agrippa, co(n)s(ul) [III, --- tribunicia] po[estate---*]. For comment see Cébeillac *et al.* 2006, 92-94, no. 9; 2010, 97-98 no. 9. Pensabene 2007, 284-290. P. Battistelli and G. Greco, in: Nicolet 2002, 391-420). The combination of theatre and *porticus* is recommended by Vitruvius (*De Architectura* 5.9.1) around 22 BC. He was inspired by the Theater of Pompey and its *porticus* in Rome, which were dedicated in 55 BC. Its plan is illustrated by the *Forma Urbis*, the Severan marble map of Rome. Agrippa built his monuments only in public areas, on the Campus Martius in Rome and on the *locus publicus* in Ostia. At the end of Augustus' reign the marble Temple of Roma and Augustus (Pensabene 2005, 512, 521-522 (late Augustan), 2007, 135-144 (late Augustan or c. AD 5/10 – 20); Geremia Nucci 2005, 230 (Tiberian)) was built on the place of the demolished southern gate of the *castrum* opposite two temples along the *decumanus* (fig. 1, no. 16). The two early Augustan temples would have replaced two Republican ones according to Pensabene (2007, 13, 123-128; Morciano 2012, 54-55). Its area became Ostia's Forum. The temple was incidentally used for political meetings (*CIL* XIV 353: *In aede Romae et Augusti placu[it] ordini decurionum...*) like the Temple of Mars Ultor on the Forum of Augustus in Rome. A colossal statue, found behind the temple, represents the personification of Roma as draped Amazon with her left foot resting on a globe (M. Loreti, in: *Archeologia Classica* 37 (1985), 176 n. 25 (first century AD). *LIMC* VIII, 1, Suppl., s.v. Roma, 59 (E. di Filippo Balestrazzi: second or third century AD)). We don't know who ordered the temple. According to Patrizio Pensabene it may have been the imperial house because of the lavish use of Luna marble (Pensabene 2007, 142).

Ostia's division into *vici* ('neighborhoods') was probably introduced by Rome. Augustus reorganized Rome's *regiones* and *vici* in 7 BC (Suet. *Aug.* 30: Puteoli was divided in seven *regiones* in the Augustan period. See also Steuernagel 2004, 43). Formerly the city had 4 *regiones* and an unknown number of *vici*. According to Pliny (*NH* 3.66) Rome had 14

regiones and 265 *compita Larum* in AD 73. The *vici* had *compita* (crossroad shrines: altars, *aediculae*) under supervision of *magistri vici*. We don't know when Ostia was divided into five *regiones* (*CIL* XIV 352 (AD 251)) but *vici* certainly did exist at Ostia in Augustus' time as is shown by the inscription on an *in situ* round marble altar standing on a marble and travertine base dedicated by a *magister* or *magistri* to the *Lares vicinales* (Appendix, text 3; fig. 1, no. 14; Lott 2004, 69 dates it before 7 BC; Pensabene 2007, 177 to 30-20 or 20-10 BC and Rieger 2004, 241 to c. 50 BC. *AE* 1945, 56 (from Otricoli) mentions a dedication to *Lares vicinales* by *IIIviri iure dicundo*). Pensabene dates it for stylistic reasons before 7 BC, more precisely between c. 30 and 10 BC. In addition, the altar is not square and does not mention *Lares Augusti*. An inscription which is dedicated to the *Lares Augusti* dates to AD 51. So maybe Claudius, when he started his *Portus* project, reorganized Ostia's *vici* as Augustus had done in Rome (Pensabene 2007, 21 n. 85, 178-179. *AE* 1964, 151: (*Ti(berio) Cla[udio Caes]ar(e) August(o) Germanico / pont(ifice) m[ax(imo) tr(ibunicia) pot(estate) XI co(n)s(ule) V cens(ore) p(atre)] p(atriciae) Laribus Augustis s[ac(rum)] magis[t]ri primi d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(ecerunt)*)).

During the early reign of Trajan who created the second *Portus*, Ostia's ground level was raised, the *Porta Romana* restored and a Basilica was built along the Forum (fig. 1, to the west of no. 16; Pensabene 2007, 212-217). Interestingly, a fragment of the sculptured friezes probably belonging to this building shows an episode from Rome's history: the Geese of the Capitol. The place of the Basilica and its decoration may have reminded passers-by of the Basilica Aemilia along the Forum of Rome which had internal friezes with similar historical themes. In addition, the Basilica has several architectural elements in common with the Basilica Ulpia along the Forum of Trajan in Rome. In both cases the central nave has 6 x 18 columns.

Some buildings of Hadrian who was twice *duovir* of Ostia, probably in 121 and 126, refer to Rome. He transformed Ostia in three areas (For Ostia's gratitude see *CIL* XIV 95 and VI 972: *colonia Ostia conservata et aucta omni indulgentia et liberalitate eius*. The *Serapeum* was dedicated on 24 January 127, Hadrian's birthday. See Bargagli and Grosso 1997, 43. Cébeillac *et al.*, 2010, 152-153, no. 29). In the centre the very high, monumental Capitolium arose around 120 (fig. 1, opposite no. 16; see C. Albo, in: Nicolet 2002, 363-390; Pensabene 2007, 250-268; Morciano 2012, 53-59; Boin 2013, 140-144. *CIL* XIV 32 mentions an *aedituus Capitoli*). It was built in the spirit of Vitruvius' normative statement (*De Architectura* 1.7.1): '...for (the temple of) Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva should be on the very highest point commanding a view of the greater part of the city.' Interestingly, the altar in front of the Capitolium shows

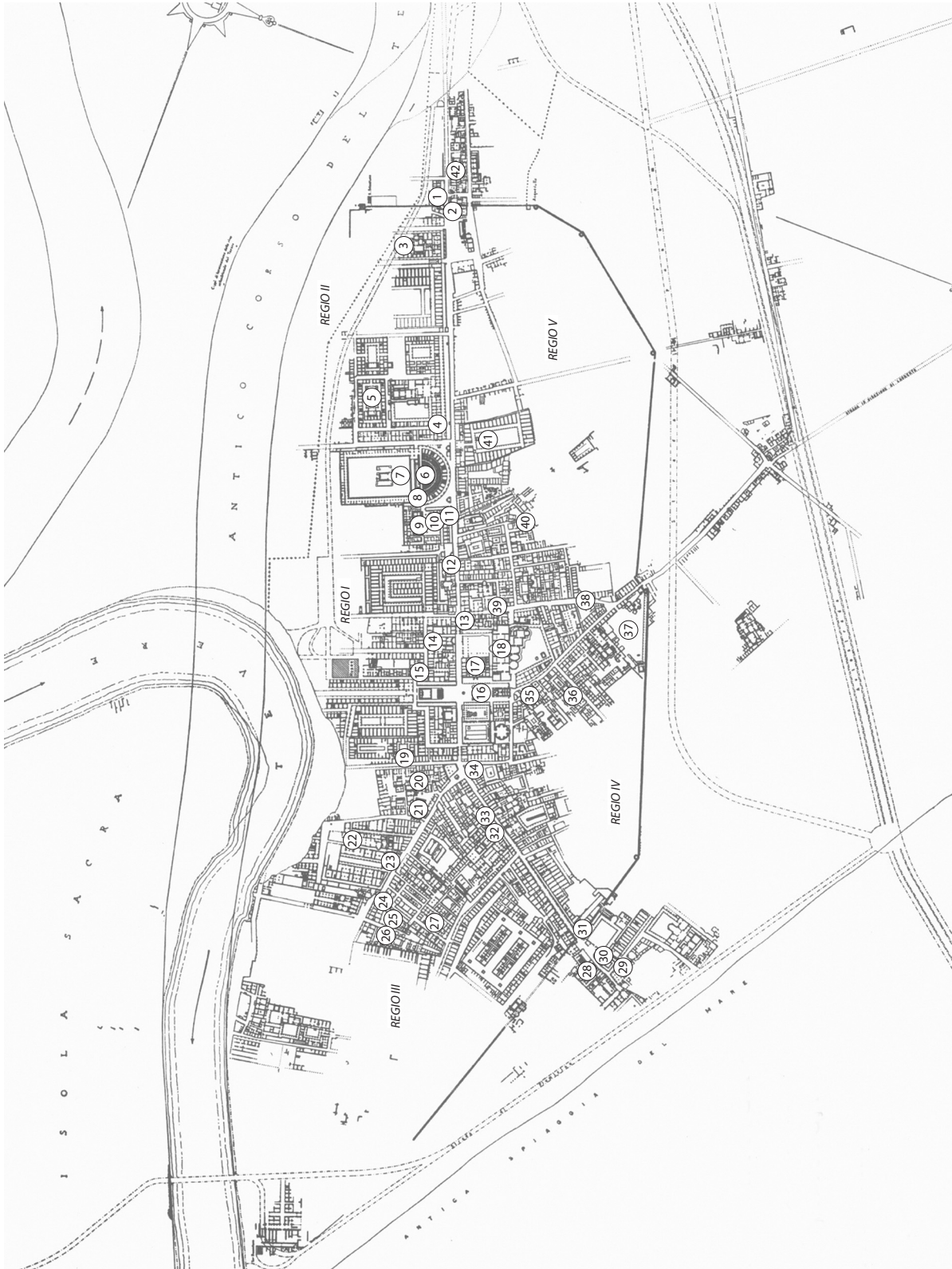


Figure 1 Map of Ostia (from: L.B. van der Meer, *Ostia speaks*. Leuven 2012, cover folder)

a shield with Gorgon's head and a helmet, again clear references to Minerva as guardian goddess of the city.

In the *locus publicus* the Barracks (*castra*) of the Firefighters (Pensabene 2007, 315-318) and the Baths of Neptunus were built; the latter were sponsored by Hadrian (fig. 1, no. 5). The inscriptions in and from the Barracks mention the *cohortes vigilum* from Rome. Inscriptions of *Ostienses* are lacking. So the building was probably not public. It was, as it were, a part of Rome in Ostia, including a Severan *Augusteum* with altars and statues dedicated to the emperors (until c. AD 250).

Symbolic references to Rome are present in Hadrian's period too. Its mythic history is shown by an altar with reliefs on all sides which originally stood in a public place which was given *decurionum decreto* (LDDDP). It was dedicated in AD 124. It was transferred to a *sacellum* in the *porticus* behind the Theatre between c. AD 150 and 200 (fig. 1, no. 8). There it was reused as base for a statue of Silvanus. The backside showing Romulus and Remus under the she-wolf was turned to the front, thus making a clear reference to the origins of Rome (Cébeillac *et al.* 2006, 266-268, no. 74; 2010, 175-177, no. 41. Pensabene 2007, 200 n. 655 relates the relief to the Lupercal on the Palatine, dwelling place of Faunus who could be assimilated with Silvanus). An inscription on a marble slab which mentions king Ancus Marcius as founder of Rome's first *colonia*, Ostia, probably belonged to a statue base of the king (Appendix, text 4). It dates to the Antonine period. Probably it stood on the Forum (Cébeillac *et al.* 2006, 73-74, no. 1; Cébeillac *et al.* 2010, 80-81, no.1). The inscription was an *elogium* comparable to inscriptions, dedicated to Aeneas and to Romulus, on the Forum of Augustus in Rome and on the Forum of Pompeii (*CIL* X 808 and 809).

Between c. AD 200 and 238-244 (the reign of emperor Gordian III) the most recent temple of Ostia, the *Tempio Rotondo II*, probably a *Templum divorum* or *Augusteum*, was built behind a large square to the west of the Basilica (Boin 2013, 90-97; Pensabene 2007, 296-315; Rieger 2004, 173-214). Its interior with niches and probably an *oculus* ('eye') in the dome must have recalled the Pantheon in Rome.

From late antiquity remains an epigraphic and possible symbolic reference to Roma. Just before AD 389 the *praefectus annonae*, Ragonius Vincentius Celsus, placed a statue, probably of Roma, for Roma, on a reused statue base, in front of the Theatre, sponsored by the *civitas ostiensis* (Appendix, text 5; fig. 1, no. 6; *CIL* XIV 4716; Boin 2013, 148). The statue may have looked like a standing Amazon or like the enthroned Roma on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*.

To conclude, inhabitants and visitors of the *colonia Ostiensis*, Gellius included (*Noctes Atticae* 18.1-2), saw spaces,

buildings, images, and inscriptions which would have reminded them of Rome or parts of Rome. Ostia was not an *effigies parva* of Rome. The visual references to Rome are mainly present in two public spaces: the *locus publicus* and the Forum area. Spatial and architectural imitations (*locus publicus*, *vici*, city gate, theatre, *porticus*, Basilica, Capitolium, Barracks and the Round Temple), though not exact copies, were made in the course of five centuries, from the second century BC until c. AD 250. Caninius, Cicero, Agrippa, Trajan and Hadrian created spaces and buildings with antecedents in Rome. So not the local authorities but Romans from Rome made visual connections in order to reinforce the relation between the capital and *colonia*. Some references were also meant as ostentation of Rome's power and past, self-representation and memorialization. Local magistrates, usually *duoviri*, preferred to invest in urban infrastructure, commercial buildings, and sanctuaries in the first century BC and first century AD. Their *modus donandi* differs, for example, from that of benefactors in Pompeii who dedicated buildings on their Forum to the cult of emperors.

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Appendix

1. Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 13.16.8-9 (c. AD 165)

Sed coloniarum alia necessitudo est; non enim veniunt extrinsecus in civitatem nec suis radicibus nituntur, sed ex civitate quasi propagatae sunt et iura institutaque omnia populi Romani, non sui arbitrii, habent. Quae tamen condicio, cum sit magis obnoxia et minus libera, potior tamen et praestabilior existimatur *propter amplitudinem maiestatemque populi Romani, cuius istae coloniae quasi effigies parvae simulacraque esse quaedam videntur*, et simul quia obscura oblitterataque sunt municipiorum iura, quibus uti iam per ignotitiam noli queunt.

2. *AE* 1997, 253 (one of the two identical inscriptions from the attics of the restored Porta Romana (c. 100 AD), which probably partly copy inscriptions from 63-58 BC).

[SE]N[AT]U[S P]OPULU[SQUE ROMANUS] / CO[LON]IA[E O]STIENSIIUM M[U]RO[S] E[T PORTAS DEDIT]. / M(arcus) [TULLIU]S C[ICE]RO C[O(n)]S (ul) FECIT CURA[VITQU]E]. / P(ublius) CL[ODIU]S PULCHER TR(ibunus) [PL(ebis) CON]SUMMAV[IT PROB]AV[IT]. / PORTAM VETUS]TATE [C]ORRUPTA[M---] [OSTIENSES?]---[OMNI DECOR]E A [SOLO]--[REFECE]RU[NT]

From: M. Cébeillac-Gervasoni, M.L. Caldelli, F. Zevi 2010, 95-97 no. 8.

3. *CIL* XIV 4298 (altar dedicated to the Lares Vicinales, c. 30-10 BC)

[M]AG(ister/-istri) D(e) S(ua) P(ecunia) F(aciendam) C(uravit/-uraverunt) / LARIBUS / VICIN(alibus) SACR(am) / ARAM MARMOREAM

4. *CIL* XIV 4338 (marble slab, probably from a statue base on the Forum; Antonine period)

A[NCO] / MAR[CIO / REG[I ROM(ano)] / QUART[O A R] OMULO / QUI A[B URBE C]ONDIT[A] / [PRI]MUM COLONI[AM] / [C(ivium) ROM(anorum)] DEDUX[IT]

5. *CIL* XIV 4716 (reused statue base in front of the Theatre, AD 385-389)

RAGONIUS VINCENTIUS / CELSUS V(ir) C(larissimus) PRAEFECTUS / ANNONAE URBIS ROMAE / URBI EIDEM PROPRIA / PECUNIA CIVITATIS / OSTIENSIIUM COLLOCAVIT