

Rediscovering Antiquity: Karl Weber and the Excavation of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae. By Christopher Charles Parslow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, paperback 1998) xx+394pp. Hardback: ISBN 0-521-47150-8 £60.00/US\$95.00, paperback: ISBN 0-521-64664-2 £17.95/US\$27.95.

This book, as emphasised by the author, is a history of the earliest excavations of the Roman towns in Campania which were destroyed by the volcanic eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD. 79. It results from Parslow's rigorous research in the archives in Naples, research facilitated by a catalogue, published in 1979, of the documentation from the 1739-1861 excavations of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiae, held in Archivio di Stato. The excavaton history begins in 1709 with the Duc d'Elbeuf's discoveries of antiquities through well-digging in the area later identified as Herculaneum, but it concentrates on the excavations between 1750 and 1764 and the work of Karl Jakob Weber.

Weber was a Swiss military engineer employed to supervise the excavations during this period. As Parslow is quick to point out, Weber was not the main protagonist in these investigations and this book is not his biography. However, through this book, Parslow endeavours to convince us of the major contribution which Weber's work has made in initiating excavation processes and documentation procedures which constitute the main and most useful information on these excavations for today's scholars.

The other major players in this story are: Rocque Joaquin de Alcubierre, chief director of the royal excavations from about 1738 until his death in 1780; Camillo Paderni, director of the Museum Herculaneum until his death in 1781; Padre Antonio Piaggio, a priest who was brought from Rome to decipher the papyrus roles from the Villa dei Papiri and who was a supporter of Weber against his enemies; Marchese Bernardo Tanucci who created the Reale Accademia Ercolanese di Archeologia in 1755 to oversee publications of the excavations; and finally La Vega who eventually took over Weber's post, Alcubierre's position and that of Paderni.

This history takes us through the processes of these early excavations: the difficulties of excavating through metres of volcanic material under contemporary housing in Resina to investigate Herculaneum; the problems of disturbing cultivable land to excavate in Pompeii; and the ensuing health hazards from long periods underground in damp conditions. These processes were greatly impacted upon by the relationships between these men, their individual beliefs about the purposes of these excavations and the best methods to realise them, and the needs of each to ensure that his own role received recognition in the Bourbon court. The Bourbon kings, Alcubierre and Paderni were carrying out the excavations to produce ancient works of art to furbish the royal collections in Portici and Naples. To collect this material they dug haphazardly around the site looking for valuable sculptural finds, back-filling immediately afterwards to prevent collapse. They were concerned to protect these assets by restricting access from the outside

world. They even resorted to destroying or mutilating any duplicate works of art to ensure the value of their own collection. Weber, on the other hand, was determined to produce accurate maps of layout of the towns and individual buildings and to record the precise contexts in which works of art were found. He believed that the excavated areas should be left exposed to facilitate comprehension by visitors, but at the same time damage to habitation and cultivatable areas should be minimised. He believed that it was important to inform the European scholarly community of the significance of these remains. Thus, this book presents the conflicts, intrigues and jealousies that clouded much of the excavation process in Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae.

This book provides much detail on the major excavations of this period: those of the the Villa di Papiri in Herculaneum, the Theatre in Herculaneum, the Praedia di Juliae Felicis in Pompeii and the Villa di San Marco in Stabiae. Weber played a major role in the excavations of these buildings and produced comprehensive and annotated plans of all of them. The book is divided into three parts although the division of the last two seems somewhat artificial as they appear to cover similar ground. It is undoubtedly rather difficult to separate out the excavation methodology from its documentation and still follow the process in a meaningful manner. The first part, 'The Historical Background', presents biographical information on Weber; the work of Weber's predecessors, particularly that of Alcubierre and Pierre Bardet de Villeneuve; and Weber's first project, the completion of a map of the Bay of Naples, the so-called Cratere Maritimo map.

The second part, 'Excavations and Methodology', traces the discovery of the Villa of the Papiri, the role of the Accademia Ercolanese in publishing the finds; the excavation and documentation of the Praedia di Juliae Felicis; and the excavation of the so-called "Temples" at Herculaneum. The third part, 'Documentation', deals with Weber's attempts to gain membership of the Accademia Ercolanese through publication of his work; relationships between the Naples court and the outside world over the excavations, particularly as articulated through the writings of J. J. Winckelmann; the excavations and documentations of the theatre at Herculaneum; and an epilogue of Weber's death in 1764 and the subsequent interest in and publication of his work.

The main section is followed by four appendices consisting of transcriptions of the texts on Weber's draft and axonometric plans of Praedia di Juliae Felicis, and of the texts of his monograph and a missing plan of the Villa di San Marco in Stabiae. Regrettably, these appendices are not cross-referenced to the related illustrations and discussions in the main text. This is particularly important for Appendix 2 which would appear to be the same text as that on the plans illustrated as figs. 48-49, despite the apparently different dimensions and catalogue number of the drawing.

The contents of this book - the details of the results of these excavations, their processes and the relationships between the protagonists - provide an essential resource for those carrying out further research on these monuments as well as a

useful sourcebook for scholars interested in the history and politics of these the earliest large-scale excavations in the western world. Weber's legacy was that 'his notions about publishing the archaeological sites and making them accessible to a broader public were years ahead of their time' (280).

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