

much further than his theoretical model allows him to. The key perspective focusing on ‘variety’ and ‘semantic struggle’ tends to shade into a notion of plurality, in the sense of co-existing options rather than processes that intersect and interact, indeed that even create amalgams that emanate from the web of ritual practices, beliefs and the material objects of Fortuna.

Ultimately, the approaches to materiality found across these varied works are as multifaceted as is the material they approach itself. These books assemble various innovative methodologies, ranging from ‘ritualisation’ (Várhelyi), ‘social imprinting’ (Moser), ‘lived religion’ (Szabó), ‘concepts’ (Miano), or Bourdieu’s distinction between ‘dominated practice’ (systematizing and fixing of knowledge) and ‘intentional profanation’ (special and detailed knowledge about the power of objects) (Gordon), just as they assemble recent excavations (Duday and Van Andringa, Szabó) and re-assessments of marginalised visual evidence (Huet, Miano). David Frankfurter’s afterword to *Ritual Matters* complements this variety. There he sketches an impressively comprehensive theory of material agency that will provide a perfect introduction to the topic for those scholars who decide to contribute to the promising field of materiality in ancient religions.

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THIBAUD LANFRANCHI (ED.), *AUTOUR DE LA NOTION DE SACER* (Collection de l’École française de Rome 541). Rome: École française de Rome, 2018. Pp. 297. ISBN 9782728312887. €27.00.

This volume consists of a collection of studies which emerged from a *journée d’étude* at the École française de Rome (2014), and is concerned with the important question of the nature of the concept ‘sacer’. The volume consists of eight chapters, with an introduction and summary, an extensive bibliography and two indices.

The chapters may be divided into three groups, methodological, linguistic and religious. The first group includes Lanfranchi’s ‘Introduction’ (7–16) and Danièle Dehouve’s ‘*Sacer* et sacré. Notion *emic* et catégorie anthropologique’ (17–37), as well as Audrey Bertrand’s ‘Conclusion’ (241–9: see below). L. briefly sketches the historiographic background and introduces the aims of the work. He poses the question, among others, as to whether the definition of *sacer* (in use since Georg Wissowa) as ‘things belonging to the gods’ is valid in relation to other Italic peoples. L. refers to the well-known theory of Giorgio Agamben and the radical laicism of the term *sacer* which he proposed. Agamben proposed that the phrase *homo sacer*, with its distinct religious connotations, should be inscribed exclusively into the legal order, and he treated it as an example of how a society which had the power to exclude individuals using the law could simultaneously shape its identity using that same instrument. Agamben’s approach has been met with scepticism among ancient historians, as L. notes. The main criticisms are concentrated around the relationship between law and religion in Roman times. A shift in research towards ancient religious terminology more generally, studied from both linguistic and religious perspectives, has moved us away from looking at Roman religion through this exclusively legal lens.

Dehouve proposes a chronological journey through the fates of the concepts *sacer*, *taboo*, *totem* and *mana*, somewhat within the spirit of Mieke Bal’s theory of ‘traveling concepts’. From the rich literature within the field, the author chooses those with a theoretical bent. She proposes an approach that relies on investigation of the whole semantic field of terms, along with their subsequent changes. This *emic* perspective requires an approach which combines linguistic and sociological points of view, as Dehouve postulates.

The four subsequent chapters (Valentina Belfior, ‘La nozione di *sacer* in etrusco: dai riti del *liber linteus* a ritroso’, 39–59; Emmanuel Dupraz, ‘Les correspondants de *sacer* dans les Tables Eugubines’, 61–91; Giovanna Rocca, ‘*Sacer* nelle iscrizioni umbre’, 93–114; Olivier de Cazanove, ‘Le sacré en partage. *Sakaraklúm*, temple ou sanctuaire sur le cippe d’Abella?’, 115–31) belong to the group of linguistic studies, and have a distinctly comparative bent. These chapters explore linguistic issues relating to Italic languages such as Etruscan or Osco-Umbrian. These interesting chapters clearly show the necessity of comparative studies for understanding such well-known historiographical artefacts as the *cippo abellano*, probably the most significant artefact of the

Oscan language, or the Iguvine Tablets, which hold the same significance in relation to Umbrian. A comparative perspective enables the incorporation of more general ideas on the Italic territories, Belfior's chapter being a good example of this. This approach also enables distinctive aspects of Italic religious practices to be observed. A practical example, using Dehouve's emic approach to the material, is the essay by Dupraz. It shows the difficulty, among others, of directly transferring the Umbrian terms *sakra* and *sakref* onto their Latin terms. Rocca uses similar principles to analyse the so-called 'iscrizioni minori', which form an exceptionally good complement to the Iguvine Tablets, while being harder to analyse for formal reasons. The interesting essay by de Cazanove moves beyond the analysis of *sacer* and *sacrum*, concentrating on the definition of *sakaraklúm*. He claims that the term belongs to the Italic religious lexicon and relatively rarely fits the use of the Latin equivalents *sacrarium* and *sacellum*. Its use in Oscan to describe a cult place is significant in itself. This is yet another instance which strengthens the thesis of highly varied religious experience among the various Italic peoples.

The next group of texts carries us to Rome, concentrating on issues connected with religious activity. Belonging to this group are: Elena Tassi Scandone's '*Sacer e sanctus: quali rapporti?*' (133–69), Roberto Fiori's '*La condizione di homo sacer e la struttura sociale di Roma arcaica*' (171–227) and Yann Berthelet's '*Homo sacer, consecratio et destinatio dis*' (229–39). Tassi Scandone's article deserves particular attention, since it strongly supports the underlying principles of the introduction and of Dehouve's methodological manifesto. In her introduction, Tassi Scandone correctly observes the difficulty of grasping relations between ancient terms: our sources are relatively few, and the semantic fields of these concepts changed over time. She analyses the material according to three perspectives: the evolution of the concept of *sanctus* over time, the relationship between *sacer* and *sanctus*, and methodology more generally. Tassi Scandone displays great self-awareness as a researcher, which enables her to use terms with exclusive meanings in a notably thoughtful manner, and thus to sketch out the terrains of the known and the hypothetical, particularly in relation to the regal period and earlier.

Fiori's essay forms in effect a small monograph on its subject. The author competently introduces this difficult issue, referring to Agamben's concept of *homo sacer*. In this paper, too, we find a historiographical hinterland, and Fiori also notes changes in the understanding of the relevant terms over time. This chapter includes the most extensive appeals to the legal meaning of *homo sacer* in the sense used by Mommsen. Fiori does, however, transfer a large part of his discussion to the footnotes, which somewhat impedes the reading of this rich paper. The last article, by Berthelet, contains deliberations on the concepts *homo sacer*, *consecratio* and *destinatio dis*, all from the lexicon of ritual. Berthelet, the author of a brilliant work on the auspices, here concentrates on the ritual *consecratio*; he attempts, successfully, to point out the differences between this rite and the situation in which the *homo sacer* found himself. He correctly argues that the situations belong to different sociological and religious categories. Here too, the reader would have been aided by moving part of the content from the footnotes to the main text.

In the 'Conclusion' (241–9), Audrey Bertrand briefly and competently summarises the various arguments contained in the volume. She draws attention to the significance of the comparative studies here undertaken, and the resultant need to add nuance to our picture of Roman society, particularly in early periods.

The volume is well edited, with few typographical errors, and the articles amply support the principles introduced by L. in the introduction. The reader is presented with an ambitious attempt at a many-faceted understanding of the concept of *sacer*, and for this reason alone it is an important publication. The volume avoids Rome-centrism, and introduces weighty findings regarding other Italic peoples. In this context it is worth emphasising once more the value of the studies on the Etruscans, the Umbrians and the Oscans, which show that we are dealing with highly varied and distinct cultures, while also demonstrating the existence of what Bertrand defines as 'une communauté de pensée'. It is worth noticing the shift of the point of analytical gravity from the concept *homo sacer* (a term with clear legal connotations) towards a more comparative and religious understanding. All the articles contained in this volume are worthy of attention, and it ought to become a significant reference point for further comparative studies on the religious lexicon of the Italic peoples.

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