The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean
The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean, Jorg Rupke, Jörg Rüpke, Oxford University Press, 2013, 0199674507, 9780199674503, 560 pages. Ancient religions are usually treated as collective and political phenomena and, apart from a few towering figures, the individual religious agent has fallen out of view. Addressing this gap, the essays in this volume focus on the individual and individuality in ancient Mediterranean religion. Even in antiquity, individual religious action was not determined by traditional norms handed down through families and the larger social context, but rather options were open and choices were made. On the part of the individual, this development is reflected in changes in 'individuation', the parallel process of a gradual full integration into society and the development of self-reflection and of a notion of individual identity. These processes are analysed within the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, down to Christian-dominated late antiquity, in both pagan polytheistic as well as Jewish monotheistic settings. The volume focuses on individuation in everyday religious practices in Phoenicia, various Greek cities, and Rome, and as identified in institutional developments and philosophical reflections on the self as exemplified by the Stoic Seneca.

One of the most famous and controversial Mithraic statues is the signum from the Terme di Mitra mithraeum from Ostia (CIMRM 230). It is famous not only because its unique iconography, but also because we know the artist: Kriton, a Greek sculptor. About the statue very few articles exist (most notable is the short presentation of Claudia Valeri from 2003). Some of the authors – like Ridgway and Ambrogi affirm, that the statue is a Hellenistic statue, or at least, it was made in an Attican workshop. The iconography and the history, the datation of the statue is still a mystery. However, some details of the statue show, that it had a Phrygian cap and maybe, some metal applicants too.

The new book of professor Jörg Rüpke, leading scholar of Roman religious studies is the latest fruit of his previous international project. He is the editor of the new book, entitled The individual in the religions of the Ancient Mediterranean; The individual in the religions of the Ancient Mediterranean; and Reflections on Religious Individuality, De Gruyter, 2012). Researching in the beautiful neoclassical building of the British School at Rome, I found a very interesting, and useful book. Written by Letizia Ceccarelli and Elisa Marroni and appeared in the series of Archaeologia Perusina (nr. 19, Archaeologica series 164) under the auspices of the Giorgio Bretschneider Editure, the Repertorio dei Santuari del Lazio (626 p.) is a monumental work in his domain.

The book is presenting the sacral topography of 29 Roman towns in Lazio (without Rome of course). The preface is written by the Nestor of Italian archaeology, Mario Torelli. Every chapter has a similar structure, presenting shortly the topography (and indirectly by the rich bibliographical
references, also the historiography) of the city, than the sanctuaries known from ancient literature, epigraphic sources and archaeologically attested buildings. Many of the sanctuaries are represented by their plan or reconstruction. The book doesn’t contain pictures, doesn’t present the Oriental cult places and doesn’t analyse the role and archaeological material of the sanctuaries. As the book titles shows, it is really a crowded, very concise and useful repertory.

L’opera, un repertorio dei tanti luoghi di culto del Lazio antico, trova urgenza e motivazione nella grande quantitÃ di nuovi dati sulla religione latina di etÃ arcaica e repubblicana acquisiti sia attraverso i numerosi importanti ritrovamenti che si sono avuti in questi ultimi anni â€“ frutto di progetti di ricerca mirati, sia attraverso la riconsiderazione di siti giÃ noti, ma sinora non analizzati in modo esauriente.

Ogni santuario viene presentato nel contesto storico e topografico di appartenenza, con piante e rilievi grafici; in ogni scheda si fa riferimento ai culti attestati rispettivamente dalle fonti letterarie, dalle epigrafi e dalla documentazione archeologica. Viene ripercorsa la storia delle scoperte, presentate e riconsiderate le diverse ipotesi degli studiosi, valutata l{\textsuperscript{TM}}attribuzione delle divinitÃ . Una attenzione particolare Ã¨ dedicata ai depositi votivi nella convinzione che lo studio di questi materiali sia indispensabile alla comprensione della vita religiosa che si svolgeva negli stessi santuari.

The new book of Eric Moormann entitled &#8220;Divine Interiors: mural paintings in Greek and Roman sanctuaries&#8221; (Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 16, Amsterdam, 2012, august) shows some of the most important decorated sanctuaries and preserved paintings of the Graeco-Roman world, focusing however especially on Italy and Greece and the sanctuaries of the official or imperial cults. About the provincial archaeological examples (like some mithrea Szombathely, GÃ¼glingen) he doesn’t write. He speak in details about the Hawarti mithraeum and also about the Mainz mithraeum too. The book is a veryimportant contribution to understand not only the interior architecture, but also the ritual and sacral topography of the sanctuaries.

Mighty marble facades, sculptures, and wall paintings played an important role in the decoration of Greek and Roman temples. While the official temples, which were connected with a city or a state, usually had a simple but solemn appearance, the more popular buildings were true multi-colored expressions of religiosity. Scenes from the life of the revered deity, portraits of the supporters and practitioners of the cult, and renderings of plants and animals could transport visitors to these shrines to different worlds. The wall paintings displayed differences in style and taste, but they had the same basic look everywhere. It is striking to see the similarities between temples that were widely separated in the vast Greco-Roman world.

Drawing on archaeological remains and texts of antiquity, Divine Interiors fills a void in Greek and Roman studies by exploring a large variety of decorative schemes and fashions all over the ancient world and by shedding light on the devotional practices of worshippers and the use of shrines and temples in daily life.

There is no monograph about the inner and outer architecture of the Mithraic sanctuaries. After a secular debate on the mythological and theological definition of what a mithraeum means (from Cumont to Roger Beck’s star talk and the inner sacral geography of a Mithras temple), the new archaeological finds urgent the analysis of the physical architecture of the buildings too.

Hence my surprise yesterday when I saw that for a limited time, David Brown Book Company is departing with volumes of these series for the incredible cost of $5! That’s right, $5, folks, for monographs in the Corinth and Isthmia series, Hesperia Supplements, and Athenian Agora volumes. I saw some books marked down from $150 to $5. And the little picture booklets for the Athenian Agora and for Corinth are going for only a buck. Sale runs between now and Saturday. Get ’em while you can.

Waldner, Katharina. &ecirc;Dimensions of Individuality in Ancient Mystery Cults: Religious Practice


Excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth, 1961-1975, produced more than 170 inscribed objects of stone, bronze, bone, lead weights, pottery (graffiti and dipinti), clay pinakes, magical lead tablets, and an inscribed mosaic. In this new Corinth volume, Ron Stroud presents all of these inscriptions, and he relates them to an overall interpretation of the activities, secular and religious, attested in this shrine during its long period of use from the 7th century B.C. until the end of the 4th century A.D. Where possible, Stroud also draws out their implications for and contribution to the history of ancient Corinth, the worship of the goddesses Demeter and Kore, and the practice of magic—especially in the Roman period. This is the final publication of the inscribed objects from the sanctuary, excluding loomweights and stamped amphora handles, which will be included in a later publication.

Over the next few weeks, I will be updating the site with some of the news bits, stories, and blog pieces that posted in the last six months. All of the following will be old news to those who follow the Corinthian Studies facebook page or the news feed of the ASCSA webpage, but for those of you who missed these stories:

The other project, related to the theme of this site, was a diachronic history of the Isthmus of Corinth in the Roman period. That about killed me. I’m wrapping up the final two chapters on the late antique period this semester. My projected completion date is January. I’ll have more to say about this in the coming year.

I’ve been up to my neck in recent weeks researching ancient isthmi. I continue to plow forward in writing a history of the Isthmus of Corinth in the Roman era, or, rather, a history of the connectivity of this Isthmus. The Corinthian Isthmus was not only the most famous isthmus of classical antiquity but also became a type of isthmuses in general. Most references to isthmuses are references to the land bridge of Corinth.

Today an elementary kid might learn in a geography class, or through a Google search, or by a Wikipedia article, that an isthmus is a narrow strip of land connecting two larger land areas, usually with water on either side. But an isthmus, as Greek writers originally used the term, packed greater punch. The word isthmos denoted first and foremost a very narrow neck of land formed by dramatic constriction of parallel coastlines, but, equally important to the concept was its consequential effects on mobility and movement. For historians of the Classical age, the effects of constriction on movement made an isthmus a term of power and control.

I wanted to see what the Isthmus of Corinth had in common with the other land forms identified as isthmuses from the archaic-early Hellenistic age and so I spent some time last month zooming (via Google Earth) around the Mediterranean and Black Sea, looking at landforms identified as isthmuses. More images forthcoming via this website, but for now, here is how the Isthmus of Corinth appears in Google earth from Acrocorinth.
I will also contribute now these thirteen ancient isthmuses to the list of isthmuses in Wikipedia. Nota bene: this list is not (of course) the sum total of all isthmi of the ancient Mediterranean, but rather, necks of land identified as isthmuses in literature of the Classical and early Hellenistic periods.

Jörg Rüpke (born December 27, 1962 in Herford, West Germany) is a German scholar of comparative religion and classical philology,[1] recipient of the Prix Gay Lussac-Humboldt in 2008,[2] and of the Advanced Grant of the European Research Council in 2011.[3] In January 2012, Rüpke was appointed by German Federal President Christian Wulff to the German Council of Science and Humanities.

Rüpke studied comparative religions, Latin and theology at the University of Bonn, Lancaster University and University of Tübingen. He received his Ph.D. in 1989 from Tübingen University with a thesis on the religious construction of war in Rome, and remained at the university for a habilitation thesis on the Roman calendar. Rüpke received his venia legendi in Comparative Religions in 1994, to which he added the venia legendi in Philology the following year.

Rüpke taught Latin at the University of Potsdam between 1995 and 1999, when he became Professor for Comparative Religions at the University of Erfurt. From 2000 to 2008, he chaired the German Research Foundation Priority Program 1080 Roman Imperial and Provincial Religions, of which many notable religious scholars were part.[4] Since 2006, Rüpke is part of the German Research Foundation Research Training Group 896 Concepts of the Divine and of the World,[5] and, beginning in 2008, co-director of the Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies' Religious Individualization in Historical Perspectives project with Hans Joas, as well as Fellow at the Max Weber Centre, Erfurt.[6] He chairs the Graduate School in Erfurt for Divinities in Modernization Processes.

Rüpke held numerous fellowships at foreign universities and research centers: He was guest lecturer at the Sorbonne, Paris, in 2004; Webst-Lecturer at Stanford University, CA, in 2005; Fellow of the Humanity Council at Princeton University, NJ, in 2009; visiting professor at the Collège de France, Paris, and Aarhus University in 2010,[7] as well as honorary professor of Aarhus University and visiting professor at the University of Chicago in 2011.

He received the Gay Lussac-Humboldt Price for German-French co-operation in 2008 for his outstanding research in the area of Roman religion and his notable collaboration with French scholars, as well as the Price of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaften in 2010.[8] In November 2011, the European Research Council (ERC) announced its decision to fund Rüpke’s project Lived Ancient Religion at Erfurt University with an Advanced Grant,[9] which promotes further studies on Ancient Religion in Erfurt.


He is the editor of two books, Roman Religion (2003) and, with Rüpke, Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome (2006), as well as a series, Empire and After, published by the University of Pennsylvania Press. His current research examines problems of law, administration and cultural change in the Roman empire.

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