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THE IMPACT OF ROME ON CULT PLACES AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN ANCIENT ITALY

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For details of the cover image, see Rudolf Känel, 'Das Aesculapius-Heiligtum in Fregellae und sein Bauschmuck aus Terrakotta', at pp. 88-99, Figure 12.

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CULT, CONQUEST, AND 'RELIGIOUS ROMANIZATION'. THE IMPACT OF ROME ON CULT PLACES AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN ITALY

TESSE D. STEK

Introduction

Countless cult places dotted the landscape of ancient Italy. Whether built in stone in spectacular locations, simple altars, or simply votive deposits buried in the ground, they all reflect the diverse actions and beliefs of those who frequented them. From their architecture, location, and gifts, it is clear that sanctuaries were nodal points in the cultic, political, and socio-economic networks of the manifold communities that populated the Italian peninsula. This is particularly clear for the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Both archaeological remains and literary and epigraphic sources attest to frenetic monumental building activity. Over this same time period, Rome rapidly grew into an aggressive and expansionist military machine. However we define its character and underlying motives,[1] the contraption called Rome got into gear most markedly with the conquest of Veii in 396 BC, thereafter progressively conquering and incorporating all non-Roman Italic communities. Along the way, it founded new polities and reconstituted existing ones, most notably in colonial foundations, but also in various other administrative configurations. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, this process changed Italy profoundly. Socio-political, economic, and cultural transformations must have been so profound as to change the living environment of most of Italy's ancient inhabitants utterly in less than a few generations.

The character of those changes, their chronological development, and geographical variability are still hotly debated today. The significance of the processes by which Italy was integrated and transformed for understanding the character of Roman imperialism and the growth of the Roman empire at large is instantly recognizable. It has become ever clearer that much of the fundamental logic behind later Roman strategies of integration emerged already in the early and mid-Republican periods, and that any separation of developments in Republican Italy and in the provinces of the Roman empire is largely artificial – a point to which I will return later.[2]

With a view to contributing to this wider debate, this volume offers ideas on and approaches to the changing cultic landscape of the Italian peninsula under Roman dominion. Sacred places and the social, cultural, political, and economic connections between different cult places, as well as between cult places and settlements and other infrastructure, were an integral part of ancient society. The interaction between the

[1] *Cf.* Stek 2014 with bibliography for an overview of recent views on Roman imperialism.

[2] Keay and Terrenato 2001; recently re-emphasized in various influential studies, *e.g.* Dench 2005; Terrenato 2008.

location, ritual performances, or other shared activities and the group of people that took part in them is an important indicator of the social structure of the communities involved and can be interpreted as mapping important aspects of their ideologies and worldviews. This importance, moreover, is not limited merely to *reflecting* social structures: ancient peoples could actively use and manipulate sacred sites and their connectedness to other elements of the ancient inhabited landscape to create, transform, and enhance social structures and developments.[3] This fact makes study of the changing sacred landscape of ancient Italy a valuable resource for investigating the effects of Roman pressure and subsequent control of the Italian peninsula in the Republican period and thereafter. Accordingly, the contributors to this volume ask how sacred sites and rituals may help us reconstruct historical developments in ancient Italy during this period. In particular, they ask how, if at all, Roman intervention and conquest affected existing religious structures, and how new configurations arose.

To be sure, this volume makes no attempt to cover what has been called the 'religious Romanization' of Italy[4] in all its facets and local variety. Rather, it is intended as an outline of different approaches to the theme. It presents diverse and original methods of getting to grips with the role of sanctuaries and religion in ancient Italian communities and with the developments therein that resulted from changing geopolitical and socio-political realities. I have chosen to focus on aspects that commonly, and arguably undeservedly, have received less scholarly attention than more prominent subjects such as temple architecture. That is, I have prioritized aspects intimately related to the role of cult places and religious practices in their local and regional social contexts. The emphasis on context is not intended to replace the more conventional object-based emphasis on monumental remains and finds, which, of course, may be equally essential, depending on the research questions asked. Nonetheless, I hope to restore cult places and religious practices at least in part to their original social background. In particular, the conviction here is that it is necessary to make our analyses of the interaction of local communities, cult places, and Roman or Italic policy-makers, with all their evidential and methodological challenges, as explicit as possible.

The volume revolves around three main topics that have here been identified as particularly important to advancing our understanding of ancient Italian cults and cult places: 1) the role of sanctuaries in local and regional settlement structures; 2) the role of Roman authorities or representatives in shaping the religious environment of both non-Roman and new Roman polities; and 3) particularly significant categories of religious material culture. In this introductory paper, I shall first try to situate this volume in the current debate on religion and cult places in Republican and early Imperial Italy. Next, I shall briefly discuss two important and interrelated issues of Italic cult places and the rise of Rome: centralization and continuity. For the sake of clarity – not pedantry – I will frame my arguments generally in contrast to earlier interpretations of the effects of Roman expansion in the religious realm. Therefore, I will first give a, necessarily brief, overview of the debate up to the present.

[3] *Cf.* Alcock 1993, 172-214.

[4] *E.g.* De Cazanove 2000c; Glinister 2006.

'Weak' socio-religious change? The limits of Roman laissez-faire

In a word, scholars have assessed the religious impact of Rome on the conquered Italian peninsula as minimal.[5] It is usually assumed that the Roman authorities followed a hands-off policy towards conquered lands and peoples in regard to their general administration, and all the more so in religious matters. The usual argument is that polities that had not yet been enfranchised remained in charge of nearly everything but foreign policy. This means that large parts of Italy that were conquered from the fourth century BC onwards, but whose inhabitants had not yet received Roman citizenship, remained more or less sovereign until the Social War and the subsequent laws granting Roman citizenship in the early first century BC. The often-heard idea is that Roman policy makers and representatives generally avoided intervening in conquered areas, as long as these areas sent soldiers to support the Roman military. The notion of a hands-off Roman policy in religious matters has become something of an axiom of the popular understanding of the Roman empire. Apart from specific wartime situations, it is generally assumed that conquered communities could keep their gods and religious institutions, which were altered only in the long run, more in form than in substance.

This view applies especially to non-urban cults. The Italian countryside has generally been regarded as evolving only slowly, removed from the dynamic cultural developments of the urban hubs of Roman Italy. With the exception of the creation of a new economically 'rational' villa-landscape in the fertile plains, the central mountainous regions have been considered as only marginally involved in the rapidly changing Roman world of cities. Rural cults and cult places have therefore usually been linked to peripheral activities and are often described in terms of local persistence or old countryside traditions, apparently immune to historical developments. I will return to this and related issues later; here it suffices to underscore the pervasiveness of modern preconceptions of a rural-urban divide.

With this backdrop in mind, we may now briefly run through the acknowledged exceptions to the *laissez-faire* rule. The direct impact of Rome has usually been evaluated in terms of three basic possibilities: 1) restriction or suppression of cults; 2) manipulation or destruction of existing cult places; and 3) the spread of Roman cults and religious models.

1) As regards the restriction of cults by the Roman authorities, few exceptions to the general rule of *laissez-faire* are known. Most notable is the senate's prohibition of the *Bacchanalia* in 186 BC (the *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus*).[6] Although the question depends on the reading of the inscription with the *senatus consultum*, notably to whom exactly it is directed – Roman citizens, *socii*, or Latin colonists[7] – the Roman senate ultimately seems to have thought that it could outlaw a specific cult community outside

[5] For the debate on 'religious Romanization', as well as its particular development for Italy compared to the Roman provinces, see Stek 2009, 17-34 with further bibliography.

[6] *CIL* I², 581. See Pailler 1986.

[7] The meaning of *foideratei* is the issue here. According to Mommsen (*e.g.* Mommsen 1899, 875) and many after him, members of the organized cult are intended here, whereas others have interpreted the decree as addressed to *socii* or to Latin colonists; *cf.*, amongst many other studies, the discussion in Mouritsen 1998, 52-58; De Cazanove 2000b; and, recently, Bispham 2007, 116-123 and Briscoe 2008, 246 (favouring *socii*).

strictly Roman territory. Actual archaeological evidence for the ban of Dionysiac cult places remains, in any case, highly controversial.[8]

2) As regards Roman manipulation of existing cult places in conquered communities, a distinction may be drawn between cult places for poliadic deities, usually located in the urban centre, and extra-urban and rural sanctuaries. Poliadic deities sometimes appear in legendary (hi)stories being captured or wooed by Roman besiegers in the heat of the battle, possibly suggesting the existence of ritual requirements to win foreign deities over to the Roman side (especially the famous, and much debated, *evocatio* ritual).[9] The often romantic/poetic and late character of such descriptions should make us wary of accepting their validity for historical cases, but the existence of such a mindset at least in later times is suggestive in itself.

According to the urban-rural divide explained above, rural sanctuaries on the other hand have usually been regarded as desolate, decaying sites, after a Rome-induced shift towards urban centres. It is assumed that the survival or demise of the typical Italic rural sanctuary was determined by the extent to which it could be integrated in the new socio-political and geopolitical context – *i.e.* that sanctuaries located within the orbit of a major urban settlement had better chances of survival. Other rural sanctuaries are thought to have lost significance in the Roman era. This pattern has been recognized not only for the central areas of the Apennines, but also, at a somewhat earlier date, for Etruria and Magna Graecia. If the post-conquest period is taken into consideration at all, continued or resumed activity at Italic cult sites is habitually explained in terms of local persistence and the immutable character of rustic life, an image not very different from that transmitted by the Augustan poets.

3) As regards the spread of Roman cult forms outside of Rome, a non-interventionist policy is also usually assumed. An exception is made for Roman colonial foundations, which are typically understood to affect the religious realm too. However, according to the conventional conception of Roman colonization, these effects were restricted to the new colonial community – *i.e.* the colonial inhabitants with Roman or Latin citizenship. Only indirectly would colonies have promoted the adoption of Roman religious and ritual models or habits in the wider environment. The spread of anatomical votive terracottas and the diffusion of the so-called Etrusco-Italic three-*cellae* temple are classic cases. The motor behind this diffusion process has normally been identified as emulation and imitation by Italic communities, on the premise that the material culture connected with Roman religious practices enjoyed enhanced cultural prestige on account of its association with Roman power. This explanation taps into a more generally widespread conception of Roman influence in conquered or incorporated areas, the so-called 'self-Romanization' paradigm. Thus, even in the exceptional case of Roman colonial foundations, aside from their generally positive 'moral effect', no active role or initiative has been suggested on the part of the Roman authorities in the spread of Roman religious models and rituals beyond colonial frontiers.

To put it generally, changes in religious and ritual practices in ancient Italy during and after the Roman conquest have habitually been classified as inherently passive and

[8] De Cazanove 2000a; Jolivet and Marchand 2003.

[9] Scepticism *e.g.* in Gustafsson 2000.

secondary. With few exceptions, only what we might call 'weak' and reactive developments, such as local imitation, have been recognized in the sacred landscapes of ancient Italy. However, as the reader might guess, current research challenges several of the premises I have roughly outlined here. I distinguish three main challenges to the conventional conception of the religious Romanization of Italy. These are primarily methodological in nature. After briefly discussing each challenge, I will explore possible responses to them, as well as the place of this volume's papers in the discussion. Drawing on the outcome of this debate, I will then dispute precisely the passive image of religious change just sketched, across the whole spectrum of Roman and Italic contexts. I will also further explore the concepts of centralization and continuity from this perspective.

Challenges to the study of the 'religious Romanization' of Italy

a) Framing Roman impact in a wider Mediterranean perspective

The most basic and therefore most challenging methodological objection concerns the way in which we frame our research questions. Any narrative is predicated on the historical questions asked and the terms in which it is formulated. In this case – the impact of Roman expansion in Italy – the terms of the debate almost naturally direct us towards an overly simplistic dichotomy of Rome on the one side and the Italic world on the other. We thus risk succumbing to a form of tunnel vision that ignores broader historical developments caused or influenced by a variety of factors other than Rome, resulting in a very partial picture of a much wider reality. The problem has been recognized for some time now in the Romanization debate on the Roman provinces, where it has been emphasized that previous models of Romanization (or, more neutrally, socio-political and cultural change after Roman conquest and incorporation) leaned too heavily on monolithic conceptions of culture groups, *i.e.* 'Romans' versus 'natives'.[10] While Romans were initially depicted positively as civilizers versus barbarians, the same model has also been turned on its head, most recently (and notoriously) under the influence of postcolonial studies with Romans as cruel colonizers versus resistance heroes.[11] This dualist notion, ultimately grounded in colonialist discourses in both ancient and modern thought, has been amply deconstructed in recent years in studies of the formation of social identities and has led to a wide range of conceptions of the effects of Rome's expansion on incorporated communities (*cf.* below, c).[12]

The debate on Roman Italy, however, is special. Put bluntly, while the intellectual background of provincial Roman studies lies in modern colonialist discourses and postmodern reactions to it, the history of research on Roman Italy owes much to nineteenth-century Romantic and nationalist thought. Seminal works such as Theodor Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte* (1854-56) vividly reflect specific contemporary

[10] Woolf 1996-97.

[11] Bénabou 1976 is an early example.

[12] Some of these have given more or less positive evaluations of the entire process ('becoming' Roman), indeed to such an extent that several scholars are now attacking them, pointing out the structurally unequal power relations involved. Various suggestions for alternative theoretical (and/or political…) frameworks in Mattingly 2002.

preoccupations with the unification of highly diverse European areas into nation-states, for which the history of ancient Italy could be studied as a precursor or historical example. As a result, from the beginning of the discipline of Roman history and archaeology, Roman Italy has been construed as a cultural unity. Consequently, the debate about the cultural impact of the Roman conquest on Italy has never fully developed. This also accounts for studies of religion that have traditionally assumed the basic *compatibility* of Roman and Italic religious systems, piecing together evidence from different contexts to construct a general model.[13] In this framework, the question of the potential Roman impact on Italic contexts cannot even formally be posed. Also, the importance of the dynamic development of Roman religious ideas and practices during the mid- to late Republican period for our understanding of developments in the conquered areas generally has not yet been analyzed in detail.[14]

This situation is rapidly being corrected. Recent studies now urge us to reassess regional and local variety in pre-Social War Italy. The provocative study by Henrik Mouritsen is most important in this regard, along with other recent studies that adopt a more localized and contextual perspective.[15] By contrasting the highly diverse backgrounds and motives of Italic communities, such studies remind us of the magnitude, but also the variety, of the changes that must have occurred especially in the late Republican and early Imperial periods. Moreover, by integrating specific local and regional developments and perspectives, Rome's role can now be redefined, especially in the early and mid-Republican periods, as just one factor in a very complex and increasingly interconnected Mediterranean world. Arguably, many developments in the Italian peninsula in the last four centuries BC are better understood without direct reference to Rome.[16] We cannot explain what happens in ancient Italy by studying only two players in an arena full of competing and dynamically developing Hellenistic polities. Adopting a local perspective, taking in all kinds of factors that influence local developments, is of paramount importance.[17] That said, the steep developmental curve of the star player Rome certainly warrants its place in the equation, and the ways in which local Italic identities relate to Roman imperialism are intricate, as we will see. But let us first consider the development of Rome's role over time.

b) Romanizing Rome: the developing character of Roman imperialism

Studies considering the wider geopolitical and cultural context of Roman imperialism have shown that Rome can no longer be regarded as a static and abstract factor. Recent work on the historical development of Roman imperialism and its regional manifestations has increasingly revealed its contextual variability.[18] Taking a broad view, Rome's status

[13] One of the few exceptions is the important work by Lacam (2010), which by its structure, however, in turn risks dichotomizing Roman and Italic.

[14] On the development of religion in Rome itself, see now the challenging study by Rüpke 2011.

[15] Mouritsen 1998.

[16] For examples, Stek 2013.

[17] *E.g*. Van Dommelen and Terrenato 2007.

[18] *E.g*. Dench 2005; Terrenato 2008; Terrenato in press; Stek and Pelgrom in press.

and importance in the Archaic and early Republican period are still hotly debated – the discussion of the real grandeur of the 'grande Roma dei Tarquinii' is exemplary.[19]

Historically we are on somewhat firmer ground from the fourth century onwards. According to the literary sources, the fourth century was characterized by a series of important wars against Italic peoples. The nature of these wars, however, is currently being reconsidered on the basis of historiographical analysis. Traditionally, the Italic wars have been depicted as an almost mythical battle between Rome and its rivals for supremacy over the Italian peninsula. But it has recently been argued that Roman military action at the time largely consisted of haphazard conflicts driven by the aspirations of competitive elite families in Rome, rather than forming part of a state-organized master plan. The so-called Samnite Wars (traditionally 343-290 BC) are a good example. Traditionally, these wars have been imagined as a key step in early Roman expansion, paving the way for the conquest of the Italian peninsula and eventually the creation of Rome's Mediterranean empire. Modern scholars had previously reconstructed the wars as three separate wars with nothing less than hegemony over Italy at stake (in Livy's words: *Samnis Romanusne imperio Italiam regat decernamus*, 8.23.9). Recently, however, Tim Cornell has questioned this view. He sees the conflict as a series of unrelated skirmishes rather than as a long-term military operation.[20] This fits well with recent scholarship that has emphasized the preponderance of short-term and rather personal goals in Roman politics prior to the consolidation of the senate's role with the *lex Ovinia*.

Only from the second Punic War onwards does robust evidence for deliberate Roman imperialism and the creation or adaptation of particular symbols of power come to the surface. Indeed, the third and second centuries BC can be seen as an important exploratory stage in the formation of an imagined Roman community, increasingly signalled by carefully chosen symbols of power. Some of these symbols have left traces in material culture we can study today. In the religious sphere, we might think of the Capitolium-style temple as a symbol of Roman power and its subsequent adoption by Roman communities outside Rome. Contrary to past interpretations, the spread of this type of temple and its association with the Roman Capitoline temple probably emerged only in the second century BC.[21] But that should not distract us from the significance of the adoption of the model as such. The Capitolium temple may have consisted of a mix of local Central Italian and Mediterranean elements, but that background in no way diminished its potential value as a symbol of Roman power. The Capitolium temple is just one example of the successful adaptation and integration of widespread, powerful symbols and their subsequent utilization as icons of Roman authority. The point is that such symbols have no intrinsically stable meaning. Different symbols – existing and new – can be chosen for specific ends. Similarly, for instance, the Romans appropriated the popular Hellenistic divine virtue Victoria, ultimately of Greek pedigree, by dedicating a temple to her on the Palatine in 294 BC. The goddess/divine virtue was immortalized by a specific denomination of coins, *Victoriati*, and also became a stock figure of terracotta decoration all over Roman Italy. The exploratory, dynamic character of interaction between Roman

[19] First described as such by Pasquali 1936.

[20] Cornell 2004; *cf.* also, similarly, Grossmann 2009.

[21] Bispham 2006.

policy-makers and representatives of diverse Italic communities could result in a range of outcomes and processes we can recognize at different moments and in different areas of Italy. This brings us to the next issue.

c) Variation in effects and processes in Italic communities

The importance of the recent deconstruction of the traditional paradigm, which assumed a deep cultural convergence between Rome and Italy long before political unification, can hardly be overestimated. This is the case not least because the traditional paradigm also dictated our interpretation of archaeological data to a considerable degree (indeed, disturbingly so). The general narrative both posited smooth, progressive cultural convergence between Italic peoples and Rome long before the Social War and usually also presupposed the collapse or disintegration of Italic cultures. This process supposedly took place in the period immediately preceding Roman domination, preparing the way, as it were, for the rise of a new Romano-Italic culture. Alternatively, scholars attributed this collapse to the total destruction of Italic communities in the Hannibalic War – especially the *agri deserti* of the Italian South, as famously described by Arnold Toynbee. In neither case has archaeology proven capable of either falsifying or even confirming such views. One suspects that the many high chronologies for recognizable feats of Italic communities result from this mindset – a subject to which I will return shortly.

Although we should be careful not to exaggerate the facts, in turn downplaying Roman agency and impact (*cf.* below)[22] and minimizing the dynamic, long-term interaction in ancient Italy that led to partial cultural compatibility in specific areas, it is certainly true that we now have more conceptual room to recognize and explain diverse local and regional developments. The concepts and tools offered by anthropology and sociology have lent themselves well to developing new conceptualizations of cultural change in Hellenistic Italy. Postcolonial theory in particular has proven its worth by offering attractive solutions to understanding cultural change from within a given community. Its most influential contribution has perhaps been its critique of the self-Romanization model. One of the central problems with this model is the dubious assumption of the intrinsic superiority, or at least desirability, of Roman material culture.[23]

Postcolonial studies have both broadened our palette by recognizing radical alternatives to emulation – such as resistance, silent or otherwise – and have also problematized the notion that material culture carries an intrinsic and fixed meaning.[24] This last realization in particular has had fundamental consequences for our interpretation of the adoption of new models or forms by local communities, as we just saw on the Roman side. To stay with the same example, the Capitolium temple in Rome was apparently evoked in Roman communities precisely for its reference to Roman power. But the major sanctuary built by the Samnites at Pietrabbondante in the second century BC *also* boasts the 'Capitoline'

[22] *Cf.* Stek 2014.

[23] Fundamental and to the point remains Freeman 1993; *cf.* Gallini 1973 for the debate on Hellenization.

[24] Van Dommelen 1998; Van Dommelen 2001.

model.[25] Since it is clear that this cult site was a focal point of Samnite identity, built at least in part in opposition to Rome, even if the Samnites sided with Rome during the Hannibalic War, we should certainly not read the Samnites' architectural choice as expressing complete allegiance to Rome.

Our interpretations of the archaeological evidence for cults and cult places in ancient Italy must allow for a much broader spectrum of human behaviour. We should probably also refrain from regarding the Social War too strictly as a watershed in this regard. Models like 'self-Romanization' may offer an explanation in specific (political) contexts and moments, but must nonetheless be qualified and explained. In many other cases, such models are inadequate. At the same time, when discussing Italic communities, we should be careful not to remove Rome entirely from the discussion. Roman pressure can disclose itself in many guises. One of these is the oppositional character of group self-identification. Exhilarating evidence of such processes has come to light from recent linguistic work, which shows that while Italic magistrates sometimes used their local Italic language in public inscriptions, Latinizing errors in grammar and spelling betray them as well- or even better-versed in Latin.[26] Self-conscious Italicizing may thus be an integral part of a new Romanizing world. A similar case can be made for the use of material culture, such as architecture.[27] Harking back to real or invented local traditions in times of duress is a phenomenon all too familiar in our own times, and moreover it is often most visible in the ritual and religious spheres.[28] The enhancement and indeed the creation of Italic identities may thus be part and parcel of growing Roman influence and integration. In due time, such labels could become completely separate from any explicit notion of ethnicity or geography, illustrating the challenges inherent in modern ethnographies of ancient Italy.

Contextualizing cult and cult places

Three major considerations – broader historical contextualization, the nascent and developing character of Roman imperialism, and the potential variety of local responses and active strategies – urge us to rethink the way in which we study cults and cult places in ancient Italy. The keyword here is context. It follows logically from the previous sections that it is crucial to analyze, in as much detail as possible, the broader social contexts within which religious rituals were performed and cult places functioned. Accordingly, the contributions to this volume revolve around three main themes that shed light respectively on: 1) the broader social picture (settlement pattern and organization) of cults and cult places; 2) cultural interaction and Roman engagement in practice (Roman strategies); and 3) physical changes in religious ritual and cult places (religious material culture).

[25] Strazzulla 1971; La Regina 1976.

[26] Adams 2003, 127-44.

[27] Wallace-Hadrill 2008; Stek 2009.

[28] Cohen 1985.

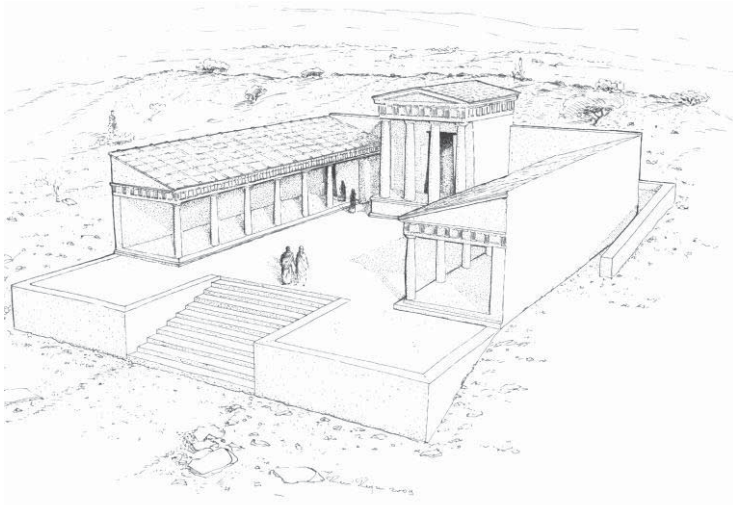

Fig. 1 A desolate rural sanctuary in the Italian landscape, artist's impression (R. Reijnen, loosely based on the temple of S. Giovanni in Galdo, Colle Rimontato).

The role of cult places in their spatial context and regional settlement patterns

The local and regional functioning of cult places is of paramount importance for understanding their role in society. What was the relationship of cult places to other elements in the cultural landscape, such as settlements, funerary areas, and infrastructure? Who constructed these sacred sites and who visited them, and for what purposes? Basic as these questions may seem, they are not easy to answer. The difficulty is due in part to scholarly bias towards monumental architecture and rich finds: research has normally focused on these elements at the expense of less visible and less prestigious archaeological evidence for use of sites and nearby settlements. Especially in the case of rural cult places, this has led to considerable misrepresentation of their social roles. The bias towards monumental remains has led to stereotyping non-urban cult places as isolated sites (Fig. 1) Consequently, such sites have usually been interpreted with macro-regional models, for instance linking rural cult places to transhumance drove roads or viewing them as territorial markers for ethnic groups or even states. Whereas such attributions are not *necessarily* wrong, recent work focusing on the direct environment of several such 'isolated' cult sites reveals that they were actually located in areas with an unusually high settlement density, normally predating the monumentalized cult site itself.[29] This shifts our attention to the local functioning of cult sites and complements our understanding of their overall importance in the social structure. Strong local embedding of cult sites does not, of course, necessarily preclude that they also functioned on a macro-level, but it shows that we do not need to presuppose such a function to account for their existence in the first place. This local function, in turn, naturally influences our assessment of the effects of Roman expansionism. Roman action can be expected to have been more incisive in regional and supra-regional systems, such as that of the 'state', than for sanctuaries functioning primarily on a local

[29] Stek 2009, Ch. 5; full dataset in Pelgrom and Stek 2010.

level. More than anywhere else, the impact of empire is likely to have varied from case to case at the local level.

Several papers in this volume consider the sacred landscape of select regions and its development over time after the Roman conquest. Some indicate that the fate of cult sites depended on local and regional processes that were not necessarily a direct consequence of Roman involvement. For instance, Helena Fracchia and Gert-Jan Burgers connect the emergence of cult places in the southern Italian landscape to the so-called 'rural infill' of the early Hellenistic period. Using intensive survey and topographical data, these studies carefully integrate sanctuary sites into the human landscape. As a rule, sanctuary sites more or less follow general settlement developments. Precisely the instances where this is not the case – *i.e*. where sanctuary and settlement evidently follow different trajectories – are highly significant. One of the most striking examples is the sanctuary of Rossano di Vaglio, a key cult place in Lucania, today Basilicata. As Ilaria Battiloro and Massimo Osanna demonstrate, this cult place flourished in the post-conquest period, whereas the regional trend for rural settlements is dramatically negative.

Bruno Sardella, Francesco Sirano, and Gianluca Tagliamonte likewise present regional case studies that compare and analyze developments at sacred sites and settlement patterns, giving invaluable insights into the local and regional functioning of sanctuaries in these areas. In northern Campania, for instance, developments are evidently differentiated according to the type of cult sites and their location, resisting a generalizing approach to the development of the sacred landscape as a whole, yet nonetheless betraying a clear logic behind it.

Roman agency

As I have argued above, it is entirely legitimate to investigate the relationship between Italic communities and representatives of Rome, as long as we do not forget the wider web of actors present in the field and the specific local and temporal conditions of these social, political, and cultural encounters. It is important to realize that the recent deconstruction of the Mommsenian model of Italic-Roman convergence does not imply that that view is wrong *per se* or that Roman influence was non-existent. Rather, it shows that Roman political and cultural dominance is not *self-evident* and must be substantiated in each historical case.[30] Actual practice, therefore, is paramount.

We must move away from the abstract notion of 'Rome' and instead focus on the actual policy-makers in the most practical and personal sense. Roman generals and magistrates had their own distinct histories and motives, and unravelling them can shed light on the actual workings of the incorporation of foreign lands or the foundation of new Roman communities. Along these lines, Mario Torelli discusses the Roman incorporation of existing communities and the ways their local pantheons were altered. Focusing on Etruria, Torelli shows remarkable differences from case to case. These can be explained primarily by practical political considerations, not least by the individual decisions of Roman policy-makers or, as Torelli puts it, 'la non univocità della politica religiosa della conquista'. Importantly, Torelli's contribution argues that Roman expansion had a profound impact on sacred affairs already at an early date.

[30] Stek 2009; Stek 2013.

John Noël Dillon discusses the ways in which Roman magistrates treated non-Roman sanctuaries, exploring the extent and limits of official Roman recognition of foreign sanctuaries in the mid-Republican period. Although in principle only sanctuaries on Roman soil were considered to fall under Roman sacred law, ever more individual Roman magistrates paid tribute to non-Roman Greek cult places. They legitimized this practice, Dillon argues, by reference to the Romans' mythological Trojan roots. Turning to the establishment of new Roman colonial communities, Fay Glinister analyzes the process by which the religious make-up of Roman colonies was shaped by Roman magistrates, local elites, and indigenous peoples and cults, resulting in unique, yet broadly compatible religious configurations.

Material culture of Roman religion and ritual

Although this volume emphasizes the broader social context of cults and cult spaces and Roman agency, it also addresses important new insights on the material culture of religion and ritual. The two cases explored here give an excellent idea of the current discussion of the role of material culture in Roman colonization and the incorporation of Italy. The debate on terracotta anatomical votives in recent years has become emblematic of the wider ongoing discussion of the Romanization and/or colonization of Italy. As mentioned above, this category of terracottas, depicting parts of the human body, has typically been associated with Roman influence on the peninsula. As early as the 1970s, the consistent presence of such votives in Roman areas in general and in some Latin colonies specifically led to their interpretation as 'guide fossils' indicating Roman presence.[31] Several scholars explained their occurrence as showing the dissemination of Roman religious ideas by Roman and Latin colonists and consequently, by a trickle-down effect, to the hinterland (Fig. 2).

Recently, however, this process, especially the connection to Roman religious ideas or ideologies, has been questioned.[32] Notably, the dataset used at the time for establishing the pattern has been attacked on the grounds that it was biased precisely toward Roman and Roman colonial areas, where more research has been undertaken. Several examples of the votives appearing outside strictly Roman areas are given in the contributions to this volume. The correlation seems to have been less pronounced in reality. Also, votives are difficult to date, and local or Mediterranean-wide influences and traditions, not simply Roman ones, may have played a part in their dissemination. The topic has become something of a hot issue, with sometimes-polarizing tendencies. This multinational volume aims to offer new views on the subject. In particular, to advance the debate, it has become clear that more in-depth analysis of anatomical votives is needed, and Olivier de Cazanove now takes up this challenge in an impressive study, researching the development of anatomical votives in time and space. His findings show that the archaeological correlation with the Roman conquest may actually be there, notably by distinguishing between originals and local imitations ('bricolage') of the model.

[31] Torelli 1973; Fenelli 1975; Comella 1981; and later *e.g.* Torelli 1999; De Cazanove 2000c; Coarelli 2000.

[32] Glinister 2006; *cf.* also Gentili 2005.

Fig. 2 A pivotal image in the discussion on the impact of the Roman conquest on religious ritual: the distribution map of votive materials according to different types by A. Comella, showing in particular the diffusion of the so-called Etruscan-Latial-Campanian votive types outside their area of origin (from Comella 1981, 760, fig. 1).

One of the most pressing questions emerging now is how these findings affect our understanding of Rome's role in religious and ritual developments in Italy. To be sure, the association of anatomical votives with the newly established and interconnected communities founded by Rome does not automatically entail that the votives themselves were regarded by their users as typically 'Roman' or as expressing loyalty to Roman values. On the other hand, we cannot indiscriminately discard such ethnic-cultural notions, as becomes clear from the fascinating case-study of a deposit in the territory of Vulci. Here, at a certain moment, local votive producers began to add a veil to some of their previously unveiled votive heads – *capite velato* in Roman style.[33] Was this intended for a new Roman element in the population, and/or for specific rituals?

This line of inquiry is followed up by Rudolf Kaenel's study, which presents vital new evidence for one of the most important sanctuaries in a Latin colonial context, the sanctuary of Aesculapius in Fregellae (founded 328 BC). In light of the votive material

[33] Söderlind 2002.

found, this cult place must have been a kind of Lourdes of southern Latium. Studying the terracotta decoration of the sanctuary, Kaenel discusses its architectural development. He proves that the sanctuary was in use over a longer period than previously known, undergoing different phases of restoration or refurbishment. This allows him to date the earliest phase of the sanctuary back to the early second century BC and, in the process, to reconstruct the iconography of the monumental sanctuary, which again indicates the popularity of the Trojan myth in this particular historical context.

For the remainder of this contribution, I would like to focus on two partly related issues: the role of sanctuaries in centralization processes and the question of continuity in cult places.

Sanctuaries and centralization: rethinking Roman strategies and urbanism

Sanctuaries as central places in Italic society

Cult places performed central functions in ancient society that went far beyond the purely religious and ritual use of the cult place. The socio-political centrality of sanctuaries is best documented in the Apennines, an area that lacked urban settlements and where social life revolved around the many rural cult places dotting the landscape. This socio-political significance is best attested at the sanctuary complex at Pietrabbondante, where Oscan inscriptions document Samnite magistrates and, more specifically, the *safinim* community as a group, however inclusive that label may have been. Local diversity is always the norm, and, as noted above, local motives should be paramount in studying cult sites. Nevertheless the satellite cult sites that were monumentalized simultaneously with the second century BC monumental phase of Pietrabbondante are doubtless linked in some way to the formation or consolidation of larger socio-political polities, or at least communities of interest, at the time. Such a hierarchical configuration of larger and smaller sanctuaries serving different communal levels is supported by the neat differentiation of sacrificed animals at larger and smaller cult places,[34] as well as by survey evidence indicating that smaller rural sanctuaries were located at the centre of relatively densely inhabited areas.[35] Sardella's contribution to this volume adds significantly to this picture by considering different types of smaller Samnite cult sites and their relationship to other elements in the landscape.

We may also expect centralizing economic functions to have been important, especially in port areas and, again, in non-urbanized areas. Actual evidence of commercial activity is slim, which suggests that we should be wary of generalizing statements about the economic role of cult places.[36] But even if the idea that rural sanctuaries functioned as marketplaces along long-distance transhumance routes is not always convincing,[37] it

[34] Barker 1989.

[35] Stek 2009, Ch. 5; Pelgrom and Stek 2010 with bibliography.

[36] Besides the famous marketplace sanctuary at Lucus Feronia we have few indications. Whereas for the Greek and eastern Mediterranean world there is ample literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence for temples serving as banks or owners of commodities and land, this is emphatically not the case for Italy. To an extent this pattern may be influenced by the differential spread of the 'epigraphic habit', more firmly established in the East. But this cannot account for the pattern in its totality.

[37] Most sanctuaries are located above the valley floor, not seldom on steep hills, which does not seem particularly convenient for driving herds of animals. In fact, the connection between

remains evident that sanctuaries were major points of reference. As nodes in socio-political networks, they provided a setting where people could meet and where goods, ideas, and information could be exchanged and redistributed. As John Scheid aptly quipped during a conference in Dresden in 2007, 'ein Gott ist besser als ein Bankier'.

These socio-political and economic networks changed after the Roman conquest. As described earlier, this change has typically been envisioned as a shift to urban sites encouraged by Rome, leading to the abandonment or decay of rural cult sites. The process is described as a radical change caused by the introduction of a new settlement system. This model, which we might call 'confrontational', is epitomized by the traditional view of Roman Republican colonization, which contrasted the indigenous village and rural sanctuary landscape with the foundation of proud new cities enjoying all the amenities of Graeco-Roman civilization. There are, however, some methodological considerations that in my view qualify our understanding of the character of centralization and urbanism after the Roman conquest and its relationship to previous patterns.

Roman targeting of Italic cult places: capturing nodes in rural networks?

First of all, we should more closely examine the evidence adduced in support of the confrontational model. This consists mainly of three notions: first, the seeming decline of rural sanctuaries after Roman incorporation, suggested by an apparent lack of investment in rural cult sites in terms of gifts and new construction; second, the notion that Italic cult places were important for political and military organization and were therefore sacked or shut down by the Roman authorities after conquest; and third, the focus on newly installed settlement sites for investment, especially in the early Imperial period. This line of argument and the conclusions drawn from it are not without their problems. The most significant is the inherent bias of the archaeological record. This bias concerns the possibility that cult places were sometimes actually targeted for settlement nucleation and finally urban development, a process noted by Michael Crawford.[38]

Consideration only of rural sanctuaries that were not integrated, contrasting them with urban sites, produces a skewed view that excludes the 'successful' cases. Although this logical consideration is implied by the widely held view that the survival of sanctuaries depended on the extent of their integration in new settlement structures, it has often been omitted from the debate on sanctuaries. Part of the explanation for this situation might reside in the second common assumption, which posits aggressive Roman behaviour towards Italic rural cult sites, such as sacking or closing them. There is no firm evidence for this assumption, however. The third notion, that urban sites attracted more attention in late Republican and early Imperial times than cult places, describes a later situation and has no bearing on how such settlements began.

There is in fact considerable evidence that sanctuaries were the focal points of new settlements and institutional units. This applies all the more so if we take into account the poor archaeological visibility we may expect for old cult sites that were later integrated

marketplaces and cult places is better documented in Roman and other Italic *urban* centres than in rural ones. Discussion in Stek 2009, 55-58, and Sardella in this volume, in particular on the smaller sanctuaries from this perspective.

[38] Crawford 1996, 426-28.

into the urban fabric. Probably the best evidence, therefore, comes from the names given to Roman colonies and *municipia*. *Lucus Feroniae*, incorporating the important sanctuary complex, is a prime example, but also *lucus Angitiae*, a *municipium* that absorbed a central cult place of the Marsi; *Hispellum*, where Octavian placed a colony on the site of an ancient Umbrian cult place; the colonies of *Luna* and probably *Venusia*; and many more.

In contrast to John Scheid, I do not think it is necessary to interpret these administrative actions as primarily ideological in nature.[39] Some large cult sites were already important socio-political and economic centres for communities in the region, such as the *lucus Feroniae*. Such centres could also conveniently accommodate, and may have continued to do so, administrative functions, such as military recruitment and censuses. In practical terms, it seems logical that Roman authorities would have made use of the existing infrastructure rather than suppress it and impose a radically new pattern. Accordingly, we should assess the extent to which cult sites were integrated in the new Roman framework not so much in terms of a bipolar model as on a long, continuous scale, with remote rural cult sites at one end and new settlements initially clustered around sanctuaries at the other. At different intermediate points on this scale we could, for example, place the temple of S. Giovanni in Galdo, with its nucleated settlement that ultimately developed no further, and, at a point closer to urban integration, Iuvanum with its emerging civic architecture. From this perspective, it becomes difficult to draw a meaningful distinction between sanctuary sites and settlements, given their overlapping functions and morphology. But perhaps we may even go a step further in confounding the traditional dichotomy and reconsider the nature of Roman colonization itself.

Colonial sacred landscapes: an alternative to the polis model?

Recent research has shown that we must revise our understanding of Roman colonization, particularly for the mid-Republican period.[40] Here I will try to show that this revision has important consequences for our thinking about the role of cult places as central elements in the natural and human landscape. As noted above, the foundation of Roman colonies has typically been portrayed as the exportation of a new, urban, city-state model to the conquered lands of Italy and beyond. The idea that new colonial foundations replicated the city of Rome, according to an unfortunate interpretation of Aulus Gellius (*NA* 16.13), has been central to this image. This has logically resulted in a strong focus on colonial centres and especially on the presence and character of public buildings, such as the *comitium*, city walls, and *forum*, and, in the religious sphere, on the Capitoline temple – in other words exclusively on urban phenomena. Recent work has deconstructed much of the 'Gellian' replica theory; most evidence for such replication or referencing of the city of Rome seems to occur after the Hannibalic War, as Edward Bispham has shown in an important study.[41] Although this recent development in research on Roman colonization affects several ongoing debates, discussion here will be limited to its significance for understanding the religious dimension of early and mid-Republican colonial landscapes.

[39] Scheid 2006. *Cf.* also below on administrative incorporation.

[40] See the volumes Bradley and Wilson 2006; Stek and Pelgrom in press.

[41] Bispham 2006.

Two elements are essential here: the character of early and mid-Republican colonial centres, and the character of settlement and cult sites in the colonial territory.

As to the first, the recent deconstruction of the Gellian replica theory has left us empty-handed, in the sense that a comprehensive alternative view of early colonial towns has not emerged. The fact that that there is little evidence for settlements before the second century BC, however, is disturbing and suggests two possible explanations. We might blame the absence of evidence on the archaeological invisibility of the pre-Hannibalic period, or we could accept that the scarce archaeological evidence reflects an ancient reality in which consistent, planned habitation was not the primary function of the colonial centre in this period. Pursuing the second option, an interesting pattern emerges: almost all evidence from the first phases of Latin colonies (*i.e.* the fourth and third centuries) relates to cult places and ritual.[42] This is surely no coincidence. We can combine this finding with the fact that a large proportion, probably as much as 70-80 per cent, of the colonial population must have lived outside the city walls on the basis of the relatively small areas within the city walls and the numbers of colonists Livy mentions.[43]

It would appear that the early colonial centres were not so much agglomerations of people as they were 'service centres', within which cult places and related rituals took pride of place. It is important to add that this conclusion does not depend on the presence or absence of domestic buildings in colonial centres. The fact that we predominantly find evidence for cult sites and not something else – such as other civic structures or luxury residences – must reflect the relative importance of cult places: their better visibility, in antiquity as today, is the direct result of the deliberate choice of early colonial communities to invest in cult places rather than anything else.

Let us now turn to the colonial territory. Usually, sacred places in the territory of colonies receive little attention. Colonial territory has generally been conceptualized as very similar to that of the city of Rome, which in turn is modelled on the city-state or Greek *polis*, with a *chora* surrounding an *astu*. As a result, boundary sanctuaries delimiting the borders of the colonial city-states have generally been expected or taken for granted, even if, to my knowledge, no firm evidence in support of this view has ever been presented for the early and mid-Republican period.[44] Indeed, in my view, analysis of the location and character of cult sites in the colonial territories of Latin colonies points to a rather different pattern.[45] Various types of field survey data and evidence for the existence of extra-urban cult places can be combined for a series of Latin colonies in central and northern Italy. The results exhibit a very clear pattern of extra-urban cult sites closely

[42] Bispham 2006; Pelgrom 2008; Liberatore in press.

[43] Pelgrom 2008, 342-47 with table at p. 344.

[44] *E.g*. Gargola 1995.

[45] Stek in press, *cf.* Pelgrom in press on legal arguments against the city-state model. As a matter of fact, even in former Greek colonies there is no good reason to assume that boundary sanctuaries demarcated the territory of the new colony. In Poseidonia-Paestum, a Latin colony from 273 BC, for instance, a number of extra-urban sanctuaries are in use in the Republican period, but among them only the Heraion at the Foce del Sele may be considered a boundary sanctuary at least in the previous phase. Activity in rural sanctuaries in the Roman period is rather concentrated relatively close to the urban centre (see Stek in press with maps).

associated with nucleated settlements in the territory. This can be seen in the territory of Ariminum, where an existing cult place related to a nearby settlement received new statues in the first generation of the colonial foundation. Similar arrangements are found in Fregellae, Alba Fucens, and Hatria. Moreover, it should be emphasized that if the archaeological evidence for this particularly understudied category of rural settlements in colonial areas had been better, more examples could have been expected. The pattern neatly indicates the existence of more or less nucleated rural communities that had their own cult places. This fact alone suggests that these rural communities enjoyed a certain level of autonomy; we are not dealing with a cluster of barns or bedroom suburbs. The status of such rural communities cannot be established without epigraphic evidence found *in situ*, but it seems reasonable to identify them with the *vici* and *pagi* mentioned by inscriptions in and around Roman colonial areas.

The relationship between the colonial centre and these nucleated settlements is crucial for our understanding of this scattered colonial settlement organization. Here, too, we find primary evidence in the religious and ritual sphere. At Ariminum, excavations in the colonial centre beneath Palazzo Battaglini uncovered what must have been a cult place, with many dedications of black-gloss *paterae*.[46] Fascinatingly, the black-gloss vessels bear painted texts that mention archaizing deities from the Roman pantheon, but also *vici* and *pagi* in several instances. It is tempting to consider these vessels as material remnants of a sacred ritual that bound together rural communities and the colonial centre.[47]

The developments outlined above still need to be tested in other colonized areas before we can draw further conclusions. But the present evidence already shows that the contrast between Roman and native settlement organization and its religious articulations may have been much less pronounced than is usually assumed. It suggests, in fact, that cult sites functioned in principle as centralizing points in the landscape for both Roman colonial and native communities. In such a perspective, the usual urban-rural dichotomy and its association with different types of settlement organization loses much of its explanatory and descriptive force. This line of thought surely accounts better for the seemingly paradoxical situations found in some Roman colonies and towns and their hinterlands. Right in the urban centre of the colony of Alba Fucens, for instance, a cult place dating back at least to the foundation of the colony has produced tantalizing evidence of native presence, attested by early Latin inscriptions and arguably also by the typical bronze statuettes of Hercules deposited there.[48] At the same time, small village communities are documented in the territory of Alba by early Latin inscriptions, which mention concepts and deities that were very much *en vogue* at the time in the city of Rome. For this reason, these villages seem better integrated in the new Roman order than the colonial centre itself…

All this goes to show that we do not need to imagine a stark contrast or 'clash of civilizations' between native and Roman sacred landscapes; these landscapes are arguably better viewed as sharing similar basic structures. Importantly, however, this morphological similarity does not presuppose cultural homogeneity or the convergence of communities of

[46] Franchi De Bellis 1995.

[47] Stek 2009, 138-45.

[48] Liberatore in press.

different statuses. The Fucine villages seem instead to constitute a network of small colonial pockets beyond the direct vicinity of, yet oriented towards, the Latin colony.

Questioning continuity

Broadening the chronological horizon

Another issue concerns our handling of archaeological and historical continuity. Research on Italic and Roman cult places typically concentrates on their monumental architecture. This is due not only to their archaeological visibility but also to the traditional emphasis in classical archaeology on the art historical value of archaeological finds. Monumental sacred architecture has usually been dated to pre-conquest times, while other periods of use or non-monumental phases have received little attention. Some attention is usually paid to the precursors of monumental phases, but more often than not this takes the form of an introductory remark emphasizing the ancient origins of the site. The author then moves on to the 'real' discussion, which focuses on the monumental architecture and extraordinary finds. Things are even worse, however, for chronological phases that postdate the Roman conquest (fourth to first centuries BC) or integration in the Roman citizen body (*lex Julia*, 90 BC). These phases are seriously underrepresented in published work. This is true not only of the actual attention dedicated to these time periods and observations made about them in the field, but also, and perhaps even more so, of publications of the final results.

In the case of cult places of Republican Italy, the situation is particularly precarious because of their complex relationship to the historiography of ancient Italy. Generally speaking, dating the monumental phases of Italic cult sites to the period before Roman incorporation has gone hand in hand with a perceived disappearance or decline of these cult sites in the Roman era. The period in which this transition is assumed to take place of course differs by region, following the different stages of Roman expansion. The large cult sites of Etruria and southern Italy, both urban and non-urban, for instance, have been studied primarily for their magnificent pre-Roman phases in the Orientalizing, Archaic, and Classical periods. There is the tacit assumption that things went downhill in the post-conquest period, as a symptom of the hypothetical decline of both Etruscans and Greeks.

In native southern Italy, the perceived decline of sanctuaries has resonated well with Toynbee's assessment of the effects of the Hannibalic War, mentioned above. According to him, the war devastated the Italian countryside. In the Apennine and Samnite areas, on the other hand, most scholarly attention has focused respectively on the third and second, or late second and early first centuries BC. In schematic terms, the first period corresponds to the prosperity of these peoples, presumed to have resulted from their participation in the Roman economic network, allegedly documented by the all-too-frequently cited Italic merchants on Delos. The second period would allegedly correspond to the antagonistic period of Roman-Samnite politics directly preceding the Social War. The construction of temples in this scenario, which as we have seen may also have been the case elsewhere, may in part be viewed as a deliberate attempt to mobilize local Italic groups for socio-political purposes.

Archaeological research, however, is starting to reveal a much more diverse picture by highlighting the continued importance or re-use of cult sites in Roman times. For Etruria, new studies now show the continued importance or re-use of these sites in Hellenistic and Roman times.[49] For instance, the important excavations at the major sanctuary at Campo della Fiera have, more than anything else, disclosed a considerable Roman phase.[50] As for southern Italy, Toynbee's biased post-First World War view has been corrected in historical studies, and only very recently has this begun to influence scholarship on religion and cult places. It seems that previous studies overestimated the antiquity of native cult places. This problem is related to the incompatibility of pottery sequences in southern and central Italy, which is derived from divergent historical interpretations of Greek colonialism in Italy.[51] Moreover, some Lucanian sanctuaries in fact yield rich evidence for continued use or re-use after the Roman conquest. As the paper of Battiloro and Osanna in this volume demonstrates, the role of the major sanctuary at Rossano di Vaglio was anything but marginal after Roman incorporation; incorporation in fact ushers in a boom in its popularity. This explosion of activity could perhaps be interpreted as a return to ancient values in a time of social upheaval, along the lines suggested above, but it can also be explained differently, as the reader will see.

As for the Apennine and Samnite areas, some cult sites can be dated independently of the historical narrative. Sometimes archaeological finds confirm the late-second- or early-first-century periodization, such as the coin minted in 104 BC found under the *cella* floor of the type-site rural sanctuary of Colle Rimontato, S. Giovanni in Galdo.[52] Nonetheless, there is the risk of circular reasoning here, too, as well as the danger of focusing only on such well-explained phases. For instance, at several sanctuary sites dated only on the basis of their architectural characteristics, there is reason to believe that they actually flourished, if not indeed were built, in the hypothetical crisis period of the first century BC or later in the Imperial period. The dating of the large temple at Castel di Ieri, for example, which exhibits clear evidence for post-Social War construction or embellishment, is open to discussion. The small temple at Schiavi d'Abruzzo clearly dates to the first century BC, as does the sanctuary dedicated to Jupiter Liber of the *vicus Furfensis*, with an inscription dated to 58 BC.[53] The temple at Colle Rimontato, S. Giovanni in Galdo, likewise yields evidence for post-Social War activity – even if its character is as yet unclear – and the temple evidently flourished in the Imperial period. Similarly, the cult place at Campochiaro loc. Civitella has a considerable Roman phase, with finds dating from the first century AD to the late antique period.[54] Even at the major Samnite cult place of Pietrabbondante, which scholars have sometimes claimed was closed by Roman authorities, coins indicate that it continued to be frequented in post-Social War times.[55]

[49] de Grummond and Edlund-Berry 2011.

[50] Stopponi 2011.

[51] *E.g*. Johannowsky 1991.

[52] Di Niro 1980.

[53] *CIL* IX, 3513 (= *CIL* I², 756).

[54] Cappelletti 1991.

[55] Crawford 2006.

An important complicating factor in our understanding of both archaeological continuity and its historical significance is the change in diagnostic wares and ritual practices in the first century BC and, to a lesser extent, in the first century AD. The transition from the predominant use of black-gloss ceramics to other wares, such as, most notably, Italian sigillata, can be placed somewhere on the watershed between the second century BC and the first centuries BC and AD – but where precisely is increasingly disputed. On the one hand, it is becoming ever clearer that the traditional black-gloss periodizations based upon the typology, not the chronology, of other regions (especially Campania) can hardly be used to date local, regionally produced black gloss in the Samnite hills with any accuracy.[56] Since even the few better understood stratigraphic contexts are ultimately dated by reference to Morel's typology,[57] a firm local or regional sequence remains an important desideratum. Without it, we cannot exclude the possibility that certain types of black gloss are much later than usually assumed. It is also difficult to say whether the absence or scarcity of early sigillata ware attests to demographic decline and abandonment or rather to a lack of integration in the networks in which these wares circulated.[58] This indicates some sort of change in this period that ultimately must be related to historical developments.

In sum, apart from the technical problems of ceramic chronologies, we should probably allow for broader periodizations of the construction or monumentalization of sanctuaries, instead of connecting them *a priori* to established historical contexts and events, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hence, the recently increased attention to the longer lifecycle of cult places is promising, not least because it enables more direct and synchronic comparison of regions that now are often treated as distinct both in terms of chronology and research traditions.

Continuity: what exactly continues?

Much more pressing than generic problems of dating, however, is the problematization of what later finds in and around sanctuaries mean in historical terms. Very often, evidence for continued or renewed frequentation of Italic cult sites has been described generically in terms of the local persistence of the original cult and cult place. This emphasis on the stability of form and meaning seems inspired by romantic notions, according to which religion and cult were elements of ancient society particularly resistant to change. This accounts for rural cults *a fortiori*, which have been portrayed as pure, uncontaminated beacons of austerity, untouched by time and history.[59] As many scholars, including myself, have argued, such an image is likely to be biased both by ancient texts and by modern interpretations.

[56] *E.g*. Roth 2007 and esp. Di Giuseppe 2012.

[57] Morel 1981.

[58] See Patterson 2006, 17-19, on the problem. During surveys around the sanctuary of S. Giovanni in Galdo we found *sigillata* at almost all Hellenistic-Roman sites, but in very small quantities.

[59] An instructive, almost completely uncritical example is Scullard 1981, which is based on, and repeats much of, Fowler 1925.

The celebration of rustic life and the bucolic poetry of the Augustan period in particular have placed rural religion in a space disconnected from the urban and highly politicized reality of the Roman empire. The visual arts of this period exhibit a very similar inclination, illustrated for instance by the popularity of 'sacred landscapes' in contemporary wall painting. This perspective of urban Roman elites who owned luxury villas in the countryside can hardly help us understand rural Italic cult sites. An archaeological and epigraphic approach therefore seems best suited to investigating the continued or resumed use of cult sites. In many cases, later phases are clearly recognizable only from pottery finds at the site. Other cases appear to be reconstructions or embellishments, but without a certain date other than the *terminus post quem* provided by the preceding phase.

Archaeology and epigraphy of course have their limits, too. As seen above, the post-monumental archaeology of sites has been published poorly, if at all, making it hard to estimate its scale. For example, were the few well-dated coins that have been found left by a lonely traveller, or do they instead faintly reflect the systematic donations and sacrifices made by a stable community that lived in the area? Inscriptions, in turn, are notorious for their fake claims of reproducing a more antique situation in order to add to the authority of the monument and its commissioners.[60] The safest approach in these circumstances would be to regard every documented time-slice in its own right, without drawing *a priori* connections to previous or later developments. This is not merely to state the obvious, that we never step in the same river twice: in at least some cases this caution is much more decisive and should warn us against peremptorily interpreting multi-period finds as evidence of cultic continuity. A good example of this is the recent discussion of the institutional embedding of cult places.

Until recently, rural cult sites in Italy have habitually been interpreted as belonging to Italic communities of different sizes, as mentioned in inscriptions found in the cult places. The smallest sanctuaries thus would correspond to the *vicus* (village) level, larger ones to the *pagus* (rural district), and the largest, such as Pietrabbondante or Campochiaro, to the *touto* (Oscan for *civitas vel sim*.). Recent studies of the institutional structure of the Italian countryside, however, have shown that this conception of Italic society is invalid. Whereas the *touto* is indeed an Oscan word for an organized community, its specific meaning and scope are unclear. Both the words *vicus* and *pagus*, however, clearly refer to the new *Roman* administrative institutions established in Italy after the Roman conquest rather than to pre-Roman, native ones.[61]

Although this reassessment has generally been accepted in regard to the administration, many scholars still maintain that *vicus* and *pagus* must reflect earlier, similar Italic *institutions*, *i.e*. legal or administrative definitions of politico-administrative entities. This distinction is important, because it has significant implications both for traditional ideas about the background and development of the deities venerated by *pagus* and *vicus* communities and for the conventional reconstruction of rural native society, as opposed to the new Roman urban model. It is clear, however, that on balance there is virtually no evidence whatsoever for continuity from pre-Roman institutions to the Roman

[60] As illustrated, for instance, in Dillon's contribution. See in general Thomas and Witschel 1992 (with Fagan 1996).

[61] Tarpin 2002; Capogrossi Colognesi 2002; Stek 2009, 107-21.

pagus or *vicus* structure.[62] The only weak argument that can be adduced in favour of the influence of pre-Roman structures is the fact that some *pagi* and *vici* seem to reflect earlier local toponyms.[63] However, ancient names *per se*, then as now in modern society, are hardly grounds for suggesting that the institutional structures were ancient, too. In fact, and decisively in my opinion, most *pagi* and *vici* names reflect new Roman deities or divine qualities. Analysis of the cult places and deities venerated by *pagi* and *vici* in Italy irrefutably shows a strong link with new Roman deities, and a similar pattern also appears in the provinces.

Both *vici* and *pagi* originated as Roman administrative units, and, as so often in the ancient world, both types of community had their own festivals and cults. These were respectively the *Compitalia*, when the *Lares Compitales* were venerated, and the *Paganalia*, which ritually defined rural districts. It is probable that, together with the new administrative network imposed on Roman Italy, these cults and festivals were exported to the conquered countryside. Such a scenario might account for the presence of small, Imperial-period bronze statuettes at some ancient Italic sanctuaries, as I have argued elsewhere.[64] In such cases, re-use of ancient Italic cult places in the Roman period is embedded in a radically different cultic and social context and is not a case of the persistence of ancient rural religion. This is moreover just one of many possible rituals and festivals that could have been performed at old native sanctuaries by people who lived in a completely changed world.

Of course, this interpretation is valid only for the Roman cults and cult places epigraphically associated with *vici* or *pagi* and makes no claims for cult places that lack such a connection to the Roman administrative network. It is clear that Italic sanctuaries also functioned in a non-urban settlement organization and will have been linked to villages and potentially some sort of rural areas. Unfortunately, though, the evidence for such a link on an organizational level is weak at best, and there is no conclusive Italic epigraphic or literary evidence that village communities were linked similarly to specific cult places as has been imagined in the notoriously ahistorical *pagus*-*vicus* system.

Archaeology now seems to offer the best way forward here. As we have seen above, field surveys of rural cult places have indeed documented relatively high settlement densities, which supports the image of local communities tied to sanctuaries. Morphologically, such constellations may have been similar to the *vicus* and *pagus* communities documented by Latin inscriptions in areas closer to Rome, but we have no evidence for their institutional context, and usually also no evidence for the deities venerated there. Again, we see the degree to which Roman sacred landscapes, colonial or otherwise, may have structurally resembled pre-Roman or Italic sacred landscapes – but, as emphasized

[62] The overwhelming majority of the evidence places the *vicus* in Roman contexts. In the Umbrian ***vukes sestines*** found near Città di Castello, some (*e.g.* Agostiniani, Calderini and Massarelli 2011, 67-69) have recognized the Latin word *vicus*, but it almost certainly concerns a *lucus*: Untermann 2000, *s.v.* ***lúvkeí***; Crawford 2011, 93; in any case, it is dated post-280 BC.

[63] *E.g.* the *pagus Boedinus* (CIL IX, 3311), where the name *Boedinus* seems to reflect the ***boúedi í n*** inscribed on a stele dated to 500 BC from Castel di Ieri (Crawford 2011, 242-43). However, the re-use of a local name or toponym is not evidence of the pre-existence of the institution of the *pagus* as such.

[64] Stek 2008; Stek 2009, 187-212.

earlier, this by no means automatically implies cultural convergence or indeed social compatibility. In sum, it is important to distinguish morphology (villages, sanctuaries, and their location in the landscape) from institutional context (*vicus*, *pagus*, *etc*.). In my view, this is at the heart of some of the persistent confusion in the scholarly debate.

Conclusion

Even a cursory overview such as this reveals, I believe, that analysis on different scales is indispensable for a better understanding of the role of cult places in Italy during the period of Roman expansion. The local and regional embedding of cult places in the settlement system, the specific character of interaction between stakeholders in different communities and Rome on a case-to-case basis, and the role of religious, ritual, and cultural innovation are all intrinsically linked to one another. They cannot be studied in isolation. What is clear is that both pre-existing local communities and newly formed ones, such as Roman colonies and regrouped native peoples, *actively* made use of the powerful resource of cults and cult places to construct, adapt, and enhance their status and self-identification. Rather than imagining the process of change in the religious sphere as passive or even non-existent, with lingering countryside traditions and hyper-tolerant Romans, we should rather characterize it as a continuous and dynamic competition between groups, sub-groups, and individuals pursuing different social and political agendas. This competition can be recognized vividly in the active capturing of cult places or the creation of a 'sacred landscape' to foster ethnic consciousness in the face of mounting Roman encroachment (or *vice versa*). Significantly, developments in Roman as well as Italic communities cannot be regarded as fundamentally different, belonging to mutually exclusive models of social organization whereby the new Roman model would have outclassed existing institutions.

Both new studies on Italic sanctuaries in their social context and the recent reconsideration of earlier views on Roman colonization and expansionism, combined with a new appreciation of rural developments, point to similar processes of centralization, which is arguably a more helpful concept than insisting on the traditional model of urban/rural conflict. Similarly, increasing appreciation of the long-term use of cult places, rather than exclusive consideration of the first monumental phase, and in particular the notion that the use and social significance of a cult place can and will have changed over time, makes future supra-regional analyses promising. If we take a step back, such a broader perspective should enable us to recognize similarities and differences in the processes observed in different areas of the Italian peninsula before, during, and after the Roman conquest. By offering different approaches and case studies, I hope that this volume may take a first step in this direction and stimulate further debate from both an historical and an archaeological perspective.

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