Hellenistic Monumental Sanctuaries in Late Republican Latium: The Advantages of a Semantic Approach

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Abstract

This article explores the advantages that a semantic system could provide to the group of Hellenistic monumental sanctuaries in Latium. Initially conceived as expressions of local reactions against Rome or as local adoptions of Roman socio-cultural practices, a semantic model allows us to see (architectural) style as a communication tool in different contexts. In this setting, there is a shift from Hellenisation, as an acculturation pheomenon, to Hellenism, as a phenomenon of social expression. Thus, a semantic model also sheds light on modes of self-perception and how style was perceived by various audiences. In particular, Hellenistic sanctuaries should be examined from local, regional and pan-Mediterranean prespectives. The emphasis on contextual applications of the semantic model should also make us take into consideration diachronicity. Given that the phenomenon spanned two centuries (the second and first centuries BC), style and, its meaning and function(s) in society would have changed due to more intense building activity and the increased presence of Hellenistic architecture in Central Italy. This consideration further allows us to move away from a static acculturation approach and acquire a better understanding of cultural contact and ethnogenesis in both the ancient and contemporary worlds.

Keywords

Introduction

In 1987, Coarelli's *I Santuari del Lazio in Età Repubblicana* examined the sanctuaries of Fregellae, Gabii, Praeneste, Tibur, Tarracina, Lanuvium and Nemi, treating them as a cohesive group. Their grandiose dimensions, the use of colonnades and the elevated positions were seen as elements in common and, very recently, have been credited to belong to a Mediterranean stylistic *koine*.[1] In this context, scholars began to enquire about the reasons behind the construction of these monumental sanctuaries.[2] What would drive commissioners to spend large quantities of funds and resources? Clearly, through the sanctuaries' visibility and monumentality, the commissioners, whoever they might have been, were trying to say something about themselves. As I will show in this article, scholarship has often tried to explain their self-portrayal through acculturation theory. Here, instead, I propose an alternative method, more specifically a semantic analysis, as a tool to reconsider the use and function of architectural style. By doing so, I will also ascertain what the benefits of this approach are: namely, the contextualisation of style and the multiplicity of identities at different social levels.

What is identity and what does material culture do for it?

The starting point for the understanding of Hellenistic monumental architecture in a semantic system is to define what we mean by "identity" and how it relates to material culture. First of all, there is no single identity. Rather, as Meskell suggested, identity depends on various factors, like ethno-cultural belonging, sexuality, gender, class and social status.[3] Identities, as we should call them, do not exist as static, monolithic entities since they result from a constant and ever-changing confrontation with the "Other."[4] This is especially the case with collective identities. In order for a group to formulate a specific *corpus* of elements, with which they then identify, it has to agree on the *corpus*' constitutive parts and their functions within the group itself. Material culture plays a vital role in the creation of this symbolism, shared by the members of the group, determining a process of cultural formation or ethnogenesis.[5] In addition to this, given that modes of self-perception acquire significance in collectivism, the study of how material culture impacts on identity should also examine the participation of these individuals into various social circles. In the case of Hellenistic monumental sanctuaries in late Republican Latium, therefore, we cannot only concentrate on the group of local civic life. Rather,

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1   For the concept of a Mediterranean *koine*, see Versluys (2014).

2   Among the scholars who have tackled the topic, we should include Coarelli (in particular, see his publications in 1986 and 1987), Lippolis (see his contribution in 1986) and, more recently, Rous (see his doctoral thesis in 2010).

3   Meskell (2007: p. 23).

4   Versluys (2013: p. 431).

5   See Derks & Roymans (2009).

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we must also take into account the relationship between and among local, regional and, finally, pan-Mediterranean realities.

Challenging static conceptions: style and ethno-cultural identity

One of the main reasons for which monumental sanctuaries in Latium should be reconsidered deals with how they and, broadly speaking, material culture have been studied since the nineteenth century. As with historical disciplines, even archaeological research has been approached along the lines of "methodological nationalism." At the core of such an approach lies the nation, which, in the nineteenth century, incorporated elements of colonialism, imperialism and cultural superiority.[6] In the study of ancient societies according to "methodological nationalism," specific forms of material culture and style were attributed to specific ethno-cultural groups, allowing archaeologists to create a map of various cultures associated to specific manifestations of styles. This depiction of the ancient Mediterranean resulted in a mosaic of well-defined, static cultures, each with its own geographical sphere or provenance and influence. In addition to this, post-processualism has attached an ideological component to style,[7] which began to be perceived as a tool for expressing certain messages.

According to "methodological nationalism," what happens when cultures interact and exchange material culture? The presence of "foreign" elements in a given societal context has been seen as an indicator of either approval or rejection. Past scholarship on monumental sanctuaries in Latium has not escaped this fate. Thus, on one side, monumental sanctuaries have been seen to celebrate Rome's expansionistic ventures; on the other side, through the civic involvement of the magistrates, the buildings represented localised self-reassertions of the communities in opposition to the *Urbs*. The first view assumes that local groups adopted certain stylistic features, symbols of *Romanitas*, according to the model of self-romanisation (*autoromanizzazione*).[8] This is particularly visible in the recent treatment by Rous, whose 2010 doctoral thesis envisaged the aforementioned Latin sanctuaries as part of a socio-cultural system with Rome at its centre. By building monumental sanctuaries in a Hellenistic fashion, the local magistrates were trying to assert their own socio-political worth in the eyes of the *Urbs*, further aiming at entering its political scene. In this context, the fact that these local settlements were emulating Roman architectural practices was interpreted as a way to indicate an ideological approval, with its consequent benefits, of Rome's socio-cultural practices.[9] As for the second approach, the concept of *Gegenarchitektur* offers an insight into the employment of monumental sanctuaries as symbols of resistance. Although the term has been employed

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6   Versluys (2013: p. 432).

7   Versluys (2013: p. 433).

8   Woolf (1998: p. 247).

9   See Rous (2010). Among the benefits Latins could have aspired to by building these sanctuaries was participation in Roman politics and acquisition of Roman political positions.

mainly for the sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia in Praeneste,[10] it can also be applied to the other sanctuaries. At a basic level, the term indicates that certain architectural features express a form of resistance and opposition. For instance, the *substructiones*, the elevated platforms on which these sanctuaries were built, allowed a tighter control over the neighbouring territory against the *Urbs*' political control.[11]

The main opposition to "methodological nationalism" and its interpretation of style and identity relates to its examination of static ethnicity, rather than ethnogenesis. A new paradigm, at least in Anglo-American archaeology, was established with processual or new archaeology, whereby cultures were conceptualised as part of a system, focusing on the explanation of social processes and cultural formations.[12] Culture constitutes an integrated system, made up of different functioning sub-systems, and, as a corollary, archaeological remains must be regarded as the product of a variety of past processes, rather than a reflection of ideational norms.[13] This shift involves a reconceptualisation of identity in relation to social organisation, often related to economic and political relationships, and in particular inter-group competition.[14]

Style and identity: toward a semantic system of interpretation

This change in the conception of culture has also affected views on style. Past scholarship saw each Roman epoch as characterised by a specific style, either Classical or "Hellenistic" Baroque, confined to the period and adopted from the Greek past.[15] On closer look, there is a plethora of examples where this static stylistic and, by implication, cultural model does not apply. Not only is there a great variety in art, but every period in Roman history bore witness to the employment of multiple styles.[16] Such diversity could be expressed even on the same monument. If we take the altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus as an example, we notice two stylistically diverse friezes: a marine *thiasos* in Hellenistic style and a *census* in a so-called "veristic" fashion.[17] The concomitance of two, divergent, styles cannot be interpreted in light of ethnic or cultural identification. From this point of view, any monument, containing both Hellenistic and Roman styles, would inevitably indicate an ethnic or cultural contradiction. Rather than reflecting a static ethno-cultural adoption, the style of artistic representations depended on content. According to Hölscher, in fact, when a commission was to be awarded to an artist or an

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10   See Ley & Struss (1982).

11   Ley & Struss (1982: p. 122).

12   Jones (1997: p. 26).

13   Cfr. Binford (1962), Clarke (1978).

14   Jones (1997: p. 28).

15   Zanker (1973: pp. 44–46), Hölscher (2004: p. 10).

16   Hölscher (2004: p. 11).

17   Versluys (2013: p. 433).

architect, the content of the work provided the decisive factor, with the form only an issue of secondary consideration.[18]

Yet, how do we explain the relationship between style and identity in these instances? It would be useful to approach style along a semantic system. Such a semantic approach finds a parallel in language, where words and syntax originate in the past, without the everyday user being actively aware of the linguistic origin. To give an example, the word "religion" has a meaning which does not take into consideration the meaning of *religio* among the Romans.[19] At the same time, it is important to understand that, while the contemporary meaning cannot be employed to build a bridge to earlier periods in an explicit and intentional way, it implicitly includes its genesis in the past. Thus, at a semantic level, our "religion" has been indirectly shaped by *religio*. In a similar way, style represents the core element of a building, which, as previously said, embodies a message. What transpires from a semantic model in stylistic analysis is that, although specific elements could be inspired by foreign sources, they would not directly copy the original meaning. More specifically, the messages they were conveying could be understood independently from the inspirational sources.[20] In this sense, the formal resources of visual art and architecture did not represent a return to the past, but rather a more vivid expression of contemporary concepts and values.[21] For instance, within statuary, the style of Pheidias would have been used to express the link between "divinity" and "majesty," rather than a return to fifth-century Athens.[22] If we shift the attention to a more monumental structure, like the Ara Pacis, we would be able to grasp the underlying mechanics of the semantic process. The great frieze with the imposing state ceremony was based on the Parthenon frieze: given its inherent quality of solemnity, the whole composition in the Ara Pacis communicated ideas of *dignitas* and *auctoritas*.[23] Yet, if we examine the single figures, we would note that they belong to different traditions: thus, while the *togati* could be approximated to Classical Greek models, the women of the Imperial family are depicted in a more Hellenistic style. As Hölscher argued,[24] convincing models for these women could have not been found in Classical art. Similarly, the *flamines* could have only been portrayed following reality, given the lack of an appropriate model elsewhere. Hence, specific themes were subject-based and did not highlight any continuity with previous ethno-cultural uses of that same style. In the case of Hellenistic monumental sanctuaries in Latium, the commissioners were not trying to advocate for a return to Hellenistic times. Nevertheless, their choice of style cannot be fully separated from the use of Hellenistic architectural style in its original setting.

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18   Hölscher (2004: p. 20).

19   Hölscher (2006: p. 245).

20   Hölscher (2006: p. 243).

21   Hölscher (2006: p. 244).

22   Hölscher (2004: p. 97).

23   Hölscher (2004: p. 77).

24   Hölscher (2004: p. 77).

Hellenistic sanctuaries in Latium: Hellenisation and Hellenism

Within the context of self-portrayal and identity, the adoption of Greek forms of material culture have undergone severe criticism, finally moving away from an acculturation approach. The so-called process of Hellenisation, initially imbued with ethnic and cultural overtones, has recently been seen as a phenomenon of social reassertion, spanning the entire Eurasian landscape.[25] First of all, an ethnicity-style equivalence is not supported by the material since what we call Greek has several manifestations, such as Attic, Corinthian or Thessalian. And, already in pre-Hellenistic times, the adoption of "Greek" items did not represent an ethno-cultural imposition/adoption, but a way to reassert and construct identity in light of threats, as in the case of the Athenians, who, facing the Persian menace, resorted to a heightened sense of Greekness in order to establish a tighter social structure.[26] Hence, Hellenisation, broadly speaking, necessitates neither migratory movements not a phenomenon of colonisation.

Scholars have distinguished between two types of Hellenisation. As Veyne shows, the first indicates the adoption of objects without any association with ethnic and cultural ideas.[27] The second model becomes more apparent in Hellenistic times, when Hellenisation is approximated to a notion of civilisation. Hence, a value judgement is attached to the adoption of "Greek" material culture, according to a model whereby "se civiliser voulait dire s'helléniser."[28] It is this last conception that has led to the use of Hellenism, instead of Hellenisation, as a way to indicate the conscious adoption of Greek forms in order to indicate an elevated social significance and worth.[29] As a few examples, we could remember: the use of "Greekness" in the Hellenistic world as a tool to overcome the dislocation of a culturally Greek elite; the Roman employment as a way to express vicinity to or distance from the multifaceted cultural concept of Greece; a late-antique definition of new paganism.[30]

Employing a semantic system: universalisation and the meaning behind Hellenistic monumental architecture

As we saw above, the meaning behind style is not of an ethno-cultural nature. Instead, it is situational, changing from one setting to another. In the analysis of material culture, a semantic approach highlights a "biography" for objects. In the Mediterranean, this model acquires significance once we see how style is employed from a universal to a particular level. With "universalisation" we intend that process whereby elements and

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25   Versluys (2017: p. 209).

26   Hall (2002).

27   Veyne (1979: pp. 6–9).

28   Veyne (1979: p. 10).

29   Versluys (2017: p. 211).

30   See Versluys (2017: p. 212) and footnotes.

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styles specific to a culture are detached from that culture and play a role in a larger system (*koine*); "particularisation," instead, sees the elements from the *koine* applied and adapted to the local reality.[31] Thus, in order to understand the aforementioned monumental sanctuaries, we must first ask ourselves how the shift from universal to particular occurred and along which dynamics.

A Hellenistic universal *koine* was the result of a series of ideological reforms, enacted by the Hellenistic kings. Already under Alexander the Great, a universalistic ideology was adopted, promoting an easier transition from one regime to another.[32] This can be evinced from the use of specific titles, such as King of Asia, which reflects the universalised epithet King of Kings.[33] With his successors, the interest in legitimating their rule over such an extended empire became even more visible. Antiochus I Soter, for instance, is referred to as "King of Kings" in a cuneiform inscription.[34] Moreover, it is not surprising that the term *basileus* became associated to imperial rule under the Ptolemaic, Seleucid and Antigonid kings.[35] The idea of universal rule became also an influential element in court culture, as evinced from poetic works. In Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos*, Ptolemy is depicted as the ruler over the whole land.[36] Similarly, in praising Ptolemy Philadelphus, Theocritus lists a series of lands and ethnicities over which his reign would extend.[37] Of course, such ideology did not only remain visible in the high echelons of the court. It also reached a public status since it was needed to cement that universalistic monarchy in the minds of the subjects. At a practical level, the universalistic ideology of the Hellenistic monarchy could not just exist on its own accord. Rather, in order to be implemented and acquire a degree of political significance, it needed to become an overarching force, capable of holding together a multiethnic and multicultural empire.[38]

In creating a universal significance for Hellenistic monumental architecture, the Hellenistic kings performed two actions: firstly, they associated their names with "international" sanctuaries and, secondly, they employed monumentalisation as a tool to control the worshippers' experience. As for the first point, royal patrons left an imprint on sanctuaries in the eastern Mediterranean, advertising their donations with inscriptions.[39] A case in point is that of Delos, where, throughout the third century BC, the investment of the Hellenistic monarchs, especially the Macedonians and the Ptolemies, was the most conspicuous form of monumentalisation in the sanctuary.[40] Yet, the presence of the

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31   Versluys (2014: p. 155).

32   Strootman (2014: p. 44).

33   Arr. *Anab.* 2.14.8–9.

34   *ANET* (1950: p. 317).

35   Strootman (2014: p. 46).

36   Callim. *Hymn* 4.169–170.

37   Theoc. *Id.* 17.77–92.

38   Strootman (2014: p. 54).

39   Wescoat (2016: p. 678).

40   Constantakopoulou (2017: p. 86). Let us not forget that Delos was not the only case of monarchic investment. The sanctuary of the Great Gods in Samothrace represents another example of royal involvement. For this last one, see Wescoat (2016: pp. 686–688).

monarchs could be felt across the Aegean. Apart from the well-known example of the Koan Asklepieion, monarchic intervention is also visible at the sanctuary of the Great Gods in Samothrace. Already in the fourth century BC, such a religious location was chosen by Philip II as a stage on which to practice euergetism.[41] This gave way to a much more intense phenomenon of patronage in the third century BC, which saw the sanctuary be altered by a series of kings, among whom Ptolemy II, Philip III and Alexander IV.[42] At Pergamon, too, the name of royalty became connected to monumental religious architecture. The Hellenistic design of the suburban sanctuary of Demeter at Pergamon was realized under the direction of Apollonis, wife of Attalos I, in the third century BC, on a pre-existing implant by Philetairos and Eumenes.[43]

One of the main innovations that allowed the royal presence to be effective and imposing relates to the use of monumentality. While Archaic and Classical sanctuaries focused on singular elements, like the temple, in their Hellenistic counterparts the architects could control space and reach a level of scale and grandeur that pleased the royal patrons.[44] At a broader level, the manipulation of space was carried out throughout the eastern Hellenistic Mediterranean according to specific characteristics: the exploitation of the natural landscape in order to achieve monumentally visible effects; a predilection for orthogonality and axiality; an emphasis on creating views and vistas.[45] At a more specific level, these features were implemented through the use of certain architectural elements. For instance, at the sanctuary of Athena Lindia on Rhodes, the Propylaia created a monumental entranceway for the temple, which "physically and visually channeled the visitor's approach."[46] Similarly the Lower Stoa directed the visitors' route toward the central focus, namely the temple.[47] A similar framed environment is present at the Asklepieion on Kos, once again with the purpose of controlling the pilgrims' experiences.[48] A final example for the control of sacred architecture is the aforementioned sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace. If we take the Propylon of Ptolemy II as an example, we would realise just how pervasive monarchic control had become. The employment of Corinthian style on only one of the facades, namely the internal one, has been seen as a way for the monument to indicate the passage from the religious sphere of the sanctuary to that outside the sanctuary.[49] Ptolemy's name on the monument would further heighten that differentiation between the two worlds.

In conclusion, the Hellenistic monumental sanctuaries in Latium do not exist as a vacuum but need to be examined against a pre-existing *koine*, determined by the actions

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41   Wescoat (2016: p. 688).

42   Wescoat (2016: p. 688).

43   Wescoat (2016: p. 691).

44   Wescoat (2016: p. 679).

45   Wescoat (2016: p. 679).

46   Wescoat (2016: p. 681).

47   Wescoat (2016: p. 682).

48   Wescoat (2016: p. 684).

49   Wescoat (2016: p. 688).

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of the Hellenistic kings, who materialised political language into architectural solutions commonly-shared throughout the (eastern) Mediterranean.

Particularisation: a semantic shift and the value of aesthetics

When we investigate the meaning behind Hellenistic monumental architecture, how likely is it that the commissioners had become acquainted with the aforementioned universalistic meaning and applied it to their local reality? Can we say that the political overtone of Hellenistic architecture in the eastern Mediterranean drove them to adopt eastern architectural solutions in their own hometown? After all, it is true that, in some instances, Latins were deeply involved in the eastern *poleis*, thus justifying an intimate knowledge of socio-cultural practices. As Caliò shows, focusing on the case of Praeneste, some local aristocratic families were also present in the eastern Mediterranean as merchants.[50] While some Latins, through their mercantile or military ventures in the East, might have been familiar with the universalised political meaning of monumental religious architecture, seeing the original meaning as the driving force behind the adoption of Hellenistic forms points toward an ethno-cultural approach, wherein (architectural) style is characterised by a fixed, unchanging meaning, related to socio-cultural practices of a specific civilisation. In a particularised context, this meaning would have not been perceived at all by those who had never had any dealing with Hellenistic architecture. In fact, can we say that an everyday farmer, who had never been to the eastern Mediterranean, could naturally and organically understand the political meaning behind the sanctuary's Hellenistic forms, as set by the Hellenistic monarchs? Such an approach sounds far-fetched. Thus, in order to make sense of the sanctuaries' significance at a local level and what it tells us about the commissioners, we should approach the issue from a different perspective, which, along a semantic model, sees style as a situational communication tool.

What transpires from the previous paragraph is that, in approaching the issue of particularised meaning, we have to let go of these ethno-cultural constructions and take into consideration style in relation to the particularised society. In this setting, we should examine the relationship between humans and objects, more specifically between the various Latin communities and Hellenistic monumental architecture. In order to do so, the notion of aesthetics comes to our aid. Initially intended as an indicator of prerational and intuitive judgement, aesthetics has also acquired a much broader dimension, "becoming in effect the collective imagination, worldview, style or sense of form of cultures, peoples and historical periods."[51] In this context, as Versluys points out,[52] this definition displays a twofold significance for the understanding of object agency: firstly, aesthetics deals with impact, rather than meaning; secondly, aesthetics emphasises both

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50   Caliò (2003: p. 65).

51   Summers (2010: p. 11).

52   Versluys (forthcoming: p. 11).

the short-term conscious human-object relationship as much as the long-term subconscious human-object encounters. Thus, an aesthetic approach indicates a shift away from a theoretical view of art, artworks and, more generally, things toward a more practical understanding, wherein what is at core is the effect of objects on people/viewers and the reasons behind people's response.

Particularisation: affordances and diachronicity

In order to understand the complexities behind the monumental sanctuaries in Latium, we should take into consideration the function of aesthetics, with its affordances, at multiple levels (local, regional and pan-Mediterranean), further taking into account a diachronic perspective.

Given that a static ethno-cultural meaning, originating from the East, has its limitation, let us turn our attention toward an affordance which shapes the relationship between human viewers and (architectural) style: the fascination of the exotic. In his analysis of the "Other," the French polymath Segalen has also described and analysed the effects of exotic items on society: more specifically, exoticism creates a "phenomenological rupture, a confrontation resulting in the inability to comprehend."[53] Thus, we can understand that exoticism is not about cultural contact and transmission, as much as sensorial and affective experiences, determined through the contact with the foreign. The tension that these experiences bring about is related to innovativeness, novelty and an increased awareness of opportunities. In local realities, exoticism creates, as just said, a rupture between the local and the non-local. Through such a rupture, not only is the local made aware of the (exotic) non-local, but it also recognises that accessibility to the non-local indicates the access to an unfamiliar reality and, by implication, the exciting and unfamiliar opportunities that it offers. Shifting the attention toward the abovementioned Latin sanctuaries, exoticism would have played an important role in determining their construction at a local and regional level, especially in the case of the earliest examples (Fregellae and Gabii). From a social point of view, the constructions of such models would have inevitably bestowed an invaluable social position on the commissioner/s. Since the sanctuaries' architecture was perceived as exotic, the commissioners behind them would have been seen as potential keys into the exotic and the opportunities that the exotic granted. Of course, this aspect would have not had only a local significance. The effect of exoticism, in fact, would have also been perceived at a regional level. That some Latin communities could afford to build monumental religious structures in a foreign, alluring, indeed exotic way, would have definitely not gone unnoticed by those communities which, for whatever reasons, could not afford to do the same. At a regional level, displaying the signs of architectural exoticism would have acted, once again, as an indicator of social status. More specifically, the status under question here was not only that of the commissioner/s, but also that of the entire communities. As Wallace-Hadrill

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53   See Versluys (forthcoming).

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notes,[54] these monumental buildings acted also as symbols of local pride. Hence, such pride would have also determined a form of hierarchy between and among settlements, wherein those who could display exotic and grandiose constructions indirectly acquired more prestige and, thus, ranked more highly than others. In this context, it is particularly fascinating to note that Rome, the superpower, was experimenting with Hellenistic artistic and architectural forms alongside other settlements, like Fregellae and Gabii, which, of course, did not enjoy the status of superpower. Hence, rather than indicating Romanisation, Hellenistic monumental sanctuaries reflected localised manifestations of the same phenomenon.

At the same time, let us not forget that the phenomenon of monumentalisation in Latium spans two centuries. Thus, what might have been exotic in the second century BC would have lost that sense of novelty by the time the later sanctuaries were built. In this context, we see, once again, the semantic system at work. Affordances and diachronicity are inevitably related. In order to understand the various monumentalisations, we should bestow the attention upon the specific local social, cultural and historical landscapes. While Fregellae and Gabii, the earliest examples, would have appeared as novel and exotic, the later ones were inserted in a system wherein Hellenistic architecture, while grandiose and awe-inspiring, had become normalised. Hence, by the later second century BC, the case of Praeneste must have resulted from this normalisation of the exotic, driving local commissioners to employ extravagant features in order to renew that sense of novelty.[55] In other cases, affordances could be determined by the increased presence and use of Hellenistic architecture in wider Latium. By the beginning of the first century BC, Hellenistic solutions had acquired a stronger prominence not only within the *Urbs*, but also in other Latin settlements. In this sense, the affordances behind monumental sanctuaries would have been related to fitting into this Latium-wide group where Hellenistic forms had become a symbolic indicator of innovativeness and, springing from that, wealth and prestige.

Although the sanctuaries' construction had a localised significance, as seen above, we must also take into consideration the commissioner(s)' self-portrayal from a broader perspective: namely, they were trying to show that they mattered at a pan-Mediterranean level and that they could belong to the Mediterranean Hellenistic *oikoumene*. The construction of the sanctuaries in a Hellenistic light should be taken as evidence for the various commissioners to appear as Hellenistic as possible. Once we understand, as previously mentioned, that the Latins had a role within the *poleis* of the eastern Mediterranean, we can also become aware that there was an interest in displaying a connection with those communities. In detailing the concept of "Peer Polity Interaction," whereby the Hellenistic age bore witness to an intense interconnectivity among eastern *poleis*, Ma recognises Rome's presence within this landscape.[56] Yet, he does not postulate the presence of smaller settlements or colonies. At the basic core of "Peer Polity Interaction" lies the

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54   Wallace-Hadrill (2008: p. 115).

55   See Fasolo & Gullini (1953) for the architectural details at Praeneste and how they renew the sense of architectural novelty.

56   Ma (2003: p. 25).

concept of parity. Relations between and among *poleis* were based on the interplay of sameness and specificity.[57] This means that they could have displayed localised identities and interest, yet within a common landscape of socio-cultural practices. One way to emphasise and encourage the connection was through a system of honours, wherein a *polis* could bestow several honorific titles to an individual. What this implies is a stronger connection between the two *poleis* through the creation of a common communicative tool. In the context of Latium, such a networking theory could be translated as follows: namely, since the Latins had some interests in the eastern Mediterranean, they had it in their best interest to foster strong relationships with the eastern *poleis* and to appear as belonging to the same socio-cultural milieu.[58] One way to do so is by displaying a similar cityscape. In this pan-Mediterranean context, therefore, we see, once again, how sanctuaries represented an example of Hellenism wherein certain stylistic choices communicated more than ethno-cultural belonging, and focused instead on social self-representation. By showing a Hellenistic façade, one could become cosmopolitan and demonstrate that he (most likely a he) had every right to take part on the pan-Mediterranean stage.

Conclusion

Taking into consideration the development of stylistic meaning behind architectural forms allows us to move away from old, static models of cultural interaction and exchange, like Romanisation. Traditionally interpreted in light of approval or opposition, I have shown how a semantic system would allow a more intricate understanding of Hellenistic sanctuaries in Latium. Rather than seeing Hellenistic architecture as a static, never-changing form of material culture, I have argued that its socio-cultural meaning should be examined according to the different contexts in which it is applied. From a universal *koine*, initially determined by the Hellenistic monarchs, whose interests related to political communication and administrative control, a process of particularisation bestows the attention upon more localised manifestations of material culture. In this scenario, the concept of aesthetics and the object-viewer relationship determine a series of affordances at multiple levels (local, regional and pan-Mediterranean). At a local level, the earliest sanctuaries would have fostered a sense of exoticism, reflected on the social position of the commissioner/s who had access to the exotic. At the same time, at a regional level it would have created a hierarchy between settlements whereby those that experimented with innovative trends were also perceived as having more prestige. At the same time, I have also taken diachronicity into account. After all, the group of Hellenistic sanctuaries spanned two centuries. By the first century BC, the exotic nature of the architectural forms would have been lost, resulting in new affordances at a local/regional level. In this sense, some later developments, like Praeneste, built between the

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57   Ma (2003: p. 21).

58   The attested presence of a Fregellanus (*IG* XI 4 757), honoured on Delos with *proxenia* for his euergetic act, shows that the local community was interest in establishing a social connection with a foreigner and, broadly speaking, its town of provenance. See Hatzfeld (1912: pp. 77–78).

late second and early first century BC, would have employed extravagant techniques in order to renew that sense of innovativeness. Similarly, the increased presence of Hellenistic architecture in Latium would have also represented a tool through which to express participation in a prestigious group. Finally, a semantic system allows us to examine the sanctuaries from a pan-Mediterranean level. In particular, the phenomenon could be seen as part of a process wherein the Latin settlements were trying to show their right and competence to partake in a pan-Mediterranean *oikoumene*.

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