

P. J. E. DAVIES, *ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICS IN REPUBLICAN ROME*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 366, illus. ISBN 9781107094314. £44.99.

This book, enormous in scope and scrupulous in detail, deserves to become a reference point (as appears to be its aim) for the state of republican archaeology of the city of Rome. Taking a strictly chronological approach, the book tracks the development of the city, dropping in all the major public buildings chapter by chapter. Its real contribution is to have brought together recent archaeological finds, predominantly published in Italian journals, and drawn them fully into our picture of republican Rome. The text is authoritative, and Davies has an impressive command of both the archaeology and formal architectural details. The volume is further enhanced by its illustrations. The photographs, predominantly of the architecture in its contemporary state and findings of elements now detached from their buildings (terracotta finials etc.), are brilliant: well-judged to illustrate the points being made, including details that are often overlooked and, more importantly, new finds. They are complemented by a further set of images, digital reconstructions of key buildings, which reflect the extent to which digital reconstruction is becoming a central part of our relation to ancient architecture. Very clearly rendered maps offer a further visual aid. They build on each other to help the reader visualise the growing imprint of the city.

D.'s emphasis on the relationship of architecture to politics is built on the basic premise that architecture is the product of the politics of the time. Not only can the form and use of Roman buildings be understood to reflect ideology in general terms, but reliance on individual commissions means that Roman buildings were the direct result of political ambition or a sense of duty. Consequently, too, the subsequent fortune of the building is often a sign of the public's response to the commissioner and his legacy. At times, this causal link is a little heavy handed: the heavy Etruscan temple design of the early Republic is explained bluntly as representing 'power'. In the absence of literary texts to prove motivation, then perhaps such a lack of nuance is not surprising. As later chapters enter more heavily sourced periods of Roman history, there is more scope to explore the different motivations for building and the tension between conservatism and innovation, collective and individual interest. These later chapters also benefit from the momentum gained as the value of the exhaustive format pays off, and the reader is able both to appreciate the manner in which the city was developing, and to begin to make links between contemporary buildings and those of previous chapters.

The huge size of this project appears to reflect academic publishers' current pursuit of the encyclopaedic. Whilst the seemingly endless additions to companion series are the most obvious output of this phenomenon, the super-long volume might be another. In its format, D.'s book is clearly poised as a reference work, though its title and aim, privileging the political, seem to have more the flavour of a monograph. On the whole, the tensions between the two different forms are well managed, though at some points the focus on the monograph-style research question (how were architecture and politics intertwined?) leads to an absence of information one might expect in a reference work (how did Roman temples actually work as places of cult worship?). There is less emphasis on space and landscape than one might have expected, given the enormous development of research into this area in recent years.

The material is militarily managed in order to marshal so vast a word-count. Each chapter follows exactly the same format: an overview of the politics of the period, followed by sections dedicated to religious architecture, the deployment of spoils and finally civic buildings. The careful expositions of each era's political landscape are carefully done, and could by themselves have generated a slim introductory volume to republican politics. They do not, however, move scholarship forward in any way, and are obviously not necessary for the academic reader. They are there presumably to add value to the book as a resource for students or the casual reader, to forego the need for cross-references with other volumes. But the upshot is a proliferation of words that adds to the task of actually getting to grips with the text as a whole. This may be somewhat self-defeating, because the book is in practice quite hard to use as a work of reference (following the history of any one building type, for instance, takes an enormous amount of cross-referencing), and the real pay-offs for appreciating the true complexity of the ways in which politics shaped architecture (and vice versa) come only when one reaches the very last page.

There is one important respect in which this book does know where to stop. The final chapter takes us down to 44 B.C.E. Whilst the book sets up brilliantly the context into which the next

important phase of Rome's development will fit, the chronological format does not allow for looking forwards. The ascent of Augustus, and his and Agrippa's building projects, are never mentioned. The only clue comes from the very last word, isolated as a sentence. Explaining the architectural honours awarded to Caesar by the Senate in terms of a deliberate attempt to push him into an inescapable corner, D. reveals them as the saviours of their Republic — 'Momentarily'.

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C. NERVI, *IL PAESAGGIO DI NORA (CAGLIARI – SUD SARDEGNA): STUDIO DEI MATERIALI ROMANI E TARDOANTICHI* (BAR International Series 2833). Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2016. Pp. vi + 462, illus. ISBN 9781407315225. £74.00.

Cristina Nervi's book, focused on the study of Roman to late antique pottery from the hinterland of the Phoenician to late antique coastal town of Nora in southern Sardinia, fills a gap in the archaeology of Sardinia's Roman landscapes. Most systematic survey projects carried out on the island have been mainly interested in earlier periods throughout the first millennium B.C., exploring Phoenician colonialism, Punic hegemony and Roman republican rule.

Based on the author's doctoral dissertation (Università di Genova, 2015), this book stems from a ten-year-long (1992–2001) survey project which covered an area of about 50 km² in the hinterland of Nora. Methodologically, this was a benchmark project for Sardinia's landscape archaeology, as along with another survey project launched in the same year — the Riu Mannu survey (<https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/humanities/research/archaeologyresearch/projects/sardinia/riumannu/>) — an intensive and systematic survey strategy was adopted on the island for the first time. This then triggered the development of further regional projects to explore the island's countryside, most recently the LASS (<https://landscapearchaeologyofsouthwestsardinia.wordpress.com/>) and SAP (<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/sinis-archaeological-project/>) projects. Important publications arose from the Nora project (e.g. M. Botto *et al.* in C. Gómez Bellard (ed.), *Ecohistoria del paisaje agrario* (2013), 151–86), which set the basis for wider reconstructions of Sardinia's landscapes throughout the first millennium B.C. (e.g. A. Roppa, *Comunità urbane e rurali nella Sardegna punica di età ellenistica* (2013)).

Because these earlier publications did not provide detailed quantitative data, and did not focus on the Roman to late antique period, it was with great expectations that I took up this book, which were, I fear, disappointed. The reason for my disappointment is in fact already evident in the organisation of the volume, in five chapters. Ch. 1 (1–4) is concerned with archaeological and literary sources on the case study area. Geography and geomorphology are presented in ch. 2 (5–8). Ch. 3 (9–26) deals with the survey methodology. In ch. 4 (27–392), the collection areas and pottery recovered are listed and described. In ch. 5 (393–454), N. discusses the data and draws conclusions. In other words, out of the 462 pages which make up this book, a substantial part — 377 pages (16–392) — is given over to catalogues of the sites identified by the survey, and to descriptions and drawings of the pottery collected. Another large part (413–54) is composed of tables and dating profiles of all the sites identified. Excluding the bibliography (455–62), the reader is left with a text of about thirty pages that has to include both the introduction and all the interpretive archaeology. This unfortunately results in a book which is clearly tilted towards the presentation of raw data as opposed to their interpretation.

However, its organisation is only a minor shortcoming of this book. The first three chapters rehearse topics which had already been treated in much more detail by the archaeologists working at Nora and in its hinterland, and do not add anything substantial to previous research. Worse, misleading data are added, as in ch. 1, where it is reported that Giovanni Francesco Fara wrote about Nora in 1538 (2). He was born in 1543, and his works were edited and published in 1835. In ch. 2, the section on orography (5) is seriously imprecise. Also, a good part of ch. 3 (16–26) is dedicated to the elaboration of a typological repertoire for ceramic common ware. I