

The Topography of Prestige: The Development of Triumphal Architecture and the Transformation of the Urban Landscape

One of the central debates among scholars of the Middle Roman Republic is the question of the definition and extent of manubial architecture (*ex manubiae*). Scholarship of the past thirty years has questioned what constituted manubial architecture, debating the extent to which Roman elites had control over the disposition of their spoils (Shatzman 1972; Orlin 1997; Bastien 1997; Churchill 1999; Ziolkowski 1992). Some have argued that scholars have overestimated the number of manubial temples that can be confirmed through the available evidence (Orlin 1997). A focus on the definition and extent of manubial temples, however, overlooks the role these buildings played in Roman elite self-representation, the growing architectural complexity of these structures from the third century BCE, and the relationship these structures had with the triumph (Longfellow 2015). Indeed, the term manubial architecture obscures the growing importance for Roman elites of associating their buildings with the triumph through location, decoration, and the manipulation of space.

Military victory had always played a role in Roman monumental building since many of Rome's public buildings were constructed from the money brought into the treasury conquest, including manubial temples. However, in the late third century BCE, the triumph, the celebration of victory, began to influence monumental architecture in new ways that would ultimately transform the city of Rome into an "eternal triumph" (Pliny, *NH* 35.2). Consequently, I argue that over the course of the third through first centuries BCE, the architecture associated with the triumph—in particular manubial temples—developed into what I term "triumphal architecture." This term denotes the location of temples and other built spaces, their spatial organization, their decoration, and their association with a victory or triumphal general. Unlike manubial temples,

temples built from the proceeds of spoils, they do not explicitly need to depend on the proceeds of plunder, nor even need to be a temple. The result of this shift to triumphal architecture was the inscription of the triumphal procession onto the topography of the city of Rome and the creation of a new visual language that combined decoration and built space to create a triumphal landscape. I draw upon spatial theory (Lynch 1960; Favro 1996)—to argue that generals located their buildings along the triumphal route in order to create visual associations with the triumph and to evoke memories of their past achievements (Holliday 2002; Hölscher 2004). In doing so, they essentially transformed Rome into a “readable” space that performed the triumph in perpetuity.

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