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978-0-521-80944-3 - The Roman Amphitheatre: From its Origins to the Colosseum

Katherine E. Welch

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THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE

This is the first book to analyze the evolution of the Roman amphitheatre as an architectural form. Katherine Welch addresses the critical period in the history of this building type: its origins and dissemination under the Republic, from the third to first centuries BC; its monumentalization as an architectural form under Augustus; and its canonization as a building type with the Colosseum (AD 80). She explores the social and political contexts of each of these phases in detail. The study then shifts focus to the reception of the amphitheatre and its games in the Greek East, a part of the Empire that was, initially, fractured about the new realities of Roman rule.

Katherine E. Welch is Associate Professor of Fine Arts at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She is a scholar of Roman art and archaeology and has held fellowships at the American Academy in Rome and the American School of Classical Studies in Athens.

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Frontispiece: Partially restored cast of a marble funerary relief in the Torlonia collection with scene of a *venatio*.

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Institute of Fine Arts, New York University



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This book is dedicated to Brian Welch, MD, who inspired my interest in ancient Greece and Rome.



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ABBREVIATIONS

AE = *L'Année Epigraphique*.

Atti = *Atti del Convegno di studi sulla Magna Grecia*

BdA = *Bollettino di Archeologia*

Beloch, *Campanien* = J. Beloch, *Campanien, Geschichte und Topographie des antiken Neapel und seiner Umgebung* (Leipzig, 1880 [repr. Rome, 1964]).

CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*.

Coarelli 1985 = F. Coarelli, *Il Foro romano nel età repubblicana e augustea* (Rome, 1985).

D.A.I. = *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*.

DS = Ch. Daremberg & E. Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, eds. (Paris, 1873–1919).

De Caro & Greco 1981 = S. De Caro & A. Greco, *Guide archeologica Laterza 10: Campania* (Rome/Bari, 1981).

EAA = *Enciclopedia dell' arte antica* (Rome, 1958–).

Frederiksen, *Campania* = M. Frederiksen, *Campania* (London, 1984).

Friedländer = L. Friedländer, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von Augustus bis zum Ausgang der Antonine*, 6th ed., 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1919).

Futrell 1997 = A. Futrell, *Blood in the Arena. The Spectacle of Roman Power* (Austin, 1997).

Golvin 1988 = J.-C. Golvin, *L'Amphithéâtre romain: Essai sur la théorisation de sa forme et de ses fonctions* (Paris, 1988).

Golvin & Landes 1990 = J.-C. Golvin & C. Landes, *Amphithéâtres et gladiateurs* (Paris, 1990).

Hopkins 1983 = K. Hopkins, "Murderous games" in idem, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge, 1983) 1–30.

IG = *Inscriptiones Graecae*.

ILLRP = *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae* (ed. A. DeGrassi).

ILS = *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (ed. H. Dessau).

Keppie 1983 = L. Keppie, *Colonisation and Veteran Settlement in Italy 47–14 B.C.* (London, 1983).

LTUR = E. M. Steinby, ed., *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* Vols. I–VI (Rome, 1992–2000).

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MRR = T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic I–II* (New York, 1951–2).

PIR = *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*.

Platner-Ashby = S. B. Platner & T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (London, 1929).

Richardson 1992 = L. Richardson jr., *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore and London, 1992).

RE = *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.

Rend. Acc. Nap. = *Rendiconti dell' Accademia di Archeologia, Lettere, e Belle Arti di Napoli*.

Robert 1940 = L. Robert, *Les gladiateurs dans orient grec* (Paris, 1940).

Salmon 1982 = E. T. Salmon, *The Making of Roman Italy* (London, 1982).

TLL = *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*.

Ville 1981 = G. Ville, *La gladiature en occident des origines à la mort de Domitien* (Rome, 1981).

Wiedemann 1992 = T. Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators* (London and New York, 1992).



PREFACE

I would like to call readers' attention to the republican amphitheatre at Nola (recently excavated and as yet unpublished), which I had the opportunity to study firsthand in summer 2004. The excavators, Dott. Giuseppe Vecchio and Dott. ssa Valeria Sampaolo, were kind enough to give me permission to visit and photograph the building (as yet closed to the public). Dott. Vecchio provided me with an updated plan and some slides taken during the dig, and discussed the excavation with me in detail. Unusually for republican amphitheatres, the building is quite well preserved and has important implications for some of the arguments in this book. For example, it is strikingly similar in architectural respects to the amphitheatre at Pompeii (both cities were Sullan colonies). Because this information on Nola became available to me only after this book had been submitted for final proofs, I could not integrate much discussion of it into the main text. I would therefore recommend that interested readers consult Cat. 13 on Nola along with their reading of Chapter Three, which concerns the earliest amphitheatres constructed in stone.

Please also note that the sequential arrangement of republican amphitheatres discussed here in the Appendix basically follows that of Golvin 1988, with some additional buildings included. Although Golvin attempted to put the amphitheatres into some kind of chronological order, be aware that the sequential arrangement in this book should not necessarily be taken to reflect the true chronology of the buildings, since they are in many cases difficult to date with any great precision. I have given my opinion on the dates in each catalogue entry.

Note also that not all of the bibliographical citations in the Appendix appear in the main bibliography.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the term "arena" can refer to the amphitheatre as a cultural institution, but in architectural terms it denotes

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the performance floor of an amphitheatre, bounded by a podium separating the audience from the combatants. Moreover, in my discussion of republican amphitheatres it is the dimensions of the arena that are critical, less so those of the *cavea* (auditorium, with its seating), which could vary considerably in size.

August, 2006.