

Review article

Ancient Rome mapped

Bernard Frischer*

ANDREA CARANDINI (ed.). *The atlas of ancient Rome: biography and portraits of the city. Volume 1: text and images; volume 2: tables and indexes*. 2017. 1280 pages, 532 colour and b&w illustrations, 9 tables. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press; 978-0-691-16347-5 hardback \$199.50 & £148.95.



When I first began my teaching career in 1976 at the University of California, Los Angeles, the subject of Roman topography was difficult to teach to English-speaking students. Most of the scholarship was written in Italian, and

much of the rest was in French and German. Over the past 40 years the situation has changed significantly. We now have two useful introductory surveys in English: Coarelli's *Rome and environs* (2014) and Claridge's *Rome: an Oxford archaeological guide* (2010). We also have a host of monographic studies and, since 1988, innumerable articles and book reviews in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology*. Richardson's (1992) *A new topographical dictionary of ancient Rome* updated the one venerable but antiquated English reference work that we had long had: Platner and Ashby's (1926) *A topographical dictionary of ancient Rome*. Meanwhile, at least for polyglot scholars, the situation became even more favourable with the appearance of Steinby's (1992–2001) *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* (LTUR), a collaborative work by a distinguished international team writing in Italian, French, German and English, with around 2300 individual entries on specific sites and monuments of the ancient city.

The atlas of ancient Rome (*Atlas* from hereon), created by a team of over 30, mainly young, scholars associated with the Sapienza University of Rome and

directed by the general editor, Andrea Carandini, is the latest addition to this growing bibliography—and a very welcome addition it is. Each of its two volumes reflects a unique contribution made by the *Atlas* relative to earlier reference works: it provides a systematic overview of the urban development of each of the city's 14 districts (or, in Latin, *regiones*) (volume 1); and it presents several hundred beautiful new maps and plans of monuments and sites organised chronologically and topographically (volume 2). These two strengths differentiate the *Atlas* from the *LTUR*, which intentionally concentrated on individual monuments, and not on their urban context, and whose illustrations were generally reproductions of those found in earlier publications. The *Atlas* features numerous colour illustrations, the work of the justly renowned firm Inlink, reconstructing the city's monuments both individually and in the wider context of the city.

The English translation, whose publication appears five years after the original Italian edition, is the more up to date of the two, including “general corrections and updates to bibliographical references to December 2015” (Carandini, volume 1, p. 9). So, at least for the moment, it is the English translation that scholars will want to read and cite.

The scope of the *Atlas* is breathtaking: its authors aim to trace the evolution of the city from its first formation in the Iron Age (tenth to eighth centuries BC) to its depopulation in the early Middle Ages. Needless to say, as with all human enterprises, this book has its strengths and weaknesses. The former far outweigh the latter, and the latter can be, to some extent, made good by the reader who comes prepared. The *Atlas*'s two introductory chapters are written with a polemical fervour, aimed more, one suspects, at specialists than at novices; for the latter, an alternative starting point I would recommend is

* 2804 South Saint Remy Circle, Bloomington, IN 47401, USA
(Email: bernard.d.frischer@gmail.com)

the 'Introduction to the history and study of Roman topography' in Richardson (1992, although the study aids mentioned there need to be supplemented by the important works that have appeared since; see above).

In reading the *Atlas*, some general points should be borne in mind. First, the *Atlas* introduces a new concept, the topographical unit (TU). This is defined as the individual monument, or feature, of the city: "each unit is like a tile in a mosaic or a word in a sentence" (volume 1, p. 2, cf. also p. 46). The concept is helpful because it allows features across the city to be given identification numbers (always *Region* in Roman numerals + *feature* in Arabic numerals, e.g. XII 10 (= Baths of Caracalla)). These appear on the many maps of volume 2, thus reducing labels and promoting legibility (for some reason, they are omitted on some maps, e.g. p. 232); they have been organised in an index at the end of volume 2, making it possible to find all references to them across the two volumes. It is too bad, however, that the opportunity was missed to make TU numbers even more useful as an aid to searching by listing them in parentheses for related items in the two other indices at the end of volume 2 ('Index of ancient names of monuments and places'; 'Index of conventional and modern names of monuments'). A second point is that, despite the fact that the work has been translated into English, it has not been integrated with the scholarly literature written in English, which could have made it more useful to readers not fluent in Italian and interested in pursuing a topic in greater depth; and I daresay that some of the contributors to the *Atlas* could have benefited from taking more of the English-language scholarship into account.

A third point is that the first section of the book ('The city as a whole') deals with an admirably wide range of topics, but, unfortunately, it omits urban administration (government, law courts, police, fire brigades, medical services, maintenance of roads, bridges and management of the Tiber). In general, readers should be wary about the information and interpretations contained in the initial section on each region ('From the pre-urban age to the late kingdom'): the team responsible for the *Atlas* has an approach to this period of the city's history that is hotly contested because they tend to accept the literal truth of the early legends about the city, whereas most scholars are more sceptical. For example, for the *Atlas* team, legendary figures such as

Romulus, Faustulus and Acca Larentia really existed, and it therefore makes sense to try to identify their dwellings among the remains of the Iron Age settlement on the Palatine (volume 1, p. 150). A fifth and final point is that the book lacks the *ultima manus* when it comes to editing, proofreading (e.g. "*Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*" volume 1, p. 49; the "Arc of Constantine" volume 1, p. 118; the "Atrium Vestae" volume 2, p. 5; "Arc" instead of "Arx" volume 2, p. 7) and consistency of translation (e.g. "Oversight Commission of Rome" volume 1, p. 44, but also "Soprintendenza" volume 1, p. 14; and churches are sometimes given their Italian names, sometimes English translations of their Italian names and sometimes both, as in "the Church of San Giuseppe of the Falegnami [St Joseph of the Carpenters]" volume 1, p. 146).

Feedback I have received from colleagues acquainted with the work (including the Italian edition) typically includes the complaint that it is hard to find what you are looking for in the book. Out of curiosity, I tried to find where the Laocoon statue group is discussed (see above photograph by Bernard Frischer showing detail of the Laocoon statue group; cast in the Skulpturhalle, Basel). The sculpture is illustrated in volume 1 (fig. 92), leading me to expect extended discussion of it; further, we have known since the publication of Volpe and Parisi (2009) where it was found, so the *Atlas* should now be able to provide a sounder integration of the statue group within the context of the ancient city. Looking at the indices, I first tried 'Ancient names of monuments and places'. As far as I could see, it is not there (whether under 'Laocoon' or 'Statua Laocoontis'). Next I tried the index, 'Conventional and modern names of monuments', using the same search terms. Finally, having not found the reference this way, I simply read the section of the book on 'Region III. Isis et Serapis', where the statue group was found. Here (volume 1, p. 316), I did find mention of the statue, along with a reference to Volpe and Parisi's article. I eventually also found the probable findspot indicated on tab. 118 in volume 2 (where, unfortunately, the statue group is not given a TU number, which could have allowed it to be traced elsewhere in the *Atlas* via the 'Index of topographical units'). Almost nothing is offered by way of the statue's date or its interpretation, if only in terms of the display of sculpture generally in the Gardens of Maecenas. One wonders why, in the end, the Laocoon warranted the illustration, and the whole process of finding where it was mentioned

took too long and was successful only because I knew where to look in the first place. The indices ought to have been more generous in their coverage, and an index nominum would have been most welcome.

The English edition, as noted above, is more up to date than the Italian version. But in making changes in a book with as much connecting tissue as the *Atlas*, again, the *ultima manus* is sometimes lacking. Care was not always taken to ensure that the consequences were worked out everywhere they arose. A case in point is the Arch of Marcus Aurelius. As flagged in the Introduction to the English edition (volume 1, p. 10), Filippi now accepts Viscogliosi's theory that the Arch of Marcus Aurelius was next to the Curia Julia; but she also writes that "at the end of the fourth century, a Flavian [sic; a mistranslation for "a Flavianus"], probably Virius Nicomachus Flavianus the Younger, built the Secretarium Senatus (VIII 1146) near the curia" (volume 1, p. 181). In volume 1, p. 206, footnote 920, she speculates that the Secretarium:

must have been located in the taberna of the Forum of Caesar, where the Church of Santa Martina would later be built and where the epigraph [i.e. inscription] commemorating its restoration was found [...] The most probable location then would be next to the curia itself, inside (according to our reconstruction) the atrium Libertatis.

This is a confusion of mistranslated English and contradictory topographical reasoning: if Filippi accepts Viscogliosi's placement of the Arch of Marcus Aurelius next to the Curia and inside the future Church of Santi Martina e Luca, then there is no room for the Secretarium Senatus where she proposes. There is also a concatenation of errors caused by the acceptance of the Viscogliosi theory in the English edition. In the Italian edition, Filippi had tentatively (hence the '?' after the name) located the Bibliotheca C. Asinii Pollionis in this area. In the 'Index of ancient names of monuments and places', the 'Bibliotheca C. Asinii Pollionis?' is listed on tabs 26, 31, 41 and 270. And sure enough, the building appears on these tables in the Italian edition. But in the English edition—since now the Arch of Marcus Aurelius has to occupy the site—the Bibliotheca does not appear on tabs 26, 31, 41 and 270, despite still being so indicated in the index. If we look up the TU of the Bibliotheca in the Italian edition, its identification is VIII 1336. If

we look in the English edition under this number, we get the same references to the tables on which it appears in the Italian edition. Meanwhile, the Arch of Marcus Aurelius gets no TU number, as it should have done, and its role as a linking element between the Forum Romanum and the Forum of Julius Caesar is left out of the account of the latter by Delfino and Di Cola (especially in volume 1, p. 208, where it might have been mentioned). So in this case, the update has unfortunately itself caused a need for some corrections in the next edition.

Let us next look at how the *Atlas* handles several specific features of the city. Bruno gives a generally good account of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine. She takes into account the recent work of Zink and Piening (2009) on the polychromy of the architectonic elements. She neglects, however, to refer to the recent controversy about the orientation of the temple (Wiseman 2012; Zink 2012). Here one suspects that the previously mentioned lack of sufficient attention to the scholarship written in English is responsible.

Another recent controversy concerns the location of the Temple of the Divine Trajan in the Forum of Trajan. This is not referenced in the generally good account of the forum by Cavallero. Fortunately, the temple ends up being situated in what we now know to be the correct place (cf. volume 2, tab. 54—erroneously cited by Cavallero at volume 1, p. 211 as tab. 50), but the key article is not cited: Baldassarri (2013). One suspects that the claim in the Introduction that the work was updated through to December 2015 was an exaggeration.

It is admirable that D'Alessio records the pyramid-tomb at the Porta Flaminia attributed to M. Vipsanius Agrippa (volume 1, p. 507). Given that the structure was demolished in the sixteenth century and is not well known even to experts, the documentation ought to have been given in a footnote. D'Alessio's brief discussion of the Horologium Augusti has not been updated to take into account Haselberger's (2014) *The Horologium of Augustus: debate and context*. Her treatment of the Pantheon is good for the Augustan phase, but for the Hadrianic it lacks discussion of important insights published in recent English scholarship: Macdonald (2002); the fascinating archaeoastronomical work by Hannah and Magli (2011); and the collection of new contributions on various aspects of the

building and its history in Marder and Wilson Jones (2015).

To conclude, despite its imperfections, the *Atlas* is a welcome addition to studies of ancient Roman topography and urban history. It fills an important gap in giving us our first comprehensive spatio-temporal account of the evolution of the city, illustrated by beautiful colour plates as well as by hundreds of new detailed maps and plans. Used judiciously as a point of departure (but not arrival) for understanding the various *regiones* of the city, it gives the English-speaking reader access to the latest discoveries and theories held to be valid by a leading school of Italian scholars.

It should be noted, in closing, that the *Atlas* project has given birth to the Sapienza University's Archaeological Information System of Ancient Rome (AISAR), a digital resource whose ambition is to "handle all the information needed to reconstruct the evolution of the urban landscape of any city in the classical world" (Carafa, volume 1, p. 44). This offline database was used by the authors of the *Atlas*; it can be consulted by scholars in Rome whose applications for access are approved (the present reviewer is a case in point). In the next stage of their work, I urge the *Atlas*'s young scholarly team to abandon the cumbersome medium of the printed book and the offline AISAR, and to adopt instead the approach of a publicly available, interactive, collaborative and constantly updatable website. The *e-Atlas*, as we might call it, should be accessible to everyone for consultation without application; and it should be open to qualified scholars as an outlet for disseminating new insights or for the correction of old errors in the *Atlas*, whether typographical, editorial or substantive. Good models for this exist, notably, the Suda On Line (www.stoa.org/sol) and the Medici Archive Project (<http://bia.medici.org>). An international editorial committee should be established to vet submissions and to ensure that the scholarship accepted is broadly inclusive, as befits a city whose impact has been felt all over the Western world. If this is done, many of the problems flagged in this review can be easily remedied, and a truly living reference work will have been created that can keep the study of Roman topography alive in the twenty-first century.

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