SANCTUARIES AND EXPERIENCE

WOOLF, GREG, BULTRIGHINI, ILARIA & NORMAN, CAMILLA (EDS.) (2024). *Sanctuaries and Experience. Knowledge, Practice and Space in the Ancient World.* Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge, 83. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner. 474 pp., 89.00 € [ISBN 978-3-515-13399-9]

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This impressive volume consists of 18 papers, plus the editors' "Introduction" (pp. 10-26) and Julia Kindt's "Afterthought" (pp. 461-472) that overall demonstrate multiple layers of human experience in diverse religious contexts in the ancient world. When reading the main title – "Sanctuary and Experience" – one might be excused to think that the papers will illuminate us about people's diverse personal and collective religious, sensory and emotional experiences in a sanctuary. Of course, hardly anyone would have ever experienced the epiphany of a god or goddess, and not everyone experienced ecstatic behaviour, an altered state of consciousness or even practiced fasting, so often described in our ancient sources. But each individual would have had various sensory experiences or "physical sensations" in a

sanctuary, which Kindt (p. 466) summarises in her "Afterthought", such as the natural environment, the objects in a sanctuary, the practices, like dancing, as well as the sound (music, prayers, incantations) and smells (smoke from the sacrifice), to which we could add many other visual, auditory and olfactory experiences, especially those related to animal sacrifice. Several papers mention depictions of ritual dances, be it in Egypt (p. 43), on the island of Despotiko (pp. 74-75) or the "komast" dances in Daunia (p. 90), while Marco Serino's paper on a divine house (*iera oikia*) in Sicily suggests that music "created a ritual atmosphere symbolically connecting the 'world of the living' with 'earthly' happiness" (p. 182), though the impact on the dancers', musicians' and the audience's brain, how it may have affected their emotions, well-being and state of consciousness, still remains to be analysed. The "media intensity of religious communication" – with a combination of gestures, prayers, music, objects, sacrifices, priestly *regalia*, reenactment, and many more, which any participant had to "process" – were aimed to bring into "existence", at least at a particular point of time in a ritual, the "otherwise invisible addressees", in the words of Jörg Rüpke (pp. 30-31). But there is also the more permanent space: the sanctuary whose specific architectural environment provided not only a purposedly-designed setting for ritual practices and/or prescribing the movement of the worshippers – both on a daily basis and for large, collective events –, but its very architecture is likely to have triggered emotional responses, be its awe-inspiring or intimidating scale or people's experience when entering a confined space. Some spaces were designed to be dark and unsettling, as we might image in the case of Eleusis' *telesterion* or a *mithraeum* – spaces that were illuminated by the flickering light of torches or oil lamps that is known to affect people's perceptions and emotions. Architecture, sounds, the smells of incense and smoke were all part of a deliberate *mise-en-scène* demarcating a sanctuary or temenos as a special place.

In this respect, a "sanctuary", as alluded to in the title, stands out as a particular space to study people's experiences. And in their "Introduction", the editors aim to provide a definition. Rather than just any place where cult activities took place (which would be quite problematic in a world where the divine was omnipresent in and inseparable from people's everyday life, just like in modern-day polytheistic religions, like Hinduism and Shinto), a sanctuary is considered to be basically a *temenos*, if we want to use Greek terminology, demarcated by a *peribolos*. Usually with a complex internal organisation consisting of different activity zones, the sanctuary is a place where human activities, such as communal dining, took up a different meaning (pp. 10-11). In this respect, Thomas Gamelin's paper on Egyptian temples (pp. 43-65) and Dominic Dalglish's paper on the Jupiter

Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus temple in Baalbek (pp. 395-423) demonstrate the importance and the impact of a sanctuary's architectural environment: there is the monumentality, sometimes of an intimidating scale, which may trigger a feeling of awe and respect. With their "otherworldly proportions", as in the case of Jupiter *Heliopolitanus*, people might well have considered a certain "divine" involvement in the construction of a temple (p. 417). Moreover, a sanctuary or temple is not just a symbol of political power or elite benefaction, but it is a "liminal space of divine immanence", a place to experience a deity, in the words of Dalglish (p. 412), as the temple represents the god's house, a "celestial place on earth", as Gamelin reminds us. The presence of a god, the overall atmosphere within the buildings, complemented by representations and monumental inscriptions, are a reminder of the "mysterious dimension of the temple and the celestial world" (p. 62). This would have affected anyone's emotions, but there is the additional emotion that priests must have felt being allowed to cross the various physical boundaries within a sanctuary to enter the temple's deepest part and getting close to a god (pp. 45 and 62). With certain areas being designed to be either "immersed in darkness" or sunlight (pp. 51-52), the architecture also triggers emotional responses, while Gamelin also reflects on the movement of the priests within the temple, such as their need to turn inside double chapels, for example at Edfu and Dendara, thus physically symbolising in their motion that they were entering another world (p. 62). Even without such monumental stone constructions, the basic concept is valid for many sanctuaries, including open-air sanctuary, whose sacred area is equally demarcated, sometimes by ditches and wooden boundaries; sites, like the Iron Age sanctuary of Corent, come to mind as they may provide useful *comparanda* that allow us not only to reconstruct ritual practices and movement inside a sanctuary, but also the multitude of sensory and emotional experiences that participants must have endured, not to mention that open-air sanctuaries might have allowed for a more intimate experience with the natural world, especially those sanctuaries that were deliberately designed to allow an enhanced experience of certain phenomena, such as solstices and equinoxes. Initiation cults, like the Eleusinian mysteries, provide a particular religious experience, which is demonstrated in Aelius Arisitides' *Hieroi Logoi* recounting his experience and therapy at the *Asklepieion* of Pergamon during his long-term illness. Being familiar with Eleusis, as shown by Petridou (pp. 369-394), Aristides describes his entire "lived experience" of illness and healing as an initiation cult, with similar religious experiences, like his "ecstatic joy" when Asklepios manifested himself, while calling his fellow patients *mystes* (pp. 370-374).

In this volume, we encounter diverse experiences. For example, Erika Angliker, Yannos Kourayos and Kornilia Daifa (pp. 67-87) focus our attention on the sensory experience of travelling in the case of the Apollo sanctuary on the small island of Despotiko which could only be reached by boat from nearby Paros, thus providing a unique personal experience that may have involved the danger of crossing the sea and the fear of death, resulting in pilgrims praying to god for a safe journey (pp. 78-80). Esther Eidinow's paper on "Travel Stories" (pp. 147-161) explores how the telling and re-telling of narratives, like Plutarch's *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance*, were creating and actualising the sanctuary of Delphi as both a demarcated space as well as a place of physical risk, with Delphians as "instruments of justice" who punished sacrilegious acts by hurling the accused visitors over the cliff (pp. 153-155). At Delphi, one might also have had an intellectual experience, as Elena Franchi (pp. 349-367) shows, as in Plutarch's *De Pythiae oraculis* describing a conversation of a group slowly walking up to the Apollo temple, stopping, engaging with the objects they see, reading inscriptions and reflecting both about past deeds and the present; this leads us to the term of "*paideia*-related agency" (p. 358), as our visitors' personal experience also depended on their educational and cultural background, especially in the interconnected Roman worlds with Pausanias basically providing a guide for visitors on how to explore the main sites in a sanctuary like Delphi (pp. 352-354). But for local populations, the "deposits of memories" that sanctuaries accumulated over many generations, also provided an ideal "pedagogical arena" to socialise children as it provides a setting to communicate – and visualise – narratives that aimed at explaining "the world and its phenomena", as stated by Jaime Alvar Ezquerra and José Carlos López-Gómez for the case of Roman Hispania (p. 441). But apart from tourism, education and religious devotion, an individual might have had numerous reasons to enter a sacred space, as emphasised by Rita Sassu (pp. 219-244), including healthcare, political reasons and financial matters, which reflect a sanctuary's "multi-faceted layers" (pp. 230, 235). This leads us to Julietta Steinhauer's analysis of the diverse experiences of "female foreigners" on Delos who were worshipping at the sanctuary of the Syrian gods on Delos (pp. 245-264), while Bultrighini examines the parallels between the worship of Artemis *Amarysia* at her sanctuary at Euboia and her "outlet" at Athens (pp. 194-218).

Human experience of images is explored, among others, by Katja Sporn (pp. 265-298) who analyses the function of the private portraits of "ordinary" people inside a Graeco-Roman temple (*naos*), suggesting that those represent people who aspired for a "close connection with the god", rather than having a statue in a publicly accessible place. Marlis Arnhold (pp. 299-316), focusing on the difference

between *simulacra* and *ornamenta*, with the former representing only the deity to whom a sanctuary is dedicated to, suggests that it was left to the visitor of a sanctuary to capture these images in a self-chosen sequence (p. 308). Anna-Katharina Rieger's paper (pp. 317-347) leads us out of sanctuaries and into the streets and private houses (*lararia*) of Pompei, showing that people's religious experiences were closely connected with the urban fabric: focusing above all on the image of well-dressed women in different social and spatial situations, one can identify the mutual influence of elite imagery on shaping the representation of the goddesses Venus *Pompeiana* and Isis-Fortuna (p. 341). Talking about the urban context, the above-mentioned "sacred house" would have appeared as an ordinary house in the urban fabric of Himera (Sicily), but the finds of red-figure vases, knucklebones, female terracotta figurines, etc. reveal its exclusive ritual role, a "neighbourhood sanctuary", probably of a *phratria*, as suggested by Serino (p. 164). Vase painting specific to this house were used to provide a visual narrative that might provide insights into ritual practices, like the probable role of wedding rituals, the initiation of new members into a family or *phratria*, or the role of water, which may potentially have cathartic and rebirthing powers, based on the depiction of the Leukothea myth (pp. 169-170), though as a goddess who helps sailors in distress, Leukothea's iconography also seems appropriate for a port city like Himera. In this respect, Camilla Norman's paper (pp. 89-114) identifies a wide range of shared ritual practices, like procession and "seemingly 'mundane' activities" (weaving and food preparation) in the iconography of the archaic Daunian stelae (650-475 BCE). At a time when sanctuaries are not attested in Daunia (p. 91), the performance of these rituals may not only have created a "temporary sacralised place" for a community, but also served to preserve people's values and customs through performance and storytelling (p. 108). This leads us to Giovanni Mastronuzzi, Davide Tamiano and Giacomo Vizzino's study of food offerings and rituals meals in the Oria and Vaste sanctuaries in pre-Roman Apulia (pp. 115-145); especially Vaste allows us to reconstruct some of the feasting rituals, with the authors suggesting that priest and worshippers may have descended into the pit at Vaste to make libations on the hypogeal altar, comparing the ritual with participants entering the womb of a fertility goddess (pp. 127-128). Examples of rituals relating to fertility deities are also discussed by Csaba Szabó (pp. 425-440), like the zoomorphic and human masks that were discovered at the Roman town of *Favianis* (Mautern), probably part of a ceremonial outfit related to winter-spring transitional rituals (pp. 430-431). While Szabó's paper discusses the conceptualisation of religious spaces in the Danube provinces, notably in an urban context, we move to the decline of public temples

and sanctuaries in the paper by Alvar Ezquerra and López-Gómez (pp. 441-460): the widespread abandonment of temples and sanctuaries across Hispania as early as the 3rd century CE, for example in cities like *Baelo Claudia* and *Cordoba*, also resulted in the abandonment of "administered religion" (*i.e.*, *polis*/civic religion), as argued by the authors (p. 448), not due to a global crisis, but with local elites no longer investing in public cults, thus making religious activities less visible, perhaps increasingly centred around the private sphere (p. 454). Together with Kindt's "Afterthought", this volume provides a wide range of fascinating papers covering a large variety of religious sites, not only in formal sanctuaries, but also in domestic houses, cemeteries, rural and urban areas.