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Alfred Schäfer, *Götter, Gaben, Heiligtümer. Römische Religion in Köln*. Philipp von Zabern, 2016, 128.p. ISBN 978-3-8053-4949-9.

With more than two thousands cities and urban settlements, the Roman Empire was many times defined as a complex network of urban settlements. Although this concept is highly criticized and debated today¹, one of the most popular approaches to present the great amount of material evidence of Roman religious experience is through organizing them in micro-scale units, such as cities and urban settlements². Alfred Schäfer's book can be integrated in this group of works. Similar monographs on urban religion were published recently focusing on Pompeii, Ostia, Avenicum, Carnuntum or Colonia Sarmizegetusa, this one even by the same author³.

The recent book is the latest and till now, the most comprehensive summary on Roman religion in Köln. Similar works written before – such as the synthesis of Schoppa from 1959 and Ristow from 1975 – were focusing on cataloguing the stone monuments, while others, such as the great work of Werner Eck from 2004 gave a short introduction into the rich material evidence and religious practices of *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*. Although, the author highlighted already in the introduction, that his book meant to be a more general introduction on Roman

¹ Numerous projects and conferences are focusing also recently on Roman urbanism and urban religion too: See the project of Ligt de Luuk: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/humanities/an-empire-of-2000-cities-urban-networks-and-economic-integration-in-the-roman-empire>. For a more broader analysis of ancient urbanism see the activity of the Centre for Urban Network Evolutions: <http://urbnet.au.dk>. Last accessed: 1.10.2017.

² On methodology and short historiography on Roman urban religion: Szabó 2014. See also: Raja-Rüpke 2015. See also: Raja-Rüpke 2015 and the new project of Jörg Rüpke on the concept of citification and the impact of cities on religious communication: <https://www.uni-erfurt.de/en/max-weber-centre/projects/research-groups-ath-the-max-weber-kolleg/the-city-in-the-history-of-religion/>. Last accessed: 1.10.2017.

³ Schäfer 2007.

religion in urban context, addressing a larger public, interested in the monuments of the Roman past of Köln.

The structure of the book follows a strict chronologic order, beginning with the foundation of the city, as a primal religious act of space sacralisation. The first phase of the settlement can be dated to the age of Augustus (12-15 pp.). Schäfer presents an ideal plan of Roman settlement, where several elements, such as a Capitolia can be just presumed (13.p). While some very problematic and “big” questions of the research history are just slightly mentioned, the great novelty of his works lies in the use of the latest archaeological finds, known well by the author, who is also a field archaeologist in Köln. Some case studies, such as the ara Ubiorum and the cult of the emperors are well presented, especially focusing on the first period of Roman presence in the early decades of the 1st century A.D. With beautifully illustrated photographs of the latest and most curious finds – such as the finger-fragment of a monumental statue of an emperor or god – the author presents also the particularities of the emperor-cult in ancient Köln. In a short chapter, A. Schäfer presents the earliest cemeteries and particularities of funerary art of the indigenous population, as the first product of the Romanisation or more precisely, intraconnectivity between Romans and non-Romans⁴. As usually happens in urban archaeology, divinities arrive from the most unexpected way from earth during rescue excavations. The author presents the discovery of a famous Minerva statue, dates in the first century A.D. as one of the first statuary representation of a Roman divinity from the newly founded colony (28-33.pp.). In a short chapter, one can read also about the problem of the sanctuaries before the official founding of the Roman city, which still unclearified by German scholarship. In the followings, A. Schäfer presents some general aspects of the ritual founding of the Roman city in 50 A.D. although the archaeological evidences of such an event are extremely limited (a bronze statuette representing

⁴ On the problem of the notion see: Versluys 2014.

two bulls) and his presentation is based almost exclusively on literary sources and analogies. The book tries to show, that the religious communication of a growing urban centre, as *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium* produced numerous local-specific aspects in iconography and religious practices. He presents in details the cult of the Matronae, goddesses who had more than a hundred monuments in the city and at least two sanctuaries identified archaeologically. The specificities of these divinities and the religious practices related to them are presented through carefully selected case studies, illustrated with the famous aedicule-altar of C. Candidinius Verus, decurio of the city (50-51.pp). Similarly to this chapter, another is focusing on the so called Jupiter-columns, well known from Germaniae. The author presents not only the local specificities of these open air monuments (more than 40 in Köln, which represents more than 15% of the complete repertory), but also presents the general patterns, highlighting the popularizing aspect of his book. Some of the sanctuaries, such as the new Capitolia of the city (63-68 pp), the round temple on the river bank (69-71 pp.) or the terrace-sanctuary (72-75 pp.) are presented in details. Similarly, such spaces, like the Forum and the Palace of the Governors are presented as spaces of religious communication, where sacralisation of the space can be attested through the rich materiality of Roman religious experience. As usually happens with Roman cities covered by a modern one, the evidence of domestic or household religion is very limited and badly documented. The famous Dionysos mosaic discovered in the mid-20th century however is one of the few documents of the religious choices of the families of ancient Köln. Following a very traditional approach, the so called "Oriental" cults are presented separately (Mithras in one chapter and all the other cults in another one). Although these elective cults and small group religions should be presented as part of an interconnected religious network, the author – probably to present them for the greater public – kept the old, Cumontian vocabulary and typology of "gods and cults". In a separate chapter, A. Schäfer

presents the material evidences and recent state of research about the religion in the harbour-fort of Köln (104-108 pp.) and the world of the cemeteries. The book ends with the short presentation of the arrival and coexistence of Christians and Pagans and the first churches attested in the city. Note to mention, that as in most of the cases in provincial cities, archaeological evidence of Christian communities can be attested only from the 4th -5th centuries.

The small, pragmatic and beautifully illustrated book of A. Schäfer is a good introduction to the religious life of ancient Köln. It is a colourful book, with high quality photographs and 3D models of the ancient city, a guide addressing mostly the greater public and visitor of the local archaeological museum, but also students who are interested in Roman religion, urban archaeology and also, modern, interactive museology. Such a book – although could not replace a comprehensive work and synthesis on the religious communication in Köln – is a great example for modern, urban museums for promoting Roman history, religion and its materiality.

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