

PREFACE

In the spring of 2001, I had the privilege of an extended stay at the American Academy in Rome (AAR) as a visiting scholar. An opportunity to join such a vibrant and diverse academic community is always an extraordinary experience in so many ways, and this one was made even more so by the opportunity to spend time with Professor Lester Little, its director. Although my research fields in ancient maritime history and marine archaeology are far from his own, his catholic interest in all aspects of classical antiquity is keen and informed. During one conversation in his office, I suggested that perhaps it was time for the AAR to host another conference on Rome and the sea. I reminded him that the last one, organized by the then-director John D'Arms and held over a two-year period in 1978–1979, had resulted in the publication in 1980 of *The Seaborne Commerce of Ancient Rome: Studies in Archaeology and History*, edited by J. H. D'Arms and E. C. Kopff (= *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 36). It was well received when published and has remained an important contribution to the literature in the field of maritime life in antiquity. I remember him asking me in his typically dry, humorous way if anything new had happened in the field since then. My response to him was in the same vein: “Yes, but not that much. We won't need two years for our conference. We can cover our material in two days.” He said that I should give it a go and try to organize a symposium of leading scholars for the spring of 2003. From that exchange of banter “The Maritime World of Ancient Rome” (MWAR) was born.

The road from this moment of conception to the actual conference and then to this volume has been a long one. In January of 2006, the final details regarding publication had been finalized, and this book moved closer to reality. Authors were then afforded the opportunity to incorporate recent research into their contributions, so the content of the various articles is more current than the date of the original conference would suggest.

Without the help of many people, including all of the speakers who made time in their busy lives to come to Rome in March 2003 and then to revise their papers as articles for this volume, nothing would have come of the plans formulated in Professor Little's office in 2001. There are others to thank who were equally indispensable. At the AAR, Ingrid Rowland (who has since left this institution), Archer Martin, Anne Coulson, and Pina Pasquantonio all worked hard to nurture this effort and ensure that it became a reality worthy of the endorsement of their prestigious institution. Of course, the conference and this volume occurred under the enthusiastic patronage of Lester Little—*sine qua non*. I wish to thank him personally for his encouragement and support for our endeavors as well as his gracious public welcome at our opening session. Elaine Gazda, who serves as the chair of the AAR's publication committee, has been the inspiration for including this volume in the series *Supplements to the Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*. Chris Hebert and others at the University of Michigan Press were extremely patient as I waited for the inevitable late submission of articles and figures that has delayed the final publication beyond their and my

own expectations. My thanks to them for the final copyediting and composition of this volume, as well as to the three anonymous reviewers whose suggestions for changes in the various articles have tightened and improved the final product.

The publication of a book is always a momentous event for those involved in its composition. I hope all who contributed to this one feel that their efforts have helped capture in some measure the excitement and synergy of shared interests and professional comradeship that pervaded our conference. Rome's maritime life needs more attention, and as our authors demonstrate there is still much to learn about this often-neglected area of study.

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