



Imperial Rome and Ostia

Warehouses and storage in Imperial Rome

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As well as being shipped to Rome, grain was stored in warehouses at Portus and at Ostia which remained the administrative centre. An imposing example of a grain warehouse at Ostia is the Grand Horrea, first built during the reign of Claudius, and later much enlarged. Grain warehouses had raised internal floors to protect the product from damp and vermin. Not all of the horrea at Portus and Ostia were granaries. This striking example of a warehouse complex in Ostia the tongue-twistingly named Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana - was probably built by two freed slaves for the storage of wholesale luxury goods. According to one expert on Ostia, the warehouse combined elegance and utility to a remarkable degree although only the ground floor survives. A product of the second century Ostian building boom, it was a major capital investment as the mosaic courtyard shows. Mosaics were an expensive embellishment signifying a successful commercial concern. The entrance consisted of an inner as well as an outer doorway, as security was evidently a prime consideration in the building plan. The structure as a whole was brick faced concrete and the design makes full use of the arches and vaulting the material facilitated. Here - an exposed cross-vault. There were sixteen large rooms on the ground floor, opening on to the courtyard, and at least two storeys above. Multi-storied buildings like this were also necessary to house the majority of the population of Ostia and Rome.