

SUMMARY

MODERN METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE RESEARCH OF ROMAN DWELLING AREAS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR THEIR APPLICATION IN THE ROMAN LIBURNIA REGION

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The authors discuss methodological issues regarding possibilities for determining the functions of rooms in Roman houses. The idea is becoming increasingly widespread that Roman houses were not uniform - as if they were some sort of direct copies of houses in Pompeii - but differed not only following the economic and social means and needs of their owners but also according to regional building features. Specific terms for various rooms brought to us by ancient writers cannot be automatically applied to such buildings, so it is clear that they should be studied using an elaborated multidisciplinary approach. We can accept ancient terms, but solely as a convention, since the functions of individual rooms can be recognised only after a critical analysis based on a study of their locations, sizes, communications to other rooms, decorations, etc. Therefore, it is imperative to record with the utmost precision both all of the above-mentioned factors and the archaeological findings coming from the closed contexts of dwelling areas, since they are the most direct witnesses of past actions there. Such an approach opens new perspectives to Roman houses in which individual rooms were not for a single, unambiguous purpose - contrary to simplified interpretations of earlier studies - but their purposes were complex with multifarious activities occurring in the same place. Changes in methodological approaches question the earlier domination of literary sources over material ones in the study of dwelling spaces, and at the same time try to solve the problem of finding adequate analytical methods to apply in order to identify as objectively as possible the functions of individual rooms.

Unfortunately, older studies did not take into consideration the manifold use of a Roman house. Analysis of the material data from Pompeian houses has confirmed such a use and the same can be observed in many other parts of the Roman state, including Roman Liburnia. The authors use Roman houses from the latter area as a case study to display the possibilities - and even more the limitations - in identifying the functions of separate rooms according to both the quantity of findings therefrom and the precision with which the finding contexts have been recorded.