

KRISTINE IARA: *Hippodromus Palatii: Die Bauornamentik des Gartenhippodroms im Kaiserpalast auf dem Palatin in Rom*. DAI Rom, Palilia 30. Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 2015. ISBN 978-3-95490-088-6. 269 S. EUR 29.90.

The current appearance of the imperial architecture of the Palatine Hill in Rome is mostly limited to the remaining masonry structures of the buildings. Kristine Iara's work seeks to reconstruct a part of this huge building complex beyond its masonry core and display it in its original splendour. She focuses on the Hippodrome garden which consists of an open space resembling the form of a hippodrome with porticoes surrounding the open space. This garden with the colonnades occupied a large part of the southeast corner of the hill. Iara's reconstruction mainly depicts the Severan period of the building. She attempts to analyse the Flavian phase of the Hippodrome, but the limited evidence allows only the reconstruction of the lowest level of the porticoes, leaving the picture of this early phase partial. Some later periods are occasionally mentioned, such as the Maxentian phase and the era in Late Antiquity when the so-called amphitheatre was built at the southern end of the Hippodrome.

Besides the introduction, the study can be divided into two parts. The first part is the description of the architectural elements (pp. 21–126) and the second part is the analysis of these elements (pp. 127–205). The description includes Chapters II (*Die Portikus des unteren Geschosses des Hippodroms*), III (*Die Basen*), IV (*Die Stützen*), V (*Die Kapitelle*), VI (*Die Gebälke*) and VII (*Lisenen, Profile und profilierte Platten*). Also, the tables of the appendices (pp. 211–234), listing the architectural elements and their features, are an integral part of the description. The work is enormous, as it is based on 988 architectural components. The tables in the book do not include all the components and the entire database is intended to be published online (www.arachne.uni-koeln.de). I was not able to find the database in spite of several attempts – probably it is not yet available online. Chapters II–VII are very useful for other researchers working with similar architectural elements as Iara. For those, however, who are trying to form a comprehensive picture of the space or seeking general knowledge, these chapters might not be as interesting as the last part of the book. However, the description chapters form the basis of the dating of the architecture, which is indispensable for understanding the later reconstruction and the analysis. Usually, the dating is based on the style and materials, but in a few cases there are inscriptions on the architectural elements to help the dating.

Describing the architecture is not an easy task and in this book the descriptions are mainly in a free-text format, accompanied by the tables of the appendix. The free-text format has its advantages: not all information can be forced into tables and figures. The descriptive chapters are well organized and each of them follows a logical pattern, but occasionally they could be even more schematic to help their readers. For example: the columns of the porticoes are classified into groups on pages 45–49. This text contains several measurements. It might be possible to replace the text with a simple table, or even possibly just briefly list the column groups and refer to table II on pages 220–221, where almost all the same information can be found.

Chapter VIII (*Rekonstruktion*) is the core of the book. It briefly describes the earlier reconstructions of the Hippodrome garden and then moves on to Iara's reconstructions of the Flavian and Severan eras – yet again, the surviving material dictates that the emphasis is on the later. Chapters IX (*Material und Bearbeitung*) and X (*Der Bautypus: Der Bau und seine Ausstattung*) continue the analysis of the decorative elements of the space.

Iara's archaeological material was excavated a long time before her study was written and she did not conduct any excavations of her own. This guides her to concentrate on the architecture as it can still be physically studied. Consequently, the reconstruction emphasizes the architecture leaving aside the garden – even though it was a large and significant part of the Hippodrome garden. Iara's reconstruction of the garden is based on the literary and archaeological sources of other gardens in the Roman world, and she concludes that the plants and other decoration in this garden must have been very impressive. This is likely a correct conclusion, even if there is hardly any evidence of the plantings in the Hippodrome garden, as is also noted by the author herself. Consequently, the conclusion that there was a garden in the space seems to be based on its hippodrome form. The written and archaeological sources indicate that other similar spaces functioned as gardens. Nonetheless, the garden identification would have profited from a simple notion that there was no floor or hard soil surface in the space if this information is available in the excavation reports or other sources. Often this might seem too obvious, but it would have strengthened the identification, as the architectural forms that can frequently be related to gardens do not always indicate that the space actually had a garden. In general, Iara connects the Hippodrome garden with other Roman monumental gardens, particularly with the gardens of the private *villae*, and she concludes that the function of the Hippodrome garden was to display high socioeconomic status – in this case the highest standing of the empire.

The text is well written and easy to read. Yet there was, for example, the fairly common mistake of spelling Wilhelmina Jashemski's name as Jashemsky. In conclusion, Iara has done a huge and important work documenting the architectural remains of the Hippodrome garden. The work is a good reference to similar studies and it will be an important part of the reconstructed architectural history of the Palatine and Rome.

Samuli Simelius