

INTRODUCTION

How can we use the archaeological record to reconstruct the experience of Roman sacrifice? This study assembles the often fragmentary physical evidence (altar placement and orientation, votive and faunal remains, sanctuary architecture) in order to explore the site-specific character of communal animal sacrifice in Republican Rome and Latium over centuries of ritual performance. A coordinated investigation of the archaeological traces of Republican Roman sacrifice will reveal a ritual that is distinctly and inter-relatedly emplaced, highly sensual, and recurring. It will be seen that the overall material setting of a sanctuary actively shapes, in the most fundamental of ways, the actions and experiences of the sacrificial performance. But more specifically, at the nexus of these permanent sacred structures and ephemeral, sensory practices sits the sanctuary's altar – the enduring, monumental locus of the climactic act of the sacrificial slaughter. Patterns of practice and architecture will be revealed as interdependent, involved in a mutual reinforcement of each other's continuance over the generations of the active life of a sanctuary. Accordingly, in this book's archaeological reconstruction of the continual interplay of ritual and its setting, Roman sacrifice will emerge as similarly enduring: a periodic reenactment of patterns of materially grounded practice. And the Roman altar, a seemingly passive, utilitarian construction in the ensemble of its material setting, will be cast in the leading role as the primary, authoritative mediator in the crafting and channeling of sacrifice.

There are no doubt some universal or at least regional aspects of sacrifice that can be conceived as independent of the location of the ritual's enactment; and, to be sure, the term "Roman sacrifice" can be a useful designation for a general category of geographically and chronologically related practices. However, the essential and defining particulars of a community's sacrifice will be shown to vary necessarily with the geographical, material, and temporal emplacement of the ritual. Sacrifice, I will argue, is a site-specific practice.

What will emerge from this study is an understanding of Republican Roman sacrifice as inherently local and conservative. This perspective challenges the standard, comparative approaches that often view sacrificial practice in central Italy in the Republican period as either a subset of Greek practice, or as a close prototype of the better-attested cult practices of the Imperial era that are well known from literary or visual evidence, or as an imposition or mimicry of practices that occurred in the city of Rome. Absent from this study are universalizing approaches to sacrifice that tend to view the practice principally as a transaction between god and human,¹ a means for distributing meat,² or a mechanism for social cohesion.³ Although the ritual may be usefully understood from many research perspectives as serving some or all of these cross-culturally conceived purposes, the performance of Republican Roman sacrifice will be viewed here instead as a community's collective re-experience of its own local practices. In this study, central Italic sacrificial ritual will defer neither to other cultures nor to other purposes, but rather will be seen as fundamentally local, a repeated experience bound to the particularities of its topographical situation, and most especially to the monumental altar residing at the center of the action.

With such an understanding of the materiality of the experience of sacrifice at its core, this book will not attempt an archaeological recapitulation of the typical themes of Roman religion. Missing from this investigation of early sanctuaries are the familiar, individualized gods, the discussions of Roman priestly dominance, the senatorial priesthoods, or even the Ara Pacis (though the research is in fact focused on altars). The chapters in this book will explore instead the different yet mutually reinforcing ways of looking at the lived, performed aspects of the principal ritual of Roman religion and at the long-term imprint of these sacrificial practices on the material world. The various case studies from Republican Rome and Latium offer different approaches and different modes of access to the material record of sacrifice over archaeological time; each sanctuary examined will reveal patterns of practice reliably transmitted not merely over a few generations but over several centuries of ritual performance. When appropriately organized, the abundance of evidence – ranging over a variety of times, places, and typologies – will allow us to see the fragments of the immensely complex kaleidoscope of Roman religious practice and how these pieces fit together in ways that can help make sense of the characteristic diversity of Roman religion.

This book examines the intricate entanglement of sacrificial practices and the settings in which these actions occur. At each of the many stages of the procedure of sacrifice – the preparatory lustrations, assembly of participants, procession of the animal, slaughter, inspection of entrails, distribution of meat, and communal feasting – the ritual will be shown to leave its physical mark on the sanctuary. Throughout each of the following chapters, in each sanctuary examined, inferences about religious actions and experience will be firmly anchored in the archaeological record of either the architectural setting or the votive or animal offerings. But above all else, it is the altars, their orientations and replications, that will consistently serve as the indispensable pivot around which movement within the sacred area is channeled. The presence of an emplaced, material altar will prove to be essential to the ritual's climactic act of animal slaughter; for without a permanent altar, there can be no socially unifying, repeated performance of communal sacrifice. Altars will be shown to be not just located *in* or *at* a particular place but to be what *actively gives place* to the experience of the sanctuary – they create place for the temple and for those engaged in its associated religious activities.⁴

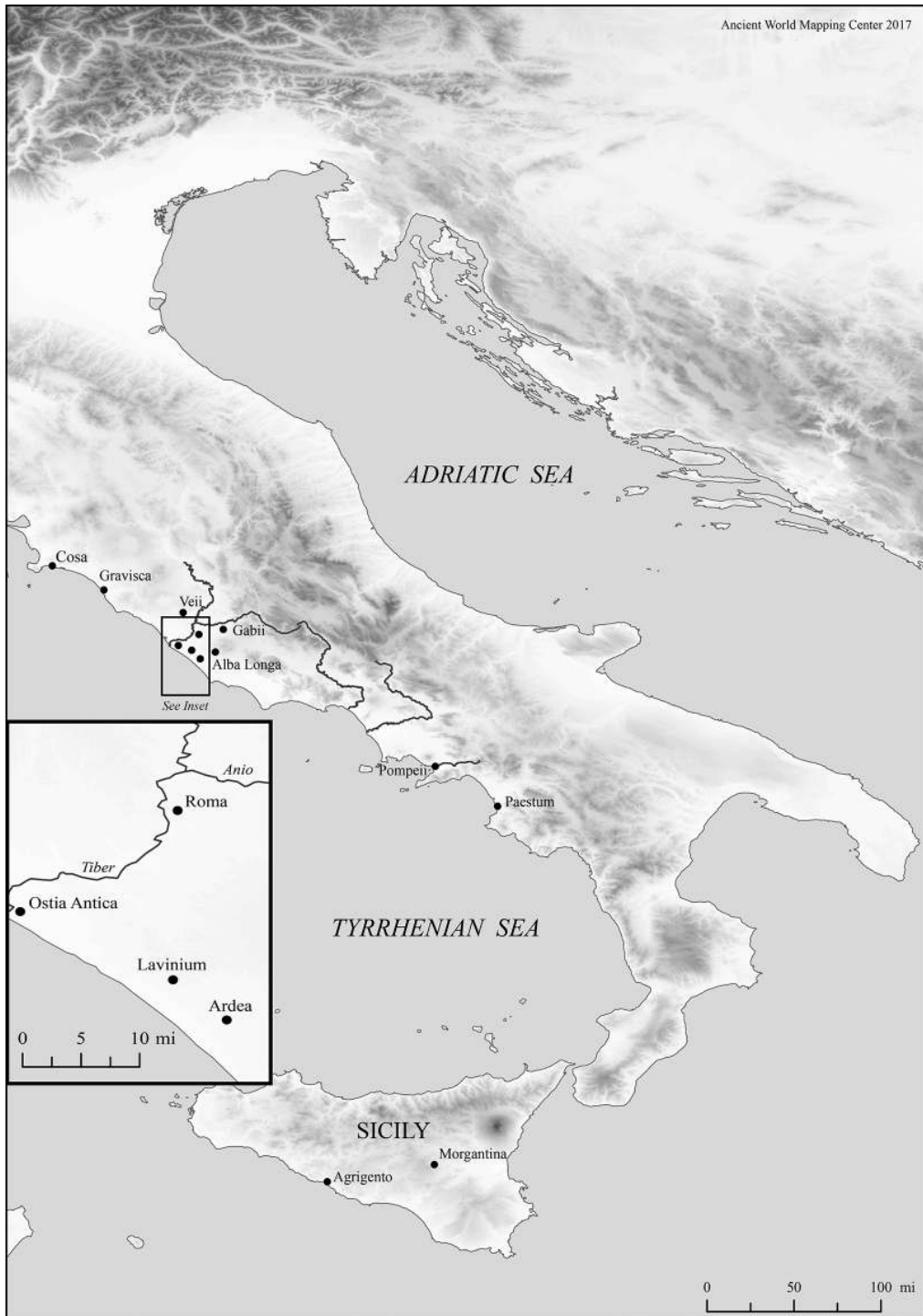
THE MATERIAL SETTINGS: FIVE LATIAL SANCTUARIES

This study focuses primarily on five sanctuaries, carefully selected for their ability to offer rich and complementary archaeological assemblages and for their overlapping range in chronological period and regional setting. Each sanctuary has multiple altars created during sequential construction phases spanning at least two centuries during the Republican period:

- S. Omobono in Rome (sixth–third century BCE)
- The Sanctuary of the Thirteen Altars at Lavinium (sixth–fourth century BCE)
- Area A at Fosso dell'Incastro at Ardea (sixth–second century BCE)
- Sacred Area of the Republican Temples at Ostia (third–first century BCE)
- Largo Argentina in Rome (third–first century BCE)

The quite limited geographic area of the five different sanctuaries listed above (two in the center of Rome, one at Rome's port, and two that are, at most, 27 km from Rome) will serve to highlight just how resolutely site-specific and distant in practice from one another these centers of sacrificial cult actually are (Map 1).

This study provides a foundation for a coordinated and comprehensive investigation of the archaeological record of sacrifice in the Roman region during the Republican period. The five contemporaneous and neighboring sites will be seen to be sufficiently similar in architecture and in ritual practice to allow for comparative and, at the same time, separate examinations of each sanctuary. Complementary ways of looking at the evidence will thus provide a



MAP 1. Map of Italy with the Location of the Five Case Studies and Other Sites Mentioned throughout the Text. Ancient World Mapping Center 2017

frame of reference for exploring the crucial question of what makes each of these sacred places so very different from the others.

This book's detailed discussions of each sanctuary will often note the ways in which particular changes in sanctuary architecture or in votive deposition might relate to changes in local social circumstances. The study's principal concern, however, will be constructing an understanding of the character of long-term patterns of sacrificial practice that remain resolutely unchanging in the face of fluctuations in the historical context of the surrounding community.

To be sure, there are a number of other sanctuaries in central Italy that have characteristics similar to those of the case study sites examined in depth in this book. The more carefully one surveys the sanctuaries and their altars in this broader region, the more clearly one discovers patterns consistent in one way or another with those of the five principal sanctuaries examined herein. Supplementary comparisons with sanctuaries throughout the region will be brought into the analysis wherever appropriate, lending support to wider inferences about Italic practice or custom.

THE MATERIALITY AND TIMELESSNESS OF SACRIFICE: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Sacrifice is site-specific. The particularities of a sanctuary's material setting contribute decisively to and characterize the enacted sacrificial ritual. A materially grounded empirical study of sacrificial practices requires a correspondingly grounded theoretical approach to the organization and interpretation of the evidence. Examining the existing data of each sanctuary from archaeological, economic, social, and cognitive perspectives, this book distances itself from conceiving Roman religion and sacrifice as manifestations of doctrines and beliefs. Instead, it adopts a view of sacrifice as religious behavior inseparably bound to the Roman experience of the physical world over time.⁵

Such a study necessarily requires a bigger "tool kit," one that supplements standard analyses of verbal and figurative records of belief with a coordinated adaptation of established theories from other fields modeling social and cultural practices. In the chapters that follow, the study of Roman sacrifice as an embodied and, most importantly, material experience will engage with theories deriving from a variety of disciplines: phenomenology and sensory studies in order to explore the procedure of animal slaughter and the experience of communal ritual (Chapters 1 and 4); philosophy of place and landscape studies to analyze sanctuary architecture and boundaries over time (Chapters 1 and 2); economic studies of use-value and consumption to examine the offering and deposition of votives (Chapter 2); studies of miniaturization to investigate the inherent, site-specific relationship between a terracotta votive and its

monumental model (Chapters 2 and 3); agricultural studies to understand a repeated cyclical, annual animal sacrifice (Chapter 3); and cognitive science studies of memory and movement to look at how the architecture of a sanctuary impacts experience and acts as a material reminder for future ritual performances (Chapters 1 and 4). When solidly anchored in archaeological evidence and situated in an overarching framework, these various conceptual approaches will prove to be quite compatible with the study of sacrifice, bringing coherence to the variety of site-specific, archaeological data of Republican-era Roman sanctuaries.

This study's organization and methodology emerge from the interweaving of questions of the materiality and temporality of sacrifice. A sanctuary's altar will be cast here as the physical, enduring, monumental focal point around which all aspects of ephemeral, iterative sacrifice are performed and experienced over time. And periodic, repeated Republican Roman sacrifice at an altar will thereby come to be understood as a means of integrating a community's sense of its materially remembered ritual *past*, its experiential *present*, and the *future* consequences of its current practices. Thus, sacrificial performances – past, present, and future – will confer on the altars and settings of a sanctuary an authority that, in turn, will respond and bear witness to the regularities of emplaced ritual practice. While an archaeological study must necessarily focus on the distant past of ritual, this book will look forward as well to the active and prospective life of these religious performances. A temporally inclusive approach allows for an ephemeral act of sacrificial ritual performed at a particular time on a particular altar to be understood as dependent on experiential memories of similar past practices: *presently* occurring repetitive actions powerfully reinforcing and supplementing *past* material experience for purposeful recollection in *future* generations.

Such a tripartite temporal perspective offers an effective frame of reference for sorting through the great diversity of different conceptual themes and theoretical models that necessarily accompany a thorough study of the material remains of ritual. The following sections of this introductory chapter offer a summary of the different views of sacrifice that will recur throughout the detailed discussions in later chapters. These various approaches are grouped below under the headings of past, present, or future with respect to their relative importance in investigating the temporal character of sacrifice. But it should be noted that each of these different modes of thinking about the material record of sacrifice will be to some extent relevant in each category, whether one is looking backwards, up close, or forwards. Such pragmatic mixing of methods and perspectives will, in the end, help construct an understanding of the timeless character of sacrifice and the ways in which ritual transgresses temporal boundaries.

The Past: Memory, Tradition, and Repetition

Themes that structure this investigation – such as memory, tradition, and repetition – emerging straightforwardly from the evidence of places and things, create a foundation for the study of the *past* in the archaeology of sacrifice. This book seizes on the intuitive notion that “all archaeology is about memory.”⁶ And the model of the memory of sacrifice associated with the five sanctuaries studied here is a working composite of a variety of models of embodied, emplaced, and materially extended memory that can be adapted to archaeological timescales. Memory of emplaced ritual movement is a principal constituent of the experience of sacred architecture: the areas of sanctuaries most devoted to ritual performance are preserved and maintained for multiple generations (Chapters 1, 3, and 4); their monuments and associated objects are rebuilt or reused (Chapter 1); and innovative reconstructions replicate the placements of their predecessors (Chapters 1, 2, and 4). The architecture of ritual performance will be understood to serve less as background and setting and to function more as a participant, actively guiding the transmission and replication of past religious practices. Above all, it is the altar that will play the pivotal role in the coalescence of centuries of ritual memory. The chapters of this book, each following its own particular path through different kinds of evidence, will demonstrate in detail how the memory of sacrificial practices is mediated by settings and by objects.

The theme of memory entails questions about the archaeology of repetitive ritual experience. These patterns of replication acquire material expression more through ritual activity than through architecture. It is the unvarying traditions of past practices that leave their traces in the archaeological record, not the ephemeral meanings of ritual that may change with passing generations. Certain practices, for example, a sacrifice held at a very particular time in the agricultural year (Chapter 3), are repeated annually regardless of whether later participants understand or even assign any meaning at all to these traditions. The importance of a repeated practice based on a well-established tradition is attested by accumulated offerings: crafted votives in extraordinary quantities, all of the same form and medium (Chapter 2), or the persistent preponderance of a single species of animal offered at one highly particular location (Chapter 3). Communities may change demographically, generations may pass, and architectural variations may proliferate, but Republican Roman sacrifice will be shown to remain steadfastly repeatable. The chapters that follow will explore the different ways that sacrifice is determined by its material traditions of practice and how previous ritual practices both mark and are marked by the stones of their altars for future generations. These ritual signposts and triggers of religious action, all of which may of course alter slightly in outward appearance over time, will nonetheless be conceived as

having an invariant authority preserved and transmitted through the fabric and orientations of altars and by means of related deposits of votive or animal offerings. Permanent altars and repeated ritual practices thus will be seen to mutually reinforce each other in a regular cycle, the durability of the altars and votives conferring a timelessness to Roman sacrifice throughout the *longue durée* of the active life of the sanctuary.

The Present: Communal Experience and Material Authority

While the past may dictate the character of sacrifice through the material memory of the sanctuary, it is within each generation's experiential present that the memory of past practices actively resonates.⁷ Questions of the ways in which experience, object agency, and individual and community behavior are determined in Roman ritual are best investigated by attempting to locate the source of authority in the *present*. In the study of Roman religion, there is often concern for finding a discourse of authority, attributing decisions to some individual or collection of individuals. In this book, I argue instead for a more inclusive *landscape* of authority, one in which the physical context of religious activities establishes patterns in the present for reenacting sacrifice in the future.

By viewing religious activities as structured experiences in the physical world, this book necessarily engages not only with the authority of the physical environment but with its correlate – the concept of material agency.⁸ In the case studies examined, the primary, active role in ritual will be assigned to the buildings, objects, and places – principally the altars – that comprise the *permanent* physical context of the *ephemeral* actions of the communal sacrifice. Monuments and votives together, whether on manifest display (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) or even deliberately buried (Chapters 1, 3, and 4), direct the experience of the sanctuary community. While materials will be viewed as determinates of human behavior, this attribution of authority in no way entails conscious intent on either side of the relationship. Objects and places are not endowed with animate consciousness, nor are the humans who respond to the operation of such mediation necessarily aware of its source. But nevertheless, the altars examined in this book will be shown unquestionably to possess an authority and agency sufficient to generate highly specific, intentional actions in those humans with whom the monuments come into physical contact.⁹

Each chapter examines a complementary aspect of this study's overarching view of Roman sacrifice as a strikingly memorable experience, a communal behavior bound in fundamental ways to the physical world and most especially so to the altar. For example, in Chapter 2, a combination of stylistic, economic, and geographic considerations will show that the individual votive practice of offering miniature altars is intimately connected to local communal sacrifice. In Chapter 3, altar placements and animal remains will be used to argue that the

seasonal timing of communal animal sacrifice was governed by the agricultural calendar and by the annual movements of the stars. Even in a sanctuary in which no archaeological evidence of specific ritual practice remains, the architecture itself will reveal the character of the sacrificial performance (Chapter 1). The sanctuary's spatial communications and its ritual and natural infrastructure will disclose much about processions and procedures (Chapters 1 and 3); the arrangements and orientations of altars will tell us in great detail just how a ritual participant would interact with and experience the sanctuary and its rituals (Chapters 1, 3, and 4).

The Future: Burial and Deposition

The participation of the enduring altar and its associated objects in a present reiteration of sacrificial performance has, as well, a forward-looking, preservationist character with respect to future ritual practices. Different chapters will explore local variations in deliberate altar burial and votive deposition as a means of maintaining the sacrality of a place for future generations. The evidence will show that in the successive building campaigns of the sanctuaries examined, votive objects and monuments of earlier phases are neither destroyed nor removed but rather carefully conserved, buried, and built upon (figuratively and literally) (Chapters 1 and 4). The new constructions thus become the purpose-built reminders of no-longer-visible, sacred monuments, the material past and the ongoing present together enacting the future of sacrifice.

To some extent, of course, offerings or monuments may be deposited or buried simply because they are no longer needed in the present (Chapter 2). But the archaeological record will clearly show that such buried structures or objects were not easily forgotten and, arguably, acquired greater agency with the passing generations. Even when buried, the votive, bone, architectonic decoration, or altar may preserve its original sacred authority and determine the type, location, or orientation of future offerings and monuments in the sanctuary. For example, animal bones and crafted votive offerings deposited directly in front of or around an altar may have been buried in exchange for some future favor from the deity. But beyond that one-time function, these offerings will be seen as prescribing patterns of action or material criteria for future dedications in the same location (Chapters 2 and 3).

Similar to handheld votives or faunal remains, architectonic decorations from earlier temples, when buried within the sanctuary, will be shown to take on defining roles, serving as new boundary markers to the sanctuary as a whole or as variant demarcations of the temple area proper (Chapter 1). Investigation of the periodic sequences of construction phases of Republican sanctuaries will show sacred monuments, and altars in particular, to be situated directly above

earlier, buried altars, at times even incorporating the previous altar's building material into the new construction (Chapters 1, 2, and 4). This layered, vertical succession of altars is a means by which the present and future communities interact with the past and its practices. The prevalence of such burial and depositional processes suggests that sacred offerings, architectural ornaments, and monuments involved in religious practices at a particular sanctuary cannot be discarded or removed from that sacred place; instead, they are buried, at once hidden but nonetheless persistent in their roles as active determinants of future ritual practices and sacred architecture.

Viewing the archaeological evidence through the lenses of the past, present, and future of ritual establishes a framework for understanding sacrificial practices occurring at altars as timeless and enduring behaviors. The ritual past is re-experienced in the present by an extended community of individuals, monuments, objects, and gods, concertedly responding in the here and now to the material memory of past practices, and continually maintaining the ways of the past for future generations. This book reorients the study of Roman religion, establishing a view of iterative religious practices at particular altars as manifestations of a temporal complex of individual and collective behaviors. These actions are inextricably involved with sensory, embodied, and emplaced experiences in the physical world. As such, the following chapters contribute a new way of approaching the archaeology of ritual, a new perspective gained from resituating an established set of theories rarely (if ever) considered in the study of the materiality and physical context of ancient ritual.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTERS

This materially grounded approach to the past, present, and future of sacrifice presents a different face in each of the following chapters. The arrangement and topical emphases of each chapter reflect the type of evidence analyzed, the setting investigated, and the theoretical framework appropriate to the character of the data or to the types of questions asked. The collective archaeological record of sacrifice for the sites under study could have been arranged in any number of ways – chronologically, geographically (rural vs. urban), or categorically (by sanctuary type). But the nested, thematic organization of this book is intentional. Each chapter builds on earlier chapters; each chapter presents a distinct view of a different category of evidence, amplifying the cumulative organizational coherence of the data previously introduced; and each chapter offers a site-specific thematic and theoretical approach to understanding and reading the archaeological record of sacrifice that expands on the arguments of previous chapters.

The outstanding characteristics of each of the sanctuaries examined provide the organizational framework for the book and offer a thematically resonant