

## Chapter 11

# Interpretation of the evidence in habitations and commercial premises

### § 1 Introduction

The second concluding chapter is a discussion of the religious evidence presented in § 5 of chapters 2 to 5 and § 2 of chapter 6, i.e. of the evidence from habitations and commercial buildings, meant primarily for the people in these buildings.

### § 2 Dates

All Ostian evidence for private religion studied in chapters 2 to 6 is from the second century AD or later. This should not cause any surprise, because hardly anything remains of Ostia's Republican and early Imperial habitations and commercial premises.

Most of the evidence from the Ostian *domus* is dated to after c. 230 AD (11 items), i.e. to the period to which most of the visible remains of the *domus* belong (fig. 2). Because up to this point in time the remains of *domus* and consequently the evidence for private religion are meagre, a comparison with the situation during the Republican period, the early Imperial period, or even Ostia's hey-day is not possible. On the other hand the amount of accurately dated evidence from the years c. 235-425 AD (seven items) is too small to permit identification of any fluctuations within that period.

As to the evidence discussed in chapters 3 to 6, the amounts per kind of building or part of a building are small. Therefore it can only be considered as a whole. After exclusion of the evidence which cannot be dated accurately the size of the sample is 34. As in the *domus* the amounts of evidence from the various periods correspond to the building activity in Ostia (figs. 2, 7). Most of the buildings dealt with here were erected during the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius. From this period 21 items remain. Most of the later building activities were modifications, in many cases leaving existing evidence intact. During the Severan period many alterations took place, and to this period six items could be assigned.

Little masonry has been dated to the periods of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, and to the post-Severan period. One item is from the period of Marcus Aurelius, three items have been dated to c. 235-300 AD, and three items (in one building) to c. 300-350 AD.

The reasonable amount of evidence from the two periods to which much of the masonry has been dated (primary masonry from the period Trajan - Hadrian - Antoninus Pius, secondary masonry from the Severan period) suggests that there was no lack of interest in private religion. The ratio 21:6 does not necessarily suggest a difference in religious interest between the two periods. The virtual absence of evidence from the remaining periods may well be related to the low level of building activity.

### § 3 Position

Before analyzing the position of the evidence, a few words must be said about the initiators. In apartment buildings, workshops, depots, and hotels shrines may have been installed by the owner, living elsewhere, in order to place his property and perhaps the inhabitants under the protection of gods. An example of such an intervention is documented in the *Insula Bolani* in Rome.<sup>1</sup> It may be assumed however that gods introduced from outside were important to the inhabitants. The protection of an apartment building for example was for obvious reasons even more important to them than to the owner.

#### *Domus*

In the wealthy Campanian houses most of the evidence is found in the *atria-alae*, *peristylia*, *viridaria* and kitchens, whereas in the Ostian *domus* it occurs most often in the courtyards with portico or colonnade and in accentuated rooms (figs. 5, 6). The courtyard seems to have been chosen regularly in North Africa as well, and a shrine in an area without a roof was found in a *domus* in Rome. Quite a few pieces of evidence from the Ostian *domus* are in rooms of which the function cannot be established. These may for example have been bedrooms.

The accentuated rooms and central areas, both in Campania and Ostia, will be dealt with first. They had various functions. In both kinds guests were received, the former were used for cultural activities and meals, the latter served as light-source, where a garden for private enjoyment could be found, and where the servants could obtain water from a basin or well.

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 3, § 5B.

The shrines might be related to any of these aspects. Perhaps a function of the room or area was stressed by a deity embodying it. Perhaps emphasis was put on divine protection of a particular activity. The central areas may have been chosen because a shrine there was thought to protect the whole house.

Furthermore the traditional element in religion must be kept in mind. The presence of traditional gods in the house, as an element of status, may have been pointed out to visitors. In the old days the *focus* may have been located in the *atrium*.<sup>2</sup> We know that links were made between the Di Penates, food,<sup>3</sup> and the hearth.<sup>4</sup> The Lares too were related to the fireplace.<sup>5</sup> The presence of shrines in the *atrium* may be related, even in a period when the hearth had moved to the kitchen. Grimal has drawn attention to the antique notion of the *hortus*, in the *peristylum* and *viridarium*, as *heredium*, that is a hereditary estate. He maintains that the Lares Familiares were gods not only of the hearth, but of the garden too, and that the presence of *aediculae* and pseudo-*aediculae* is to be understood from this point of view as well.<sup>6</sup>

In only two cases can a motif for the positioning of a shrine be established with a fair degree of reliability, both in the Domus della Fortuna Annonaria. Here a niche, dated to the early fourth century, is in the centre of the back wall of an accentuated room and opposite the centre of its main entrance (pl. 13). It appears that in this way religion was linked to the contact with visitors. This was done a second time by positioning a pseudo-*aedicula*, dated to after c. 250 AD, opposite the centre of the main entrance to the house (pl. 12).

The presence of evidence in the Campanian kitchens poses few problems. From antique literature we learn that the kitchen was sacred to the Di

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<sup>2</sup> Servius, In Aeneidem Commentarii 1, 730: *Ibi etiam culina erat, unde et atrium dictum est; atrium enim erat ex fumo.*

<sup>3</sup> Cicero, De Deorum Natura 2, 68: *Nec longe absunt ab hac vi Di Penates, sive a penu ducto nomine (est enim omne quo vescuntur homines penus), sive ab eo quod penitus insident, ex quo etiam "penetrales" a poetis vocantur.* Cf. Firmicus Maternus, De errore Profanarum Religionum 14, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Servius, In Aeneidem Commentarii 11, 211: *Adnotandum sane quod "focus" dixerit pyras, cum focus ara sit Deorum Penatium.*

<sup>5</sup> Columella, De Re Rustica 11, 1, 19 (text: chapter 2, § 5C). Cf. Plinius Senior, Naturalis Historia 28, 267.

<sup>6</sup> Grimal 1969, 41-56, 308-310. See especially Plinius Senior, Naturalis Historia 19, 50: *In XII tabulis legum nostrarum nusquam nominatur villa, semper in significatione ea hortus, in horti vero heredium ... hortoque et foco tantum contra invidentium effascinationes dicari videmus in remedio satyrica signa, quanquam hortos tutelae Veneris adsignante Plauto.* Cf. Jashemski 1979, 115-140.

Penates.<sup>7</sup> I have already noted links between the Di Penates and Lares on the one hand, and food and the *focus* on the other. Here we may find the explanation for the depiction of all sorts of food, cooking implements, and people at the dining-table on some paintings from the kitchen shrines.<sup>8</sup> Wissowa's suggestion that the relation between the Lares and the servants prompted the location presents a problem:<sup>9</sup> the Di Penates were related to the wealthier, free-born people.<sup>10</sup>

In two respects the situation in Ostia clearly differs from that in Pompeii and Herculaneum. First of all the virtual absence of shrines in the accentuated rooms of the Campanian houses is striking. Secondly, whereas in Ostia four pieces of evidence, dated to after c. 250 AD and including all the items from accentuated rooms, are in the centre of a wall (pls. 2, 5, 8, 13), it looks as if the evidence in the Campanian houses is never in an axial position. The differences cannot be explained without placing them in a wider context, which falls outside the confines of this study. Perhaps in later antiquity the need to strengthen social relations was more strongly felt.

### Other habitations

In spite of the fairly large number of *medianum*-apartments in Ostia, the evidence for private religion encountered in these habitations is very scarce. This may of course be due to the fact that the inhabitants did not own the apartments and were not allowed to damage walls by hacking out niches.<sup>11</sup> Paintings and masonry or wooden (pseudo-) *aediculae* may have compensated for this. Such evidence will often have been removed in the Christian era, or decayed quickly after the city had been abandoned.

<sup>7</sup> Servius, In Aeneidem Commentarii 2, 469: *Singula enim domus sacrata sunt dis, ut culina Penatibus, maceries, quae ambit domum, Herceo Iovi.*

<sup>8</sup> Boyce 1937, nrs. 60, 68, 119, 156, 468.

<sup>9</sup> Wissowa 1897(1), 1884.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Fröhlich 1992, 30-31, 40. At this point a niche may be mentioned in the Schola del Traiano (IV,V,15), the seat of a guild. The niche, of which only the lower part has been preserved, can be found in the northeast wall of the understairs to the southwest of rooms B and C (starting at 0.93 from floor; preserved h. excl. modern restoration 0.89; w. 1.09; d. 0.30). It is in vittatum A. The bottom is modern. The back, with curved ends and a straight central part, is of vittatum A and partly covered by mortar. The vittatum A of the understairs has been dated by Heres to c. 330 AD, like most of the masonry of the rooms in the back part of the building (Heres 1982, 519, fig. 93). The presence of the niche can be explained if foodstuffs were stored in the understairs. Meals were served in the nearby *triclinium* A.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Frier 1980, 38-39. Nevertheless some niches were hacked out. In view of holes in the back, these were probably fountains rather than religious niches (chapter 3, § 3, n. 19). They may have been installed by the landlord as an added plus.

The only certain evidence are two pseudo-*aediculae*, one in the communal garden of the Insula dei Dipinti (pls. 16, 17), the other fallen from an upper floor of the Caseggiato degli Aurighi (pl. 18). It may be significant that the former is turned towards the most expensive dwelling in the block, the Domus di Giove e Ganimede. There is however no door or window in this house opposite the pseudo-*aedicula*. The monumental nature of the other pseudo-*aedicula* virtually excludes the possibility that it comes from a single apartment. It probably belonged in an upper portico. The shrine of Bona Dea in the Insula Bolani in Rome was presumably also located in a central area, because a well was found nearby.

In general we must assume that if evidence is found in a central area it functioned in relation to all the rooms grouped around it if there were no aspects of the central area appropriate for worship, for example if it merely served as a light-source with a water basin. This situation is usually encountered in apartment buildings. In the Insula dei Dipinti however the evidence is in a central area taken up by a garden, to which it may have been connected (cf. the *hortus* in the *domus*). If evidence is found in central areas on the ground floor it could be linked to upper floors as well. Thus Bona Dea was worshipped in, presumably, the courtyard of the Insula Bolani *in tutelam* of the entire *insula*. On the other hand an upper floor in the Caseggiato degli Aurighi seems to have had its own pseudo-*aedicula*.

The worship of Tutela near the entrances to apartment buildings, presumably in the vestibules, is mentioned by Hieronymus. Deities in the vestibule offered protection to the whole complex of rooms accessible from there, and consequently Hieronymus says that Tutela was worshipped *ad tuitionem aedium*.

### **Workshops and depots**

Most of the evidence from the workshops and depots is found in various communal parts of the buildings: in the vestibule, a corridor (one of these an entrance-corridor), a central area, and the courtyard with portico or colonnade (fig. 10). A cult-room was found in the courtyard of a depot in Rome. Only one piece of evidence is found in a work-room of a workshop. It is quite possible however that small niches and paintings were located in the work-rooms and are now no longer recognizable as such or have disappeared altogether. Paintings were found in work-rooms in three Pompeian bakeries.

In two depots the precise location is significant. In the Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana four niches are on two intersecting axes. Two niches in the lateral walls of a vestibule create something like a religious threshold. An accentuated room, perhaps an office, and two flanking niches

are on the main axis of the building, facing the main entrance, i.e. directed at people entering the depot: the workers, or merchants calling upon the owners - Epagathus and Epaphroditus - or their manager. The latter two niches are in the centre of the back wall of the courtyard (pls. 23, 24). This phenomenon is also encountered in Horrea III,II,6 (pls. 26, 27). Here however the courtyard and a niche in the back wall are not exactly opposite the main entrance. In both cases the niches dominate the courtyard and therefore formed the religious focus for the depot.

### **Shops, bars, markets, and hotels**

Enough has been preserved of the Ostian shops to be certain that they were not normally equipped with niches when they were built. The only series of shops with primary niches is found in Caseggiato I,VIII,5. Here virtually identical niches are found in four consecutive shops (pl. 33). They belong to a large-scale rebuilding. Because this situation is exceptional we may assume that there was some tie between the shops: that the shop-keepers were slaves of the same master, or that they sold the same goods. This last link is suggested by doorways in the back walls of the second and third shop, leading to the adjacent contemporaneous building 8. This consists of two large rooms, both accessible from the street through wide passages, one with a large basin. Quite possibly this was a workshop or depot, where the goods sold in the shops were manufactured or stored.

Four other shops contain niches that belong to the first building period. In each case it is the only shop in a row to have a niche, so that there must have been something special about it. The west part of the Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana consists of a row of shops lining the street. The only shop provided with a niche is also the only one connected with the interior of the depot, through a primary doorway leading to the vestibule (pls. 31, 32). The shop-keeper may well have been a slave of the owners of the depot, selling goods stored in the building. The south part of Caseggiato II,IX,2 is also made up of a row of shops. Here it may be significant that the only one with a niche is connected with backrooms (pl. 37). Unfortunately the building underwent many alterations in the course of time, so that the original plan is only partly known. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that both these niches are close to the connecting doors. To the northeast of the Case a Giardino is a very long row of shops. The one with a niche is in Caseggiato III,IX,25. It is one of the few shops in the row with a staircase. A large bar and two adjacent shops are found in the facade of the Terme del Faro. The shop with a niche is next to the vestibule (pl. 40), recalling the situation in the Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana. In the bath however a door leading to the vestibule was

hacked out (clearly secondary) and blocked afterwards.

In two cases hacked out niches confirm the relation between interconnected shops. In a number of such shops in the Caseggiato del Mosaico del Porto fish was presumably sold, witness a floor-mosaic and basins. Niches were hacked out neatly in two consecutive shops, when the building was being erected or later (pls. 34, 35). The relation between the shops is confirmed by the fact that the niches are virtually identical. Two shops in the facade of the Domus delle Muse are connected by a door hacked out roughly, clearly after the first building period. In one of the shops a niche was hacked out irregularly in a lateral wall (pls. 38, 39). It intensified the link between the shops, because it is precisely opposite the door.

Evidence in communal parts of buildings and at least related to shops is found in the facade, perhaps in the interior of the portico along the street, in the vestibule, and in the courtyard (fig. 14). The evidence in the facade may be related to either the entire building, or one or more shops. Because the niche in the facade of the Caseggiato di Annio (pls. 51, 52) and the intarsio in the facade of the Caseggiato dei Misuratori del Grano (pls. 45, 46) are placed in a corner of the building, they were most likely meant for the protection of the whole of these buildings. I have already argued that the evidence in the courtyard must have been related to all rooms grouped around that area.

There is no evidence for private religion in the Ostian *macellum*. In other *macella*, notably in North Africa and Pompeii, statues of deities and of the Imperial family were placed in the centre of the courtyard, in a portico, or in a cult-room at the back of the building, opposite the main entrance. Evidently religion could play a central role here, and this could be communicated to the customers by positioning a shrine opposite the entrance.

In the Hospitium delle Volte Dipinte some of the evidence is directed towards the guests. Over the centre of the entrance to a staircase which led to guest-rooms was a protome (pl. 55). On the first landing of the staircase was a niche with an altar, opposite the entrance to the staircase (pl. 56). In the Hospitium del Pavone a pseudo-*aedicula* is found in a courtyard which was used by the guests (pls. 57, 58). Stables could form part of hotels. Apuleius describes a shrine of Epona in the centre of the central pier of a stable.

### **Unclassifiable evidence**

About half of the unclassifiable evidence is found in communal parts of buildings: the facade, the vestibule, corridors, and in the jamb of a passage between two buildings (fig. 15). The remainder is found in rooms of which

the precise function is mostly unknown.

The evidence dealt with in this section was related in a variety of ways to the life of the Ostians. It may be found in almost any kind of area in virtually any position. The amount of evidence from communal parts of buildings catches the eye. The importance of this phenomenon cannot be denied, even if much small and less durable evidence from other parts of the buildings has deteriorated beyond recognition, or disappeared altogether.<sup>12</sup> In the new living- and working-environment created for the lower classes in the second century, in the numerous and often large apartment buildings, workshops, and depots, a communal, religious anchorage was formed by deities in the facades, vestibules, and courtyards. This was stressed in the *Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana* and in *Horrea III,II,6*, where niches are found in the centre of the back wall of the courtyard. Both literally and metaphorically speaking they play a central role. Other shrines have a prominent location, notably the niche in the *Caseggiato della Nicchia Policroma* (pls. 47, 48), the pseudo-*aedicula* in *Caseggiato III,I,8* (pl. 21), and the cult-room of Serapis in the *Caseggiato del Serapide* (pls. 49, 50). In these three cases it was impossible to place the evidence in a central place.

In the *Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana* the workers or visiting merchants were confronted with shrines upon entering the building. Similarly several *macella* outside Ostia had a shrine directed at the customers (in Pompeii as well, where none of the evidence in houses and workshops seems to be on an axis). In the *Hospitium delle Volte Dipinte* a niche on the landing of a staircase was directed towards the guests entering the hotel. Shrines on the axis of a building and opposite the main entrance are also found in the *Caserma dei Vigili* and in several guild-seats. In the *Caserma dei Vigili* a shrine for the Imperial cult confronted the fire-fighters.<sup>13</sup> In the guild-seats *Tempio Collegiale I,X,4* and *Tempio dei Fabri Navales (III,II,2)* a whole temple faced the members, in the *Caseggiato dei Triclini* it was a cult-room, and in the probable guild-seat *Domus Fulminata* an *aedicula* or pseudo-*aedicula*.<sup>14</sup> In later antiquity the phenomenon is documented twice in the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria*.

In all these cases people coming from outside were made aware of the religious protection of the building and its occupants at the moment of transition from the street to the interior. The reason for this cannot always

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<sup>12</sup> In Ostia dozens of small holes can be found which may have been niches.

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 9, § 4C, n. 148.

<sup>14</sup> On the guild-seats and the *Domus Fulminata* see chapter 6, § 2A, on catalogue A, nr. 42.

have been the same, because the relation of these people to the buildings varied. The relation was strong in the Caserma dei Vigili, which was inhabited by the fire-fighters. Here tighter links were forged between the building and the fire-fighters by a religious welcome. In the *macella* and the hotel the people were merely visitors. Here an attractive, inviting aspect of the building was presented. In the remaining buildings the evidence may well have been directed at various kinds of people simultaneously: in the depot the workers and merchants, in the guild-seats the members and business associates, and in the *domus* both poor and wealthy visitors. The linking capabilities of private religion are at another level visible in shops, where both the presence and position of some of the evidence testify to relations between shops, and between shops and other parts of buildings.

#### § 4 Appearance

The most frequent kind of evidence is the niche, in all kinds of buildings in Ostia, and in Pompeii and Herculaneum in the shops, bars, and dwellings of wealthier people (figs. 5, 6, 10, 14, 15). As much as two-thirds of the Ostian evidence consists of niches (48 items). There are furthermore 8 reliefs, intarsios, and slabs, 6 (pseudo-) *aediculae*, 5 cult-rooms, 4 mosaics, and 1 painting. In the dwellings of the wealthy in Pompeii and Herculaneum 55.4% of the evidence consists of niches (143 items), 25.6% of paintings (66), and 15.5% of (pseudo-) *aediculae* (40). Here 9 cult-rooms are found. In the Campanian shops and bars 89 niches account for 86.4% of the total, next to 13 paintings and 1 stucco relief.

In comparison with Ostia the amount of paintings and (pseudo-) *aediculae* in Campania is relatively large. The virtual absence of the former in Ostia may well be due to the state of preservation of the ruins. The only one preserved, a painting of a Genius and two snakes, is akin to many Campanian paintings. Two parts of a similar painting, of which the place of discovery is unknown, are in the museum and store-rooms.<sup>15</sup> The (pseudo-) *aediculae* in Pompeii and Herculaneum are all found in the dwellings of wealthier people, and these are much more numerous there than in Ostia.

The more expensive and elaborate evidence consists of cult-rooms, (pseudo-) *aediculae*, and niches with *aedicula*-facade. In the Campanian dwellings cult-rooms and (pseudo-) *aediculae* are found exclusively in

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<sup>15</sup> See chapter 1, § 5E, n. 58.

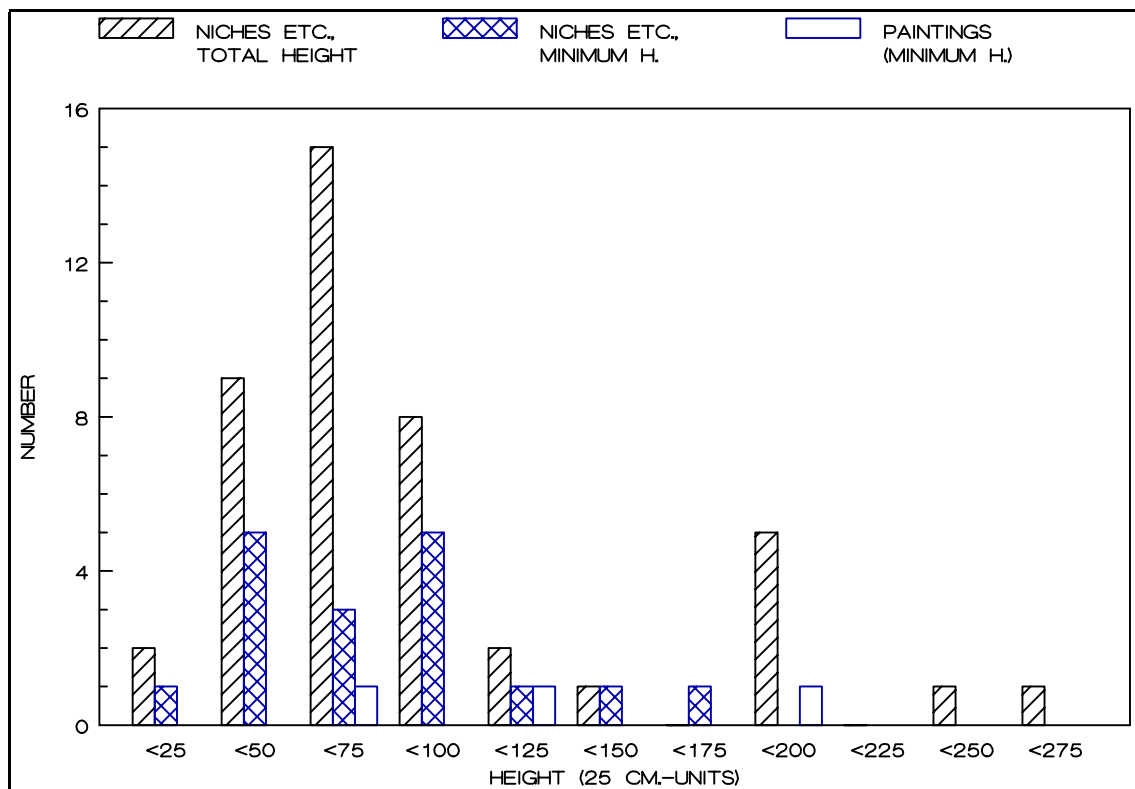


Figure 24. Total or minimum height of niches, reliefs, intarsios, and paintings in Ostia.

central, open areas, the former possibly simply because of their size. Niches with *aedicula*-facade are found here as well, but are not restricted to these areas. In the Ostian *domus* no cult-rooms can be identified with certainty. Here all (pseudo-) *aediculae* and the only niche with *aedicula*-facade are located in the courtyard-portico-colonnade, again a central, open area. Costly evidence in Ostia is also found in the workshops, depots, shops, apartment buildings, and amongst the unclassifiable evidence. Here most cult-rooms and all pseudo-*aediculae* are found in the courtyard-portico-colonnade. One cult-room was built in a corridor. Niches with *aedicula*-facade are not restricted to a particular kind of room.

Of the less elaborate evidence the niches do not seem to have been preferred in a particular kind of room or area. Paintings can be found virtually anywhere in the Campanian dwellings, but there is a very high concentration in the kitchen. In Ostia apotropaic mosaics are found in the vestibule of a *domus* and directly behind the entrance to an unclassifiable accentuated room. Reliefs, intarsios, and slabs are here found especially in the facade or the portico in front of a building, where they are reminiscent of shop-signs. Surprisingly two reliefs occur in the courtyard-portico-colonnade (in the Palazzo Imperiale and Piccolo Mercato), where the more

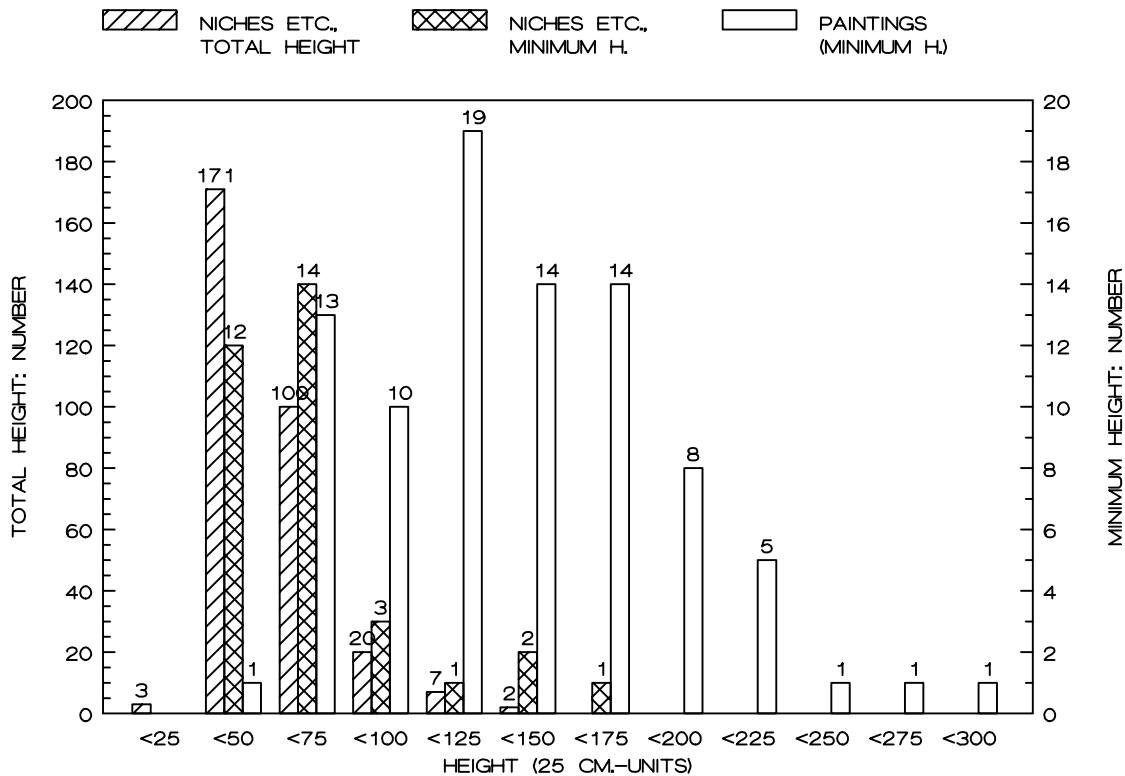


Figure 25. Total or minimum height of niches, reliefs, intarsios, and paintings in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

elaborate evidence is usually found.<sup>16</sup>

Several niches are made of polychrome terracotta and pieces of stone. They were apparently not meant to be plastered. This is also suggested by the unusually thin, neat joints between the bricks of some of these niches. This accurate masonry was imitated in the *Domus del Larario* (pl. 15) and *Caseggiato del Sacello* (pls. 67, 68, 69), where bricks and joints of a niche and the facade of a cult-room were painted red and white. The painted joints are narrower than the actual ones underneath. The niche in the underground cult-room in the *Caseggiato del Bar* was presumably not meant to be plastered because its back is in *mixtum*, the remainder of the room in *latericium* (pls. 43, 44).

Figure 24 is a graph of the total height or, if that is not known, minimum total height of the Ostian niches (except those in *pseudo-aediculae*), reliefs, intarsios, slabs, and paintings. It may be compared with

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the relief in the courtyard of the *Caseggiato di Diana* (chapter 6, § 2A, catalogue A, nr. 6).

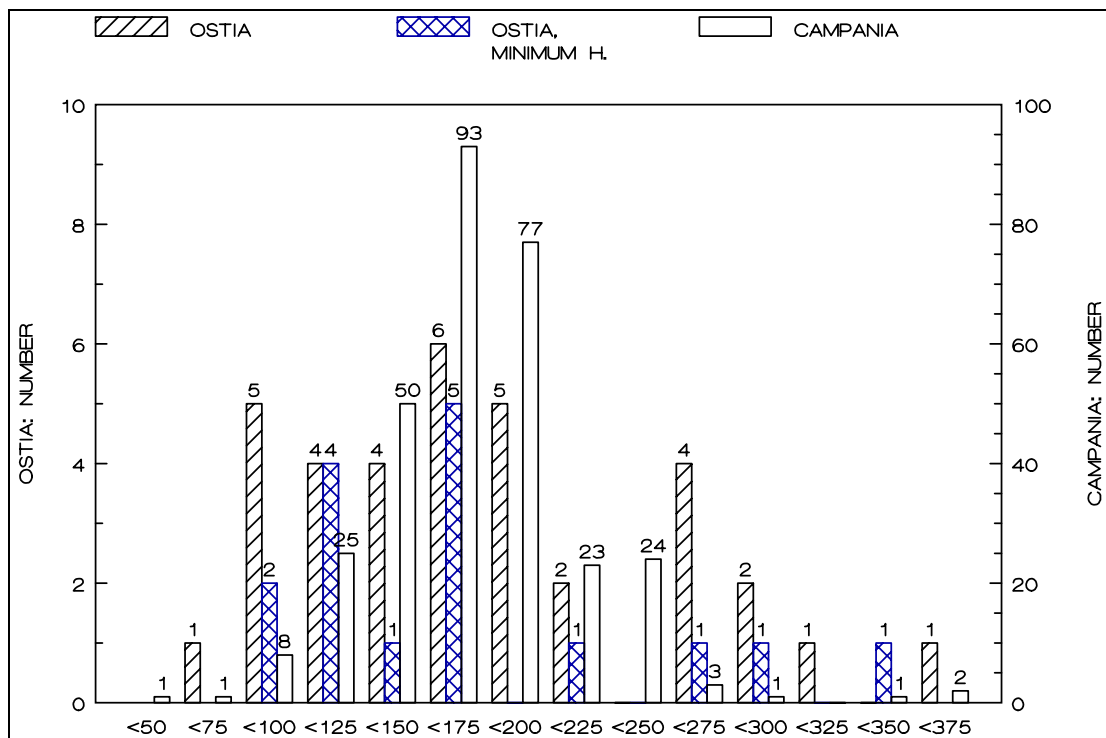


Figure 26. Height of two-thirds, in 25-cm. units, of the openings of wall-niches, reliefs and intarsios in Ostia, Pompeii, and Herculaneum.

figure 25, a representation of the height of the Campanian evidence (the paintings are single paintings or around a niche).

The preferred heights of the Ostian evidence were 50-74 cm. and, to a lesser extent, 25-49, 75-99, and 175-199 cm. In Pompeii and Herculaneum the heights encountered most often among 303 items of which the total height is known are 25-49 and, to a lesser extent, 50-74 cm. Furthermore the minimum height is known of 33 Campanian niches and 87 paintings. The latter numbers are fairly large, because often in the catalogues the height of an *aedicula*-facade is not provided (usually about two-thirds of the height of the opening of a niche), and it is not made clear whether paintings have been preserved over their total height.

The almost complete absence of large niches in Campania is striking. In Ostia several niches are higher than 1.74 m.: wall-niches in the vestibule and courtyard of the *Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana*, in the courtyard of the *Caseggiato della Nicchia Policroma*, in the apsidal accentuated room in the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria*, and in the courtyard of the *Domus del Larario*; floor-niches in the *Hospitium delle Volte Dipinte* and *Caseggiato di Annio*. The wall-niches in the courtyard

of Horrea III,II,6 and in the cult-room in the Caseggiato del Serapide may well have been higher than 1.74 m. In Campania the total heights provided in the catalogues do not exceed 1.24 m. There are four instances of niches with *aedicula*-facade and a minimum height of 100-174 cm. With the help of a photograph it can be established that the height of two of these, which are next to each other, is c. 2.35 m.<sup>17</sup> The small number of high niches in Campania is compensated by many tall paintings.

The height from the floor of the evidence is presented in figure 26. It is the height of the representations of deities which is of interest. Assuming that the eyes of a deity will as a rule have been at about two-thirds of the opening of a niche, relief, or intarsio, that height has been recorded. The figure is a graph of the height or minimum height from the floor of two-thirds of the openings of wall-niches (including those in pseudo-*aediculae*) and of reliefs and intarsios, in Ostia and Campania.

Most of the evidence is at eye-level, at 125-199 cm. A second feature that may be noted is the extremely low height of some of the wall- and also floor-niches, both in Ostia and in Campania. The height of two-thirds of the wall-niche in the vestibule of the Caseggiato del Sacello is at 50-74 cm., that of the five wall-niches in four consecutive shops of Caseggiato I,VIII,5 at 75-99 cm. As to the floor-niches, for the one in a shop in the facade of the Terme del Faro 25-49 cm. results, for those in an accentuated room in the Domus del Ninfeo, in a shop in Caseggiato III,IX,25, and in a corridor in the Caseggiato del Bar 50-74 cm. In Campania we find ten low wall-niches (25-49 cm., 50-74 cm., 8 x 75-99 cm.) and one low floor-niche (25-99 cm.). One of the wall-niches is in a cult-room. This one, a further wall-niche, and the low floor-niche contain religious paintings.<sup>18</sup> The explanation for the phenomenon may be that the household gods were thought of as small deities.<sup>19</sup> It is also possible that the niches were accompanied by paintings higher up on the wall.

<sup>17</sup> Near the west end of the north wall of the second *peristylum* of the Casa del Fauno (VI xii, 2) (Boyce 1937, nr. 189, Pl. 5, 4). The others are: Boyce 1937, nr. 112 (total height to judge by a photograph c. 1.70); Boyce 1937, nr. 252; Orr 1972, cat. B, nr. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Low wall-niches: Boyce 1937, nr. 218 (25-49 cm.; with a painting of a reclining figure, probably with *cornucopiae*; in a cult-room); Boyce 1937, nr. 333 (50-74 cm.); Boyce 1937, nrs. 290, 332 (with stucco *aedicula*-facade) and 445 (in a pseudo-*aedicula*; with a painting of the Lares, a Genius, and a snake); Orr 1972, cat. A, nrs. 36 and 49; Orr 1972, cat. B, nrs. 4, 5, and 12 (all 75-99 cm.). The low floor-niche: Boyce 1937, nr. 112 (with a painting of Ceres and a serpent). For another Campanian floor-niche (Boyce 1937, nr. 432; with a base for a statue) 175-199 cm. results.

<sup>19</sup> This is the implication of Juvenal's lines *O parvi nostri Lares, quos tunc minuto aut farre et tenui soleo exorare corona, quando ego figam aliquid quo sit mihi tuta senectus a tegete et baculo?* (Juvenalis, Saturae 9, 137-140).

In Ostia some wall-niches, two reliefs, an intarsio, and a slab are high up in the wall. The height of two-thirds of the two niches in the vestibule of the *Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana*, of the slab in a corridor of *Caseggiato I,VIII,4*, of the niche in the courtyard of the *Caseggiato della Nicchia Policroma*, and of the niche in the apsidal accentuated room in the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* is at 250-274 cm. For the relief in the facade of the *Caseggiato dei Molini* and the two niches in the courtyard of the *Horrea Epagathiana* 275-299 cm. results, for the protome in the facade of the *Hospitium delle Volte Dipinte* 300-324 cm., for the intarsio in the facade of the *Caseggiato dei Misuratori del Grano* 350-374 cm. Three wall-niches - in one of the rooms in the *Caseggiato del Bar*, in the courtyard of *Horrea III,II,6*, and in the facade of the *Caseggiato di Annio* - have a height of two-thirds exceeding 249 cm. Virtually all Ostian evidence from the facade is high up in the wall.<sup>20</sup> The catalogues of the Campanian evidence do not deal with the facades. Seven high wall-niches are found there inside buildings.<sup>21</sup>

Three items which are in an axial position and in the centre of a back wall - the pair of niches in the courtyard of the *Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana*, the niche in the courtyard of *Horrea III,II,6*, and the niche in the apsidal room of the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* - are also high and high up in the wall. The two added aspects of these pieces of evidence coincide with the rather distant nature of the religious communication with the people towards whom they were directed. One further niche, in the courtyard of the *Caseggiato della Nicchia Policroma*, may also belong to this group. It is more or less in the centre of the back wall of the courtyard and almost opposite the centre of the main entrance to the building. It was however impossible to give it an axial position.

In general it may be said that, from the architectural point of view of the size and the height in the wall of the evidence, private religion was in Ostia and Campania clearly present: most of the evidence was of considerable size, at eye-level, and therefore noticed quickly.

## § 5 Deities

The remains of private religion in Ostia furnish little information about

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<sup>20</sup> The reused relief from a carpenters' workshop in the facade of the *Terme dell'Invidioso* is a bit lower in the wall.

<sup>21</sup> Boyce 1937, nrs. 105 and 189, Orr 1972, cat. B, nr. 34 (250-275 cm.); Boyce 1937, nr. 396 (275-299 cm.); Boyce 1937, nr. 102 (325-349 cm.); Boyce 1937, nrs. 42 and 190 (350-374 cm.).

the deities which were worshipped. Virtually all evidence is from the second and third century AD. In that period 12 traditional deities are documented in 17 catalogue-items.<sup>22</sup> Evidence of the Imperial and oriental cults is relatively scarce (2 and 7 items respectively).<sup>23</sup> Another sample, the dedications by workers in *horrea* in Rome, presents similar ratios. It should be remembered however that the traditional gods outnumbered the oriental ones and the deities related to the Imperial cult. Therefore the majority of the deities in a particular shrine could easily be traditional. Thus the number of testimonia of the Imperial cult in the Sacello del Silvano - a probable Genius Augusti and a reference to the Emperor - does not do justice to the importance of the Imperial cult in that shrine.<sup>24</sup>

Because of its small size the Ostian sample is unreliable. We know that in the second century and the Severan period the traditional cults, oriental cults, and the Imperial cult were all widely represented in Ostia.<sup>25</sup> The evidence for private religion does not prompt any doubts with regard to the general picture. Little is known about the developments in Ostia after the Severan period, simply because there is hardly any evidence. Therefore the statuettes from the Caseggiato dei Molini are of great importance, because they were in use or for sale at the end of the third century, when the building caught fire. A large number of traditional deities is encountered,<sup>26</sup> next to Jupiter-Serapis and a Lar Augusti (pl. 60).

Meiggs has suggested that the northwestern part of Regio III was "something of an oriental quarter", in view of the worship of oriental gods and the presence of Greek graffiti.<sup>27</sup> Neither the gods nor the graffiti are numerous enough to provide certainty.<sup>28</sup> The presence of an intarsio of

<sup>22</sup> Diana, Dionysus, the Dioscures, Fortuna, Genii, Hercules, Jupiter, Juno or Ceres, Mercurius, Minerva, Silvanus, Venus.

<sup>23</sup> Imperial cult: a Lar Augusti from the Caseggiato dei Molini; probably a Genius Augusti and a reference to an Emperor in the Sacello del Silvano. Oriental cults: Apis, Harpocrates, Isis, Isis-Fortuna, Jupiter-Serapis, Serapis.

<sup>24</sup> The Imperial cult is discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>25</sup> Meiggs 1973, 377-388.

<sup>26</sup> Aesculapius, Apollo, the Dioscures, Hercules, a Lar, Mars, Mercurius, Minerva (2x), Venus. A small snake may represent the Genius Loci.

<sup>27</sup> Meiggs 1973, 419 n. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Oriental gods: the Hadrianic Serapeum (III,XVII,4); the temple is at a distance of c. 100 m. from the shrine of the Egyptian gods in the Caseggiato del Serapide; the relief of Apis from Caseggiato III,XVI,6; the head of Isis or of a woman-follower of Isis from the Caseggiato degli Aurighi; the Mitreo della Planta Pedis (III,XVII,2). Syrian gods were perhaps worshipped in the Sacello delle Tre Navate (III,II,12) (Becatti 1954, 69-75, Tav. XIV; but cf. R. Calza 1965, 144-147 and Hermansen 1982(1), 82-83). In the area 50 Latin and a little over 17 Greek graffiti were found (Della Corte - Ciprotti 1961, nrs. 1-63, 71-74; Solin 1972, 194-198).

the bull Apis in the facade or a portico of Caseggiato III,XVI,6 is however surprising (pl. 53), because no dedicatory inscriptions to him are known from the western half of the Roman empire.<sup>29</sup> The bull is also depicted in mosaic in the entrance of the nearby Serapeum.<sup>30</sup>

The Domus del Tempio Rotondo, Domus del Ninfeo, Domus dei Dioscuri and Domus della Fortuna Annonaria have niches from the fourth century and first quarter of the fifth. For this period the question must be posed whether the niches could have been used for Christian sculptures, of the Pastor Bonus for example. In the first quarter of the fifth century niches were installed in the Basilica Cristiana (III,I,4), a Christian edifice, the precise function of which is disputed.<sup>31</sup> Of the niches in the interior, three were supplied with water.<sup>32</sup> There is a rectangular wall-niche in the centre of the outer wall of the western apse.<sup>33</sup> If it is assumed that the niches in the *domus* were used for pagan statues and statuettes, they point to pagan tenacity amongst some of the well-to-do.<sup>34</sup> The scarcity of Christian evidence from the *domus* has led Meiggs to the conclusion: "It is at least a tenable hypothesis that a large section of the upper class remained pagan for much of the fourth century".<sup>35</sup>

## § 6 Participants, beneficiaries, and organization

In § 4, where the position of the evidence was discussed, some

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<sup>29</sup> Malaise 1972(2), 212-214.

<sup>30</sup> Becatti 1961, 152-153 nr. 290, Tav. CI (possibly late second century).

<sup>31</sup> Heres 1982, 464-471, fig. 82, with extensive bibliography.

<sup>32</sup> Neuerburg 1965, 185-186 nr. 120, fig. 67.

<sup>33</sup> Rubble masonry; a few traces of plaster on the inside; at 1.22/1.84 from the ground; w. 0.58; d. 0.32.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Bloch 1945 on the pagan revival of 393-394 AD, documented in Ostia as well (restoration of the Tempio d'Ercole (I,XV,5)).

<sup>35</sup> Meiggs 1973, 401 (on Christianity in general: 389-403, Appendix VII). The Christian evidence:  
- a probable Christian motif in the vestibule of the Domus dei Pesci (Becatti 1949, 18-20, 51, fig. 48; Calza 1951, 126-129, fig. 3; Schaal 1957, 152; Becatti 1961, 181-183, nr. 338, fig. 227, Tavv. CC, CCXXVII, dated to the fourth century; Meiggs 1973, 400).

- a possible *baptisterium* in the courtyard of the Domus dei Pesci (Becatti 1949, 18-20, 51-52, fig. 18).

- possible Christian motifs in mosaics in the Domus dei Dioscuri (Becatti 1961, 114-123 nrs. 214 and 217).

- an early-Christian glass bowl found in the drainage channel of latrine 19 in the Domus del Protiro (Floriani Squarciapino 1952(3); Boersma 1985, 232; dated to the early fifth century).

conclusions have already been drawn with regard to the people involved with it. Part of the Ostian evidence formed a "communal, religious anchorage", part of it, for various reasons, formed a link between buildings or the people inside them on the one hand and people entering the buildings on the other.

Explicit data concerning the participants and beneficiaries documents the same aspects. The workshops were idle on the occasion of certain *feriae publicae*. The presence of a *sacerdos* in the Horrea di Hortensius implies at least the idea of a group of people led by him during religious celebrations. In the *domus* the Di Penates could be regarded as gods related to the hospitality of the master of the house.<sup>36</sup> The cult of the Lares and Genius was shared by the master of the house, his wife and children, and his slaves and freed slaves. Of course this does not mean that the hierarchy between them was given up. The expression Lares (*domini*), instead of Lares Familiares, is significant: the slaves and freed slaves, sometimes grouped together as *cultores* or *familiae*, worshipped protective deities of their *dominus*, not their own gods. Thus private religion contributed to social integration and division. A dividing line is discernible between those of servile origin and their masters, but simultaneously the two groups were bound together.

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<sup>36</sup> Cicero, In C. Verrem 2, 4, 48; CIL VII, 237; Wissowa 1912, 163.