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Sanctuary and workshop: religion and commerce in Roman urban space

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TRAVAILLER

À

L'OMBRE DU TEMPLE

Activités de production
et lieux de culte dans
le monde antique



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TRAVAILLER À L'OMBRE DU TEMPLE
ACTIVITÉS DE PRODUCTION
ET LIEUX DE CULTE
DANS LE MONDE ANTIQUE

sous la direction d'Olivier de Cazanove,
Arianna Esposito, Nicolas Monteix et Airton Pollini

Naples
2023



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Aventicum, temple de la Grange des Dîmes : acrotère en bronze doré (© AVENTICVM – Site et Musée romains d'Avenches, cliché F. Tomio).

Éléments d'un acrotère : tête de déesse de Copenhague et épaule avec main masculine provenant du sanctuaire de Sant'Omobono à Rome (inv. HIN 26 et MC 15990 ; cliché P. Lulof).

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Sanctuary and workshop. Religion and commerce in Roman urban space

Miko Flohr*

This chapter explores in which ways and to which extent urban sanctuaries in the Roman world were associated with manufacturing and commerce. As will become clear, there is not a lot of explicit, high-quality evidence directly supporting a discussion of these issues, but it is possible to partially circumvent this by approaching the problem in a more indirect way, by looking carefully at, first, the position of temples and sanctuaries in the urban landscape of Roman cities, and then at the contextual embedding of commerce and manufacturing, before combining the two. The focus in this chapter will firmly be on the cities of Roman Italy, and, mostly, on the late Republican and early imperial period, with some emphasis on the sites that dominate traditional discourse on Roman urbanism: Pompeii, Ostia and Rome.

Yet before looking at the actual evidence, it makes sense to briefly point out that sanctuary and workshop have no strong intrinsic conceptual relationship: there rarely is a direct need for the two to be closely related unless ritual practice required the production of objects playing a role during religious ceremonies, such as votives. In an urban context, however, there is little need for sanctuaries to actively instigate such production as there were enough potential producers around in the city; in

rural contexts, it is perhaps more logical to find such production closely associated with a sanctuary, but even then, it is hard to say whether production also was economically related to (i.e., controlled by) the sanctuary. In the absence of such an intrinsic relation, there are two basic reasons for religion and commerce to be closely related in the archaeological record. The first is that selling or producing things may be a valuable source of income for the authorities of a religious institution, so that they actively invested in building commercial facilities on their premises; the second is that spatial competition in the city made that religious and commercial space ended up directly next to each other, or otherwise closely associated. For our present purpose, the first scenario is of course more relevant than the second, but the two cannot always be distinguished in the evidence.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the actual impact of planning or, rather, the extent to which newly founded cities, in Roman context, must be seen as a relevant analytical category that is to be opposed to gradually or organically grown cities. To some extent, of course, newly founded cities are immediately recognizable because of the regularly patterned street network, contrasting with the more haphazard and irregular street grid of the

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settlements that grew more organically over time. Moreover, in newly founded cities, it was possible to reserve certain locations for certain purposes, making it easier to cluster certain activities in the urban topography, and to spread the starting population in a convenient way over the urban area. Yet on the other hand it should not be forgotten that, from the moment of foundation onwards, ‘planned’ cities began to develop just as organically as other cities did, and in reality, many aspects of the urban landscape in these cities were not planned at all. For instance, Timgad was founded around 100 AD as a completely planned Roman city, with a rectangular wall-circuit, a regular street grid, space reserved for the major public buildings, and the city blocks were divided in regular plots in which, subsequently, standardized houses were constructed. Yet the city not only quickly outgrew its original wall circuit, developing vast, organically grown suburban quarters, it was also transformed internally, as houses and city blocks began to merge.¹ Thus, many cities with a planned street grid developed, in many respects, like all other cities; the more meaningful distinction in terms of urban development is not between planned and organically grown cities, but rather between cities located in plains, and cities situated on slopes or mountain tops.

Urban sacred landscapes in the Roman world

Roman cities were full of temples, altars and other cult places, to the extent that it is on the one hand easy to get the impression that religion was simply anywhere, and on the other hand hard to understand the system behind the dense clustering of places of (potential) religious significance. Particularly in the heart of urban settlements, along major thoroughfares and, of course, on and around the

central plaza, temples and altars would be a dominant factor in the urban landscape. However, true complex urban ‘sanctuaries’ – if we define these as large-scale (clusters of) religious institutions that own or occupy a clearly demarcated section of the city larger than a simple temple – were not necessarily common everywhere and did not have a *natural* place in the Roman urban landscape.²

To a significant extent, this is because many larger sanctuaries in Roman urban settlements, even if they ended up in the middle of the city, had started as a suburban or even extra-urban phenomenon rather than as a truly urban phenomenon. At Pompeii, the oldest two ‘urban’ sanctuaries – the temple of Apollo and the so-called Triangular Forum appear to have been situated a bit away from the oldest nucleus of the city, traditionally thought to have been situated east of the present *forum*; even in the early imperial city, they take up a less than central position – as indeed is true for the temple of Venus, built in an isolated position in the southwest corner of the city.³ At Ostia, the three sacred areas that survived the second century AD building boom were all situated outside the initial urban core of the city: one cluster of temples was situated ca. 100 m outside the East Gate of the castrum along the eastern Decumanus; a second one was situated ca. 70 meters outside the West gate of the castrum, and a third one, along the *Cardo*, was 150 meters outside the south gate of the old castrum; these sacred areas were integrated into the city over the course of the Republican period; the Sullan city wall surrounds all three of them.⁴ In the city of Rome, larger clusters of temples, such as the late-Republican sacred area at the Largo di Torre Argentina, were, at the moment of their construction, also situated outside the city.⁵

The spatial organization of the earliest colonies founded by the Romans confirms the idea that ‘urban sanctuary’ is a problematic category

1. On Timgad see Fentress 1979.

2. For a working definition of complex sanctuaries in an urban context see Raja 2015, p. 307-308.

3. Cf. Pesando and Guidobaldi 2006, p. 5-7.

4. Cf. Pavolini 2006, p. 76, 117-122, 207-210.

5. Coarelli 2008, p. 361-368. Claridge 2010, p. 241-246.



Fig. 1 - Norba. Plan of the city with the location of the forum and the main urban sanctuaries.

in Roman Italy. Most of these settlements were situated on hilltops, so that there were significant height differences within the city. These played a crucial role in the constitution of the urban religious landscape.⁶ At Norba, (re)founded by the Romans in 492 BC, but completely reorganized in the fourth century, there were clusters of temples in three places (fig. 1). One was situated close to the highest point of the city, on the so-called 'major' acropolis; another one was situated on a lower, second hilltop – the minor acropolis – overlooking the city centre and the Pontine plain; the third was situated close to the edge of the plateau on which Norba was situated, on a low hill in the south-west half of the urban area.⁷ All three locations were marginal with respect to the urban street grid – in a way that is comparable to the contemporary situation at Ostia, the temples surrounded the city rather than being an integrated part of it. At Alba Fucens, founded in 330 BC, there were temples on all three hills surrounding the area of the *forum*.⁸

6. Cf. Sewell 2010, p. 18.

7. On Norba see Quilici Gigli 1994.

8. Mertens 1981, p. 32.

9. Brown 1980; Fentress *et al.* 2003, fig. 10; On the role of the Arx in Republican Roman urbanism see Lackner 2007, p. 245-249.

10. See e.g. Avenches and Kaiseraugst. Cf. Paunier 1992.

At Cosa, founded in 273 BC, the initial planners also designated the highest point in the city as the main sacred area – erroneously identified as an '*arx*' by the excavators – whereas the slightly lower hill east of the forum area also was reserved for religious purposes.⁹ It may be pointed out that many of these sacred areas in fact are simply collocations of temples and that there is no direct evidence that these were institutionally integrated; some sanctuaries appear to have been developed according to a plan, but others appear more organically grown. Moreover, especially for the temples on hilltops it remains true that they always remained spatially marginal in the city – they were situated away from the main urban thoroughfares and separated from the surrounding urban area by the slope of the hill on which they had been built, which occasionally was rather steep. Later Roman foundations also have most of their larger sacred areas in a relatively marginal position – either *within* the original wall circuit, or outside it.¹⁰

There is a not insignificant change from the early imperial period onwards, when there is an increased clustering of larger-scale religious architecture in the

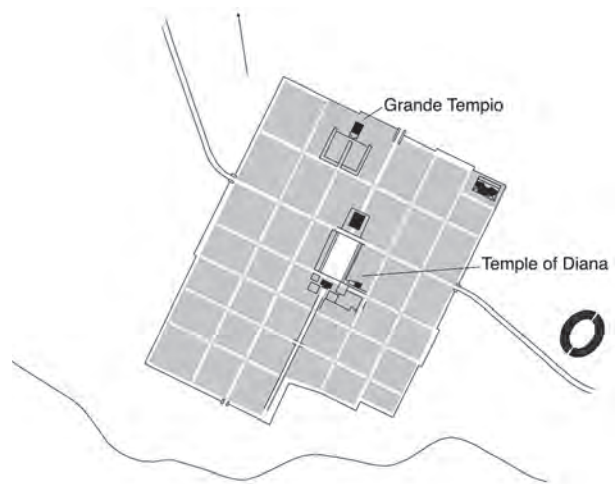


Fig. 2 - Luni. Plan of the city with the location of the forum and the main urban sanctuaries.

heart of some larger and wealthier urban centres. This is well-attested for the city of Rome, both in the environs of the Forum Romanum, and in the Campus Martius, but can also be seen elsewhere. At Pompeii, but also in, for instance, Cuma, several larger temples and sanctuaries emerged directly on the sides of the *forum*.¹¹ An interesting case is the colony of Luna, which was founded in 199 BC, but had a strong development in the early imperial period, when immediately next to the forum, a large temple was constructed (fig. 2). Known as the ‘Temple of Diana’, it had a vast precinct taking up the space of an entire city block; north of the *forum*, against the city-wall, a second large temple precinct – the so-called ‘Grande Tempio’ – was built, also in the same period; both complexes had long façades directly onto some of the major thoroughfares of the city.¹² Yet the possibilities for the construction of such large complexes were not unlimited: not only was their construction expensive, it also necessitated the buying up and destruction of entire urban quarters.¹³ Hence, in many urban centres throughout the Roman world, larger scale religious complexes remained overwhelmingly situated in the urban periphery.

Commerce, manufacturing and the urban topography

It is a key distinctive feature of Roman cities that they were very densely commercialized throughout their urban landscape. While Greek cities had streets dominated by closed façades, (invisible) domestic workshops and a clear clustering of retail on and around the *agora*, Roman cities, particularly in Italy, had their streets lined with shops and workshops that had a deep impact on urban

space. While scholars have long emphasized the low status of manual labour in Roman society, and its association with freed and servile status, it has become increasingly clear in recent years that this was elite snobbery rather than widespread cultural resentment.¹⁴ Indeed, the exceptional preservation circumstances at Pompeii make clear that the visibility of retail and crafts throughout the city could be reinforced, at points, by painted decorations on façades alluding to the work done inside, and that craftsmen and retailers could use their occupational identity as an asset in electoral campaigning.¹⁵ In Roman cities, shops and workshops can particularly be found in three contexts: in purpose-built structures around *fora*, integrated into domestic buildings, and as part of public buildings; the key architectural feature for urban commerce in the Roman world is the *taberna*, a large, open space defined by its wide entrance from the street (fig. 3).¹⁶ *Tabernae* were multifunctional commercial facilities and could be used for almost all forms of retail and manufacturing.

As far as the *fora* are concerned, it is clear that there were *tabernae* around the Forum Romanum as early as the third century BC, and as Roman colonies emerged throughout Italy, they were developed with *fora* that, especially from the second century BC onwards, began to be surrounded by *tabernae*. An early example of this is Paestum, where a Roman *forum* was inserted into a large area that used to include the Greek *agora*. The forum was constructed in the second half of the third century, and was built with long rows of *tabernae* along three of its four sides – possibly totalling to sixty (44 have been preserved).¹⁷ Livy records how Roman magistrates of the early second century were building *tabernae* around several *fora* of Roman Italy, such as Calatia and Auximum,

11. On the forum of Pompeii see Pesando and Guidobaldi 2006, p. 40–54. For Cuma see Gasparri 2009.

12. Frova 1973, p. 233, 653–693.

13. See, e.g. on the Forum of Augustus, Suetonius, Aug. 56.2.

14. See Flohr and Wilson 2016, p. 2–3.

15. Cf. Flohr 2013, p. 332–338.

16. On the *taberna* see Holleran 2017, Ellis 2018, Flohr 2020a, Flohr 2021.

17. Torelli 1999, p. 33–34.



Fig. 3 - Herculaneum, taberna VI, 10. Photo: Miko Flohr.

while Vitruvius advises architects to design fora with *tabernae* that return money to the public treasury.¹⁸ Though not all *fora* were surrounded by rows of *tabernae*, permanent facilities for commerce that bordered directly on the main urban plaza became common throughout Italy, and remained so throughout the Roman period. Imperial period examples from Italy include the *forum* of Brescia, lined with *tabernae* on both long sides, the *forum* of Suasa, surrounded by *tabernae* on three sides, and the forum of Herdonia, built as one coherent complex with rows of *tabernae* and a macellum in the second century AD (see below).¹⁹ It is generally impossible to understand whether all these *tabernae* were used for business, retail or manufacturing

– their remains do not specify; but they certainly were in principle able to accommodate all three, even though business and retail may be more likely than manufacturing, as far as *fora* are concerned. As in the Greek world, and indeed, most pre-industrial societies, Roman houses were the primary and preferred *locus* of manufacturing and, to some extent, retail. In contrast to developments in the Greek world, however, from the middle Republican period onwards, Roman houses began to include *tabernae* in their façade (fig. 4): medium-sized houses generally had *tabernae* on both sides of their entrance corridor, while smaller houses had one *taberna* next to the entrance, or, when built on a narrow plot, had a *taberna* serving as

18. Livy 41.27.

19. Brescia: Rossi 1995; Suasa: De Maria and Giorgi 2013; Herdonia: Mertens and De Ruyt 1995.



Fig. 4 - Pompeii, house VII 10, 4-6: domestic building with two tabernae. Photo: Miko Flohr.

the main entrance.²⁰ When elite houses became larger in the late Republic, the number of *tabernae* increased proportionally, and where this was convenient, *tabernae* also were built on the sides of houses.²¹ These basic architectural models are found throughout Roman Italy and continued to be popular throughout the Imperial period. In addition, domestic architecture appears to have been able to accommodate workshops from early onwards. In Pompeii, some early houses appear to have had a separate section, next to the domestic core, that offered space for commercial facilities; in the early imperial period, the larger workshops of the city were situated in the back parts of houses, either next to or instead of the back yard.²² To some

extent, this house-based model of manufacturing can also be found in other cities – as in Saepinum, Herculaneum, and Paestum – but in many places the actual remains of work installations tend not to be preserved above the original floor level.²³

While in many cities most or all identifiable shops and workshops were found in direct association with houses or around fora, some developments in Rome, Ostia and Pompeii point to the emergence of more complex commercial landscapes in the late republic and early imperial period. An important aspect of this development includes the increasing integration of commercial facilities into public architecture. At Pompeii, this is particularly well-visible in the city's bath complexes, which all

20. Flohr 2021; Ellis 2018.

21. Flohr 2019, p. 86.

22. Flohr 2007.

23. Saepinum: De Caro 1991; Herculaneum: Monteix 2010.



Fig. 5 - Ostia, Theatre. *Tabernae* underneath the *cauea*. Photo: Miko Flohr.

were surrounded by façades including long rows of *tabernae* in some of the most commercially attractive places in the city.²⁴ At Ostia, this development becomes even more pronounced, with *tabernae* not only surrounding the larger public bath complexes, but also occupying the vaults underneath the cavea of the theatre (fig. 5).²⁵ In Rome, the remains are more fragmentary, but a similar development appears to have been taking place, e.g. underneath the cavea of the Circus Maximus, and in front of the Baths of Caracalla.²⁶ Another development that can be seen in all three of these cities is the development of large-scale purpose-built commercial architecture, including long rows of *tabernae* along the major urban thoroughfares, and production

halls that were built to host larger-scale urban workshops.²⁷

This all meant that Roman cities, by the early imperial period, were at least as full of commerce as they were full of religion. Of course, there were differences between cities – in larger communities, the evidence for manufacturing and retail was more pronounced than in smaller communities, and there is more evidence for investment on a larger scale. This makes sense: in larger communities, more money was to be made, and in many cases, there was an economically more powerful elite that was both willing and able to invest in retail and manufacturing. Such economic realities (and differences) are, of course also relevant in understanding the relation

24. Flohr 2016. Flohr 2019, p. 86.

25. Pavolini 2006, p. 58-59 (Baths of Neptune), p. 68-70 (Theatre), p. 107-109 (Forum Baths).

26. Baths of Caracalla: Claridge 2010, p. 359. Circus Maximus: Coarelli 2008, p. 426.

27. See e.g. Flohr 2017, p. 149-150.

between commerce and religious institutions: if temples or sanctuaries were financially able and willing to invest in retail or manufacturing, it also had to be economically viable.

Sanctuaries and commerce

As the above sections make clear, Roman cities were characterized by a structural physical proximity of many everyday social, cultural and economic processes. Yet this physical proximity, and the resulting variety of land use does not mean that Roman urban space completely lacked internal logic: urban commercial landscapes were particularly dense along the urban thoroughfares, and around the forum, while the larger urban sanctuaries were traditionally clustered around the (initial) urban core, away from the commercially more attractive zones – with the exception of the forum where the two spheres intersected. This has two consequences that should be taken in mind when thinking about the commercial involvement – and, thus, about the role of manufacturing – in and around sanctuaries in Roman cities. First and foremost, implication is that many larger sanctuaries in the urban sphere did not have a very strong incentive to invest in commercial space, as they were in a marginal position, whereas those that were situated in a more central position often simply did not have the space. Secondly, within city centres, and particularly around fora, it was normal for religious and commercial processes to take place in each other's direct environment, and, indeed, to be in direct competition with each other for urban space.

The interweaving of the commercial and religious sphere is nowhere clearer than in the Forum Romanum in Rome. The *tabernae* that lined the *forum* from the middle republic onwards were sur-

rounded by temples: before the construction of the Basilica Sempronia in 169 BC, the space between the temple of Saturn and the temple of Castor and Pollux was occupied by a row of *tabernae* – Varro suggests these were initially used by butchers, and only later by bankers.²⁸ In the imperial period, the forum area partially de-commercialized, but in the margins of the plaza, *tabernae* were built directly next to the temple of the Deified Vespasian, as part of the so-called Porticus of the Twelve Gods, itself possibly partially of religious nature.²⁹ In the very symbolic heart of the Roman Empire, commerce and religion thus were closely intertwined – for all to see. In other *fora* in Roman Italy, the picture often is similar. In the strongly commercialized mid-republican forum of Paestum (see above), two temples were built in the subsequent centuries. One of these was situated directly next to a row of *tabernae*; the other, at the short end of the forum was surrounded by *tabernae* on three sides.³⁰ The second century AD forum of Herdonia incorporated two (earlier) temples, one of which was situated directly next to the *macellum*.³¹ At Pompeii, the forum appears to have lost some of its commercial facilities in the early imperial period, but paintings from the *praedia* of Julia Felix suggest it remained in use as the town's primary market place, and it retained a strong cluster of commercial activity – interestingly, concentrated on both sides of the main forum temple, which was surrounded by, on the east side, the *macellum*, and on the west side a market hall.³² Away from the *forum*, urban temples were equally closely associated with commercial activity. Still at Pompeii, the Temple of Fortuna Augusta, on the intersection of the Via di Mercurio and the Via della Fortuna, was faced by *tabernae* on its north and west sides and flanked by *tabernae* on its south and east sides.³³ It occupied one of the commercially most

28. Varro, fr. 853.

29. Flohr 2020b, 212-213. Cf. Coarelli 2008, p. 73.

30. Torelli 1999, p. 64-68; 110. On the forum of Paestum see also Flohr 2020b, 205-206.

31. Mertens and De Ruyt 1995, p. 188-189.

32. Flohr 2020b, 213-214. Cf. Pesando and Guidobaldi 2006, p. 44-47.

33. Pesando and Guidobaldi 2006, p. 54-55.



Fig. 6 - Luni, dolia behind the so-called 'Temple of Diana'. Photo: Miko Flohr.

attractive places in town – its construction in the Augustan period probably went at the expense of high-profile commercial space. Thus, throughout Roman cities, commerce formed the background of religious experience, and vice-versa.

Yet direct relations between temples and sanctuaries on the one hand and commercial establishments on the other are much harder to identify in the archaeological record. Moreover, it is one thing to be able to connect a sanctuary structurally to *tabernae* or workshops; it is quite another thing to understand the nature of the connection, and the degree of involvement of the temple or sanctuary with the actual use of the *tabernae* or workshops: a sanctuary could directly manage a (work)shop, or simply rent it out, and it could play a more or less active role in determining the type of business carried out. Generally, such distinctions are invis-

ible in the archaeological record. An example of the complexities involved is offered by the Temple of Diana at Luna, where a *doliarium* was installed against the back of the complex (fig. 6).³⁴ Yet it is unclear whether the *doliarium* was situated within or just outside the complex, and which purpose it served. Similarly, the podium of the forum temple at Carsulae included three *tabernae* alongside the Via Flaminia but these may have been owned by the community rather than by the temple – they were part of the Augustan *forum* project.³⁵ A bit less complicated is the situation with two of the originally sub-urban sanctuaries at Ostia, which by the imperial period had been completely absorbed by the expanding city. Both the sanctuary of Magna Mater in the south part of the city, and the sanctuary of the Four Temples along the eastern Decumanus were, during the building boom of Ostia in the sec-

34. Frova 1973, p. 233-246.

35. Ciotti 1976, p. 20-21.



Fig. 7 - Ostia IV i 9. Row of *tabernae* in front of the Campus of Magna Mater. Photo: Miko Flohr.

ond century AD, equipped with a row of *tabernae* along the street, instead of what previously had been a closed wall (fig. 7).³⁶ It seems clear from the architecture in both cases that the *tabernae* actually were built on ground owned by the sanctuary – remains of the former perimeter wall have remained visible. The situation suggests that the sanctuaries took advantage of the changing economic circumstances in the city, and their suddenly rather central location. Yet, the actual ownership situation remains unclear – it is possible that the sanctuaries and the *tabernae* were public property rather than independent, self-managed organizations. Elsewhere in the city, in the same period, two smaller collegial temples also were built with *tabernae* flanking their main entrance – this is true for both the temple of

the Fabri Navales, and for the collegial temple at IX 4, near the forum.³⁷ In Herculaneum, the *tabernae* in the so-called *Insula Orientalis II* belonged to the original building phase of a large complex that was initially identified as a palaestra, but may actually have been, or at least included, a temple, though not enough of the building is known to understand the nature of the religious institution in charge of this temple, and its relation to the complex as a whole (fig. 8).³⁸ Finally, in Pompeii, the large, monumental ‘Imperial Cult building’ on the forum had two *officinae lanificariae* in its back parts.³⁹ In this case, the link between the workshops and the building is very strong – they were inserted in rooms physically associated with the main building, but the precise identification of the building remains disputed:

36. Pavolini 2006, p. 76.

37. Pavolini 2006, p. 149-150 (Temple of the Fabri Navales); p. 196 (Collegial Temple).

38. Monteix 2010, p. 263-267.

39. VII 9, 43 and VII 9, 44. Cf. Moeller 1976; Flohr 2007; Monteix 2010.



Fig. 8 - Herculaneum, *tabernae* in the façade of *Insula Occidentalis* 2. Photo: Miko Flohr.

long seen by many as a sanctuary of Pompeii's public lares, the building was seen as a 'library' by Richardson Jr. in the 1980s, while it was identified by Dobbins as an 'imperial cult building' in the 1990s.⁴⁰

Discussion

All in all, the relation between sanctuaries and workshops in Roman cities remains very hard to grasp in our evidence, as we lack both high-quality archaeological examples that allow us to explore the issue to greater depth and the written documentation that offers scenarios of ownership and management that help us to build up and test a model. More crucially still, the places in Roman Italy where our evidence is most explicit – and particularly Ostia and Pompeii – remain historical

exceptions that went through a historical trajectory that set them apart from most cities elsewhere in Italy and in the Roman world at large. Certainly, overly deterministic interpretations of fragmentary material or textual evidence should be resisted, and extreme caution should be used in extrapolating from the few individual situations that at first sight may seem to be indicative.

Nevertheless, it is possible to make some observations. By means of conclusion, four inter-related points deserve to be made. First, Roman cities were unlike Greek cities, and diverged sharply from these in their organization of urban space, particularly with respect to the role of retail and manufacturing. There is very little need to assume that any picture emerging from evidence from the Greek world holds validity for the Roman world too. Second, because of this, it was normal for urban religious structures to be visually associated

40. Richardson 1988, p. 273-275; Dobbins 1994, p. 687-688 with references.

with commerce, and to operate in a densely commercialized environment, with a variety of private and public proprietors involved. This means that there hardly can have been a strong cultural impediment against the involvement of urban religious institutions in commerce: everybody was doing it, so why not the sanctuary too? Third, while the direct evidence that we have remains very implicit, it indeed suggests that at least in some cases, urban religious institutions could and did develop their property commercially, particularly by building *tabernae* that subsequently could be rented out, but also by using marginal space for workshops. Fourth, it should be emphasized that the evidence

is too fragmentary to give us any insight into local and regional differentiation. However, it can be argued that the incentives to invest in commerce were particularly strong in the larger cities of Roman Italy in the imperial period and may have been less of a force to reckon with elsewhere in the Roman world, where cities often were smaller, less densely commercialized, and often had a less intense competition for urban space. Thus, in the end, economically, most urban temples and sanctuaries in practice probably were consumers rather than producers of wealth, and should be approached as such, unless there is strong evidence to the contrary.

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