

Schola del Traiano: The Seat of Shipbuilders' Association?

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Schola del Traiano (IV v.15) is one of the most magnificent *scholae* (seats, clubhouses) of associations in Ostia (Fig.1). The name is derived from a statue of the Emperor Trajan unearthed at the site (Fig.2). This *schola* is generally assumed to have been the seat of the association of shipbuilders (*fabri navales*) since it stands opposite the temple of shipbuilders (III ii.2) across the street (Fig.3).¹ The aim of this paper is to examine the assumption and present our hypothesis regarding the association that supposedly occupied the *schola*.

1

Schola del Traiano lies on the south side of Decumanus Maximus, the principal street of Ostia, and covers a spacious area (about 2,300m²). It consists of a building with *tabernae* (shops) facing the street (Building A), a large peristyle with a long fountain basin, and a building behind the peristyle (Building B) (Fig.4). Building A and the peristyle were constructed at the beginning of the third century on the remains of houses built in the late republican era.² Originally, the peristyle extended to the south end of the site. Later Building B was constructed by cutting the peristyle and the fountain basin short (Fig.5). Scholars have not come to an agreement on the exact date of its construction, but most of them suggest sometime during the third century.³ Besides these major programs, the buildings were often remodeled. The splendor of the *schola* and its history of enlargement tell us of the continuous prosperity and development of the association which built and occupied it.

The temple of shipbuilders (Tempio dei fabri navales) was constructed in the reign of Commodus (the late second century) on the remains of a *fullonica* (fullers' workplace).⁴ It consists of *vestibulum* (entrance room) and *tabernae*, a peristyle, a temple on a *podium* (stylobate), and a court with colonnades on both sides behind the temple, occupying an area about 17m×60m (Fig.6). For a temple of a private cult, it has considerable size.

If Schola del Traiano belonged to the shipbuilders, they might have acquired land

and built the temple in the late second century, constructed the *schola* after a few decades acquiring more spacious land, and added Building B in the *schola* perhaps within a half century, remodeling their facilities successively. Is this chronology in conformity with the history of the shipbuilders' association of Ostia?

2

We know two associations of shipbuilders in the Ostian territory, that of Ostia and that of Portus. The harbor of Ostia was at the mouth of the Tiber, neither large nor deep enough to receive large seagoing ships with cargos, so the Emperor Claudius built a new port about 3 km north (Porto di Claudio, Portus Augusti), and Trajan added another one (Porto di Traiano, Portus Traiani). Around the new ports developed a new town called Portus which administratively belonged to Ostia (Fig.7). It is probable that the shipbuilders of Portus could have established a new association at a certain time (in the first half of the second century?). We have two membership lists of shipbuilders, *CIL* xiv.169 found in Portus and Bloch 1953, no.43 found in front of the shipbuilders' temple in Ostia. Though we cannot know the full names of associations because of damage of the stones in both lists, the former seems to be of the association of Portus, the latter to be that of the Ostian association.⁵ Hereafter we will call the former alb. Port., and the latter alb. Ost. Alb. Port. seems to date from around 200 AD⁶ and alb. Ost. was probably inscribed at the beginning of the third century.⁷ So the two lists seem to have been compiled at an interval of one generation at most, which would be no obstacle to comparing them from the viewpoint of the members' social constitution.

In alb. Port. there are many members with the *nomina* of imperial families. They form 29.6 % of the total (99 of 353), a ratio outstanding among Ostian associations.⁸ Most of these members were imperial freedmen or their descendants who seemed to have been working as foremen or laborers in the state dockyards or doing subcontracted works. Now we can compare the numbers of those who had the imperial *nomina* in alb. Port. and alb. Ost. in chronological order (table). While in the association of Portus imperial *nomina* appear in succession, in the Ostian association they disappear almost completely after Iulii. This indicates, I think, that the state dockyards were moved to Portus when the port of Claudius was built. A certain part of the private dockyards might have been moved to Portus as well. Thus, many shipbuilders might have left Ostia and settled in Portus. If so, the Ostian shipbuilders' association was in stagnation or decline after the establishment of the new asso-

Table Numbers of those who had the imperial *nomina*
alb. Ost. alb. Port.

Iulii	8	24
Claudii	-	8
Flavii	-	18
Cocceii	-	2
Ulpii	-	11
Aelii	-	24
Aurelii	1	11
Septimius	-	1

ciation of Portus. While in alb. Port. 353 names are counted, there are only 94 names are read in alb. Ost.⁹ Is this not a reflection of such stagnation or decline?

The history of the Ostian shipbuilders' association we have reconstructed is not in accordance with the architectural chronology above. The association had neither the necessity of nor the resources for successive enlargement of their facilities. If they didn't have a *schola*, they could have used the court with porticos behind the temple for their assemblies and banquets instead. It may have been planned for this purpose.

The statue of Trajan in Schola del Traiano, probably dedicated by the association that built the *schola*, provides circumstantial evidence. Trajan, the builder of the new port, was not a benefactor of the Ostian shipbuilders. The association of Portus may have been established and recognized officially under his reign. It is improbable that the Ostian association should have dedicated a statue to this emperor.

3

Which association, then, was the owner of Schola del Traiano?

Hermansen, Bollmann and Ascough suggest the association of shipowners (*navicularii*).¹⁰ The most important evidence is a fragment of inscription found in the *schola* (Bloch 1953, no.32). Bloch integrates it as follows, relying on an inscription whose words are almost the same (*CIL* xiv.3603).¹¹

[/. Pacceio L. f.] / Q PR[o pr.] / NAVICVLARIEI•O[stienses]/ QUOD•IS•
PRIMVS•SIM[ulacrum - - -] / STATVARIVM•PRO - - - - -

This inscription was dedicated by shipowners to Paccius, *quaestor pro praetore*, since he promised (?) a statue. It is dated to the Augustan age from the ending *-iei*,¹² far earlier than the construction of Schola del Traiano. But this interval does not necessarily deny the connection between the *schola* and the shipowners. The inscription may have been introduced there by the shipowners with the image on it when they built the *schola*.¹³

Other evidence does not positively indicate the association to which the *schola* belonged. The inscription Bloch 1953, no.33 found in the *schola* was dedicated to L. Volusius Maecianus, *consul designatus* and patron of the city, by L. Volusius Mar-----

(possibly his freedman) around 160 AD.¹⁴ In the *cursus honorum* (career) of Volusius Maecianus we find *praefectus annonae*, the post responsible for supplying the capital with foodstuffs. Since shipowners were engaged in transportation of foodstuffs from the provinces, it is possible to presume their connection with him. But we don't know what relations they had with the dedicator and why the inscription was introduced into the *schola*.

The statue of Fortuna in Building B cannot be related to any specific associations. Many cases have been reported concerning the connection between this goddess and associations from various cities of the Empire. These associations were made up of various groups, butchers (*lanii*), keepers or managers of warehouses (*horrearii*), blacksmiths (*ferrarii*), builders (*fabri tignuarii*), and so on. Neither *fabri navales* nor *navicularii* appear among these groups.

What about the floor mosaic in the *triclinium* (banquet room) of the Building B? It represents wild beasts, birds, and winged Genii or Amores¹⁵ with a bunch of grapes, a hare, a basket of possibly bread (Fig.8). The beasts and birds (lion, panther, peacock) remind us of Africa and Asia. But we can only say that the design of the mosaic is more suitable for shipowners than for shipbuilders.

We have some information on the Ostian shipowners' associations. Owners of river-boats, ferry-boats, and barges organized several associations.¹⁶ As for the shipowners engaged in marine transportation, we know there was an association of shipowners of the Adriatic Sea (*corpus naviculariorum maris Hadriatici*).¹⁷ The shipowners of this association seem to have been sailing around the Adriatic Sea and imported various goods, especially wine from Istria and the northern Adriatic regions. The base of this association, however, may have been not in Ostia but on the Adriatic coast, perhaps in Aquileia.¹⁸ In the Augustan age, *Naviculariei Ostienses* appear in the inscriptions mentioned above. Though we don't know whether they had an officially authorized association or not, they acted as a group in dedicating a statue. In the late second century an inscription speaks of an association of shipowners (*corpus naviculariorum*).¹⁹ We don't know whether it was the same group as that of the *naviculariei* and what relations it had with the association of shipowners of the Adriatic Sea. It is possible, however, that there existed an association composed of many shipowners of Ostia engaged in marine transport. If so, it must have been one of the most important and prestigious associations in Ostia together with that of builders (*fabri tignarii*). Nevertheless no facilities of theirs have been identified in Ostia apart from two *stationes* (offices) in Piazzale delle corporazioni.²⁰ *Schola del Traiano* seems suitable for the headquarters of such an important association.

The statue of Trajan is suitable for the shipowners as well. His construction of the new port must have been of great convenience for them and enabled them to develop

their activities. They would have dedicated the statue with great gratitude.

To sum up, at present, it is most reasonable to think that Schola del Traiano was the seat of the shipowners.



Fig.1 Entrance of Schola del Traiano



Fig. 2 The statue of Trajan (copy. The original is in the Museum of Ostia)

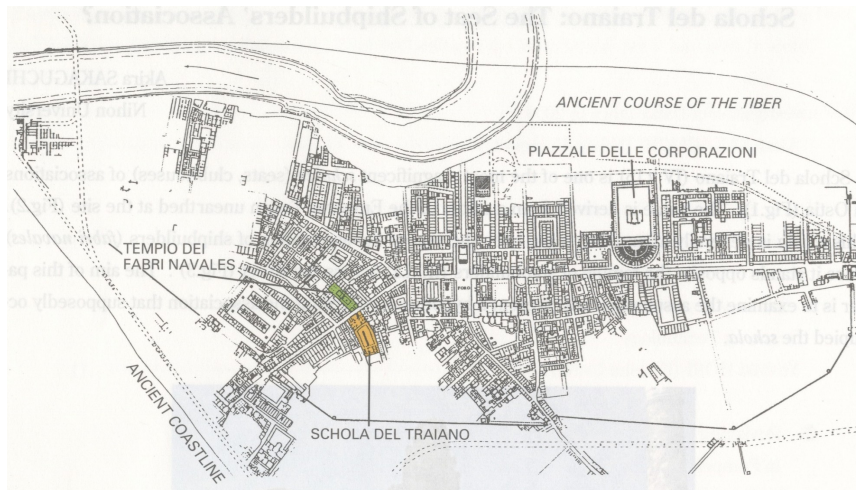


Fig.3 Plan of Ostia antica. Calza et al. 1953, fig. 36.

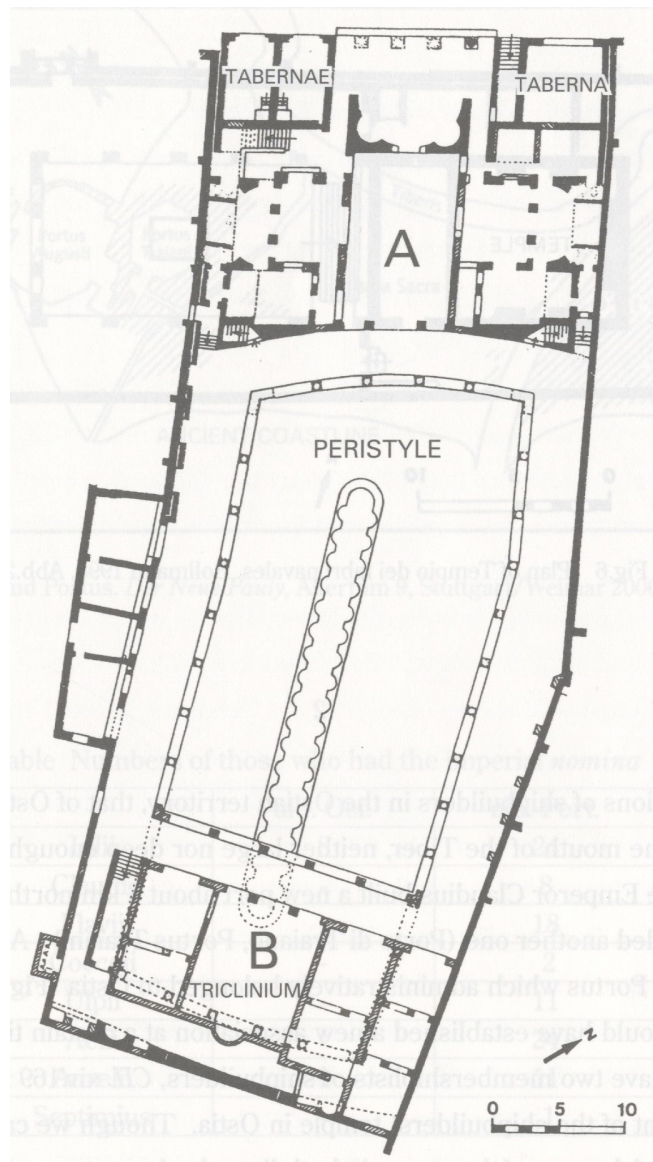


Fig.4 Plan of Schola del Traiano. Calza et al.1953, piante 7, 12; Bollmann 1998, Abb.13



Fig.5 The fountain basin in the peristyle and Building B (back)

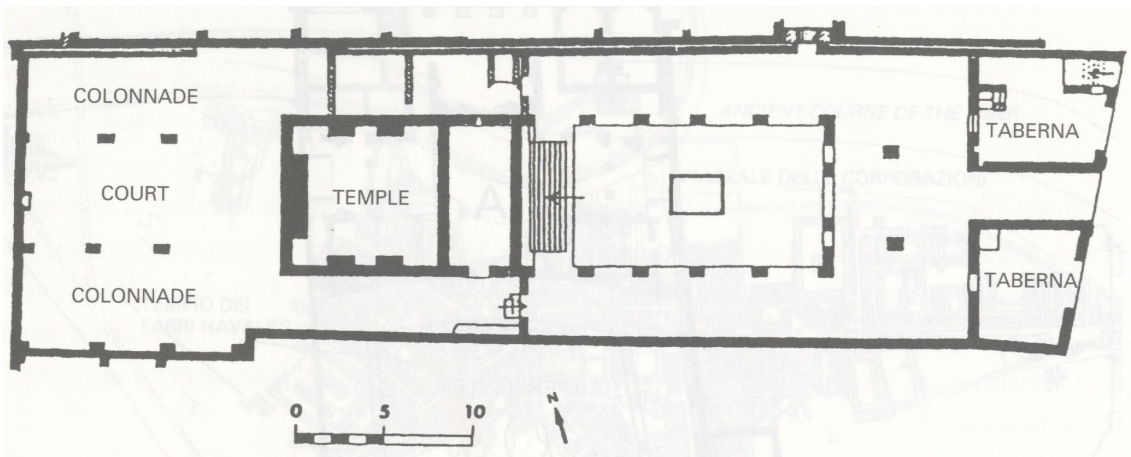


Fig.6 Plan of Tempio dei fabri navales. Bollmann 1998, Abb.21

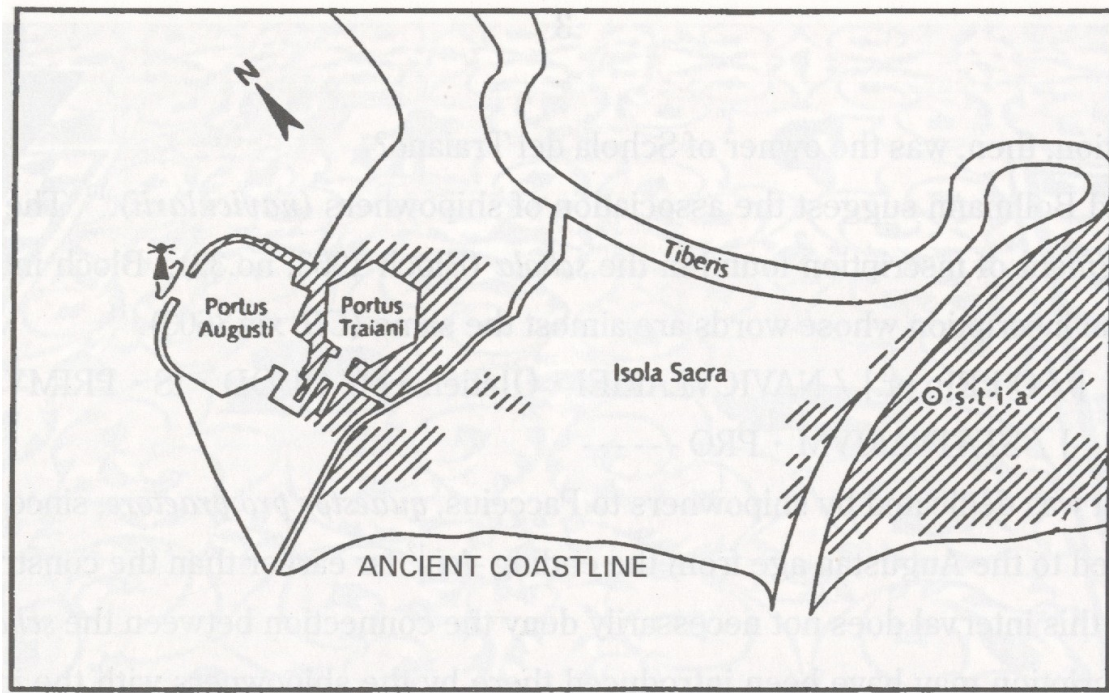


Fig.7 Ostia and Portus. *Der Neue Pauly*, *Altertum* 9, Stuttgart/Weimar 2000, 192, Abb.



Fig.8 The floor mosaic in the *triclinium* of Building B

Notes

- 1 Calza et al. 1953, 146, 149; Schaal 1957, 94sq.; Calza et Nash 1959, 52sqq.; Boyle 1968, 271n.15; Scrinari et al. 1982, 76; Pavolini 1983, 144, 182; Pavolini 1991, 151; Pensabene 1996, 217; Gallico 2000, 54; Chrzanovski et al. 2001, 74; Pavolini 2006, 149sq.,190; Pellegrino 2012, 104sq..
- 2 The construction of the *schola* was formerly dated to the mid-second century or a bit earlier from wall structure and stamps on the bricks of walls and the tiles of canalization, and the style of capitals of the columns. Calza et al. 1953, 146, 226, 237; Girri 1956, 31; Lugli 1957, 610sq.; Becatti 1961, 199; Neuerburg 1965, 192; Boyle 1968, 50; Calza et Becatti 1968, 42; Pensabene 1973, 73sq.; Herres 1982, 519; Hermansen 1982, 72; Scrinari et al. 1982, 75; Pavolini 1983, 182; Bollmann 1998, 77, 326; Gallico 2000, 54; Chrzanovski et al. 2001, 76; Pavolini 2006, 190; Broquet et Gonon 2006, 62. Ascough et al 2012 dates it to the end of the second century. The excavation by French scholars since the beginning of the 2000th has led to their proposal that it should be dated to the beginning of the third century. See Parrier 2007, 15; Pellegrino 2012, 104.
- 3 Calza et al. 1953, 156, 238 (second half of the 3rd century); Becatti 1961, 199-202 (reign of Septimius Severus, based on mosaics of pavement); Calza et Becatti 1968, 42 (the 3rd century); Boyle 1968, 50 (middle of the 3rd century); Pensabene 1973, 42sq. (reign of Severus, based on the style of capitals); Herres 1982, 519-525 (c.330-340 and after, based on wall structure); Hermansen, 1982, 71 (250-300); Scrinari et al. 1982, 77 (the 3rd century); Pavolini, 1983, 183 (the 3rd century); Bollmann 1998, 77, 327 (the late 3rd or the beginning of the 4th century); Pavolini 2006, 191 (the 3rd century, based on mosaics of pavement and frescoes on the walls); Broque et Gonon 2006, 62 (epoca severiana, based on the wall structure).
- 4 The dating is based on pavements. Calza et al. 1953, 149; Girri 1956, 25; Becatti 1961, 94; Pavolini 1983, 144; Bollman 1998, 50, 81, 306; Pavolini 2006, 149sq.; Ascough et al. 2012; Pellegrino 2012, 105.
Identification of the temple as shipbuilders' is almost certain. The base of statue dedicated to a patron of their association was found at the site, and some members in the list found there have some relations to a magistrate of the association. See Sakaguchi 2001, 21, 28n.17; Sakaguchi 2002, 23. On the *fullonica* beneath the temple see de Ruyt 1995.
- 5 Bloch 1953, 285; Meiggs 1973, 215sq., 317, 324; Chevallier 1986, 154; Royden 1988, 30-33. Tran proposes the possibility that the two lists reflect members of the same association at two very distant moments (Tran 2006, 315). But an analysis of the names in two lists excludes such possibility. See Sakaguchi 2001, 21sq., and

below.

- 6 Bloch 1953, 285 (“difficilmente può essere anterior alla fine del secolo II”); Meiggs 1973, 317 (“probably from the Severan period”); Tran 2006, 315 (“peut être...sous le principat de Commode”).
- 7 Bloch 1953, 285 (“nei primi decenni del terzo secolo”); Tran 2006, 315 (“proche de l’édit de Caracalla”).
- 8 Shipbuilders’ association of Ostia: 11.1%.
Corpus lenunculariorum tabulariorum auxiliariorum Ostiensium: 12.9% (152 AD, *CIL* xiv. 250), 10.7% (192 AD, *CIL* xiv.251).
Collegium fabrum tignariorum Ostiensium: 21.2% (198 AD, *CIL* xiv.4569).
- 9 Alb. Ost. is inscribed on two steles, on two sides of one and on one side of the other. On one stele appear magistrates of the association, the first, and as on the other stele the inscription ends on one side, it is certainly the last. Bollmann supposes that there existed other steles between, and estimates the members at 150-200 (Bollmann 1998, 50sq., 54). The possibility cannot be excluded, but if my assumption in the text is right, it is reasonable to think that the extant two steles represent the complete membershiplist apart from broken parts.
- 10 Hermansen 1982, 72sq.; Bollmann 1998, 77, 198, 327 (*fabri navales* or *navicularii*); Bollmann 2001, 176 (“peut être”); Ascough et al 2012, 235 (“clealy”).
- 11 Bloch 1953, 269.
- 12 Bloch 1953, 270; Hermansen 1982, 72sq.; De Salvo 1992, 376. Similarly the twin inscription *CIL* xiv.3603 dates from the Augustan age as well. Dessau in the commentary in *CIL*, etc.
- 13 De Salvo interprets the title of Pacceius, *quaestor pro praetore*, as supervisor of banks of the Tiber from Rome to Ostia following Rickman and Houston, and maintains that the *naviculariei* were not owners of seagoing ships but boatmen engaged in domestic transportation (De Salvo 1992, 376). This argument seems not persuasive to me.
- 14 Bloch 1953, 270sq. The dating is based on another inscription *CIL* xiv.5347 dedicated to the same person.
- 15 Beccati 1961, 200; Calza et Becatti 1968, 43; Pavolini 1983, 183; Bollmann 1989, 326; Pavolini 2006, 191.
- 16 Aicher 1947, 85-109; Licordari 1987; Royden 1988, 33-51; De Salvo 1992, 147-182; Herz 1994.
- 17 Meiggs 1973, 275sq.; Pellegrino 1987; De Salvo 1992, 429-437.
- 18 De Salvo 1992, 431-437.
- 19 *CIL* xiv.4648: ---]CORP NAVICV[---
- 20 In the pavement mosaics in front of two *stationes* we can read “navicularii et

negotiantes de suo” (*CIL* xiv. 4549.15, 16). It is not apparent, however, that these *navicularii* were members of that *corpus*. These *stationes* may have been those of shipowners from provinces like other *stationes* in the piazzale.

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