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THE AGENCY OF LANDSCAPES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTS IN REPUBLICAN CENTRAL APENNINE ITALY

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Religious space of the local communities of central Apennine Italy during the Republican period is often determined by the topographical framework and environment of sacred sites, underlining the importance of the topographical contextualisation of such sacred areas. They can be characterised by areas for open-air meetings that are marked by evidence of ritual practices, depositions and sometimes altars, or are linked to a specific natural setting, such as a cave. Between the 4th and 1st century BC there is a widespread distribution of healing (sanatio) cults, often associated with water, and cults connected to pastoralism. During the 2nd century BC some of those sanctuaries underwent a monumentalization process, while others slowly lost importance. This paper focuses on the agency of landscape in the establishment and development of cults and sanctuaries in the Central Apennine area from the Roman colonization to the Roman Imperial period, with the latter covering an obvious cultural break. By focusing on an area that is specifically defined in time and character, both local characteristics and those shared with the rest of Republican Central Italy can be highlighted from synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Our interpretation of the tempo-spatial patterns acknowledges not only cultural implications but also the significance of topographical distributions and territorial functions of these cults.

Keywords

Agency of Landscapes, Healing Cults, Roman Colonization, Central Apennine Italy

Note/comment