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# Reviews

**Marlis Arnhold, *Transformationen stadtrömischer Heiligtümer während der späten Republik und Kaiserzeit*, Contextualizing the Sacred Series 10, Brepols, Turnhout, Belgium, 2020, 382.pp. ISBN: 978-2-503-58835-3**

Rome is well-known today for its monumental archaeological heritage from classical antiquity, especially from the period of the late Republic and Principate. Most of the visible and still standing, archaeological monuments are from these two major historical periods. The large, sacralised spaces and urban complex discovered at the Largo Argentina, Forum Boarium, Sant'Ombono, Forum Holitorium square in Rome today represents one of the major touristic attractions of Rome. The monumental temples and the surrounding buildings of the square have their own metahistories already in collective memory and represents a provocation for archaeologists to understand the historical evolution, archaeological stratigraphy and various transformations of these urban complexes.

The book of Marlis Arnhold is one of the few comprehensive studies focusing on the problem of transformations of sacralised spaces in urban contexts. The monumental volume published in lavish quality by Brepols publishing house is the result of the doctoral project of the author carried on at the Max Weber Kolleg from Erfurt, where she was also a postdoctoral researcher in the Lived Ancient Religion ERC Advanced Project coordinated by prof. Jörg Rüpke<sup>1</sup>. The methodological innovations of the project, its new definition of religious communication focusing on the agency of human, divine and material actors, embodiment and local, individual appropriations also offered a new approach to understand the transformative role of Roman religion in urban context<sup>2</sup>. These theoretical approaches certainly influenced the work of Marlis Arnhold, however this book surprisingly evokes the very strict rules of the traditional German classical archaeology, emphasizing the role and presenting in detail the architectural features and materialities.

After a long list of figures (the book contains 167 black and white photographs and plans – mostly the works of the author), the author has a short acknowledgement with a long list of persons. Among these we also find the name of Henner von Hesberg, doyen of classical archaeology in Germany, whose influence, and methods can be observed in the work of Arnhold. The list however is rich also in scholars of religious studies, especially those related to the Max Weber Kolleg from Erfurt.

In the Introduction, Arnhold presents the major topics analysed by her book. She emphasises, that the focus of her research is not necessarily on the technical, artistic, stylistic and architectural details and their typological evolution in temple-buildings and sanctuaries in the late Republican and imperial periods, but especially on the functional, urban and religious transformations occurred with the evolution of the urban environments

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the project's main results and theoretical innovations: ALBRECHT et alii 2018; RÜPKE 2018.

<sup>2</sup> As a continuation of Rüpke's project, see the emerging studies of urban religion in antiquity: RÜPKE 2020.

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and building complexes presented as case studies by the book. Her research focus therefore is just partially follows the classical German archaeological research and offers a syncretic, transdisciplinary view on the transformations of sacralised spaces in complex, urban environments from Rome and Ostia. She also argued on the importance of the actors behind these monumental building programs, which were often interpreted only in political history (prosopography) of Rome, but not as religious actors in urban religion.

In the first part of the book (3-307.p.) the author presents in details eight individual case studies from Rome and Ostia. The first case study – presented in almost 70 pages, a micro-monograph on the site itself – is one of the most comprehensive analysis of the so-called Area Sacra from Largo Argentina square in Rome. After a short, historiographic introduction, Arnhold presents the history of the four temples and the larger urban context, which reconstructed on the basis of the current archaeological research and the digital mapping of the *Forma Urbis Romae* fragments (FUR 234a, b, c), need to be interpreted in the broader context of the Campus Martius and the Balbus theatre. Three small fragments of the marble map of Rome might indicate, that the four temples established in the so called Area Sacra of the Largo Argentina were part of a larger complex with at least five or six sacralised spaces. In the following, the author presents the archaeologically attested four temples, beginning with the building C, built in the 3rd century BC. Arnhold presents all the known archaeological phases of the temples, illustrated with plans, where the major structural changes and architectural differences are marked. The 2nd century BC marks also a new phase in the architectural and visual atmosphere of these sacralised spaces: the space is marked and located with inscriptions of the political elite of Rome, such as the altar of Aulus Postumius Albinus, consul of the year 180 BC. The restoration and modifications of the temples are marked by the author in two different plans (Abb. 5 and 7), which is perhaps less attractive, than the multilayered visualisation of building-biographies in the Atlas of Ancient Rome, however Arnhold's interpretation is focusing on a much more diverse facets of the reconstruction-phases and presents technical, architectural and historical details which are not presented in Andrea Carandini's work<sup>3</sup>. The author presents in detail also the building of temple B, the tholos-type sanctuary, which changed radically the space-organisation between temple C and A around 100 BC. In this chapter Arnhold is following the best traditions of the German classical archaeology: the temples are presented here with great attention on the technical, architectural details, dimensions with a special focus on the movable archaeological heritage discovered in the ruins of the temples (statue fragments, decorative elements). The interpretation of the fragments of the monumental statue of Fortuna Huiusce Diei unites not only the archaeological evidence, but also the literary and epigraphic sources, such as the fragments preserved from Plinius Maior (Plin. Nat. 34.19.54 and 60). The multiplicity of sources used by Arnhold are reflected in her footnotes, which reflects this transdisciplinarity between philology, classical archaeology and religious studies. The

<sup>3</sup> CARANDINI 2018, vol. II. Tab. 215b, 216-217.

author presents all the major periods of the site in the age of Pompeii the Great, who transformed radically the urban landscape and introduced several new strategies of public space sacralisation in the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (and not earlier as F. Coarelli suggested), but also during the 1st-3rd century AD, when the area was monumentalised by several public buildings and the temples were rebuilt. The big fire of Rome from 80 AD contributed also to the uniformization of the space and a centralised, architectural program initiated by Diocletian himself. The chapter ends with a short analysis of the late antique transformation of the temples in the 4-6th century AD. Although the author presents an in-depth analysis of the urban sector with several sanctuaries in macro-spaces, the problematic excavations from the 1930's and the Medieval destructions of the building-complex destroyed those details, which could help us to understand even more carefully the role of human agency and the interaction between the material and human in religious communication.

The same structure and research focus can be observed in the following subchapters which present the Roman temple at the Botteghe Oscure, the Portunus temple in the Forum Boarium, the so-called Area Sacra of the Sant'Omobono, the three podium-temple under the San Nicola Church at the Forum Holitorium, the Porticum Octaviae and Porticum Philippi near the Circus Flaminius, the temples of Apollo and Bellona *in circo* and the so-called Area Sacra of the Republican temples from Ostia. The author gives a special focus on the imperial changes, reconstructions of the late-Republican sanctuaries, showing in most of the cases how certain political actors and the processes of urbanism changed the Late Republican sanctuaries by restorations or new, annexed buildings.

The second part of the book (pp. 307-369.) summarize the major aspects of the transformations presented through the case studies from Rome and Ostia in the previous chapter. Arnhold here presents the modifications of the temple-forms and the changes of the architectural details and general urban atmosphere occurred in the Late Roman Republic and during the Principate. She is focusing also on some particularities, such as the use of *quadriporticus* or the temenos-walls of the sacralised spaces occurred in the late Republican time, as part of the monumentalisation of urban, macro-spaces used in religious communication by the local political elite, but also on the role of meso-spaces, such as the assembly-houses and annexes of the sacralised spaces associated with collegia or other small group religious activities. The most interesting – and unfortunately, the less detailed – chapter of her book is focusing on the strategies of religious communication and functionalities, use of sacralised spaces. Arnhold argued, that due to the transformation of the Roman state and the territorial expansion of the empire, urban landscape gained also a radically different aspect: the use of sacralised places, as triumphal and representational spaces became usual practice in the age of the “strong men” of the late Republic<sup>4</sup>. Arnhold dedicates a subchapter also for the divine agents of these monumentalised sacralised spaces, trying to identify the divinities behind the archaeological and epigraphic

<sup>4</sup> Notion used by Mary Beard for the political elite of Rome in the 1st century BC: BEARD 2015.

material and their historical, religious connectivity. Toponyms such as *in campo* and *in circo* and other, often legal notions are also shortly analysed. Arnhold identifies several sacralised spaces in Campus Martius: temples dedicated to the Nymphs, the Lares Permarini, Hercules Custos, Juno Curitis, Jupiter Fulgur, Volcanus, Feronia, Juturna.

The book of Marlis Arnhold published as the tenth volume of the Contextualising the Sacred series of the Brepols publishing house with beautiful photographic material represents an important step in classical archaeological historiography. Elegantly, however perhaps with modest steps, she introduced a new, transdisciplinary dialogue between the rigorous and century-long historiography of German classical archaeology and the contemporary study of Roman religion. Her work can be interpreted as a balanced example and a transdisciplinary door-opener between two, often radically different disciplines<sup>5</sup>. The unanswered questions of the book and the issues presented in the well-known, well-documented case studies from two of the most researched urban environments however shows the general and most striking issues of *Altertumswissenschaft* and the study of religious communication of antiquity: when it comes to the complex interaction between divine, human and material agency of religion, the researcher will be limited even in those cases, where time was propitious with the archaeological heritage of the Roman past, such as in Rome and Ostia.

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<sup>5</sup> For a similar, transdisciplinary approach which goes beyond the classical methodologies of classical archaeology see also the ERC project of Annette Haug hosted by the University of Kiel: Decorative Prinzipien der späten Republik und frühen Kaiserzeit in Italien (No. 681269). See also: MASCHEK 2016.