

APPLYING A THEORETICAL CONCEPT TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE: MEMORY AND URBAN RELIGION IN THE HELLENISTIC-ROMAN CITY OF IAITAS/IETAS

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Abstract

The Monte Iato plateau in Palermo's hinterland was inhabited from the end of the 8th century BC to the 13th century AD. After the prosperity of the indigenous settlement in the archaic period and a subsequent decline in settlement activity, the plateau was urbanised in the 3rd century BC following Hellenistic polis models. The ruins of a theatre, as well as a paved agora bordered with four stoai, which also included one or two bouleuteria, as well as residential quarters with richly furnished peristyle houses still bear witness to the increase of construction in the Hellenistic city of Iaitas. They are complemented by the evidence of communal infrastructure consisting of a connecting road and a sophisticated drainage and irrigation system. The given archaeological record tells about renewed prosperity, a functioning and quorate political system, and autonomy of the Iaitinians during the historically eventful decades of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st century BC. The city continued its expansion by adding other buildings such as storefronts, popinae, and a possible gymnasium and transformed into the Roman city of Ietas during probably the 1st century BC. The city's prosperity was to last until the Julio-Claudian period when once again a decrease in settlement activity is noticed before the antique ruins are extensively reused and partly transformed by the medieval settlement.

This paper deals with the archaeological record of four possible cult buildings in the context of the "materialisation" of the city Iaitas/Ietas, which were integrated into the urban topography in different locations. It discusses the possible identifying features of urban religion, according to Rüpke et al. The central raised question is whether and how the theoretical concept can be applied in the case of the sacral topography of an indigenous city in western Sicily, whose material legacy contains no written or epigraphic evidence and little religious material is present in situ. How can the strong archaeological evidence of memory and identity narratives be put into context? Which material evidence can be pieced together to conclude a comprehensive view of religion in the city of Iaitas/Ietas?

BETWEEN LOCAL TRADITION AND URBAN INNOVATION
Ritual Space and Religious Dynamics in Ancient Sicily

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