

CULTS AND THE COLONIES - EXTRA-URBAN SANCTUARIES IN COLONIAL TERRITORY IN REPUBLICAN CENTRAL ITALY

Marion Bolder-Boos¹

¹ *Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Arbeitsbereich Klassische Archäologie*

A significant number of extra-urban sanctuaries in Republican Italy were located in the hinterland of Latin or Roman colonies. Many of those cult sites, however, were not founded by the colonists but originated in pre-Roman times and thus went back to indigenous cults. While the Romans often changed certain aspects of these indigenous cults, the cult sites themselves were often continued and could, like the sanctuary of Marica a few kilometres west of Minturnae at the mouth of the Liris River, obtain a quite prominent position within the colonial pantheon. In other cases, however, such extra-urban cult places were abandoned and subsequently forgotten. Only rarely did the colonists destroy a pre-Roman sanctuary intentionally.

Various factors could have affected the continuation or abandonment of an extra-urban sanctuary: its importance for the indigenous population, where it could hold the danger of becoming a rallying place for those resisting Roman occupation; the nature of the cult and its compatibility with Roman religious ideas; the perceived sanctity of the place. The latter aspect leads to the question which role the natural landscape played in which a cult place was situated and whether the location in a geographically exceptional position made a difference. Did certain natural features – such as springs, rivers or grottoes – favour the continuation of a cult site in a colonial setting, even though it was created by an indigenous population? And how was identity negotiated in such a place?

The paper seeks to address these issues by giving an overview of the known extra-urban sanctuaries on colonial territory in Central Italy and their environmental setting, discussing the diverse landscape features as well as aspects of cult and – where possible – the deity (or deities) worshipped there.

Keywords

Extra-urban sanctuaries, Central Italy, Roman Republic, Colonial territory, Landscape

Note/comment