

RECENSION

JOSÉ MIGUEL NOGUERA CELDRÁN, ANDRÉS CÁNOVAS ALCARAZ, MARÍA JOSÉ MADRID BALANZA E IZASKUN MARTÍNEZ PERIS (Eds.), *Santuario de Isis y Serapis (Insula II) Molinete/Cartagena. Barrio del Foro Romano. Proyecto integral de recuperación y conservación = Santuario de Isis y Serapis (Insula II) Molinete/Cartagena. Sanctuary of Isis and Serapis (Insula II) Molinete/Cartagena. Roman Forum District. Recovery and Conservation*, Ayuntamiento de Cartagena – Universidad de Murcia, Cartagena - Murcia, 2019, 172 pp. ISBN: 978-84-17865-13-9.

Copyright: © 2021 CSIC. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License.

The book¹ represents a collective effort outlining the results of the research carried out between 2009 and 2017 at the Isiac sanctuary located in the *insula II* at Molinete/Cartagena/*Carthago Nova* (p. 14). It starts with a chapter entitled *Isis (y Serapis), dioses de la navegación y del comercio marítimo. Vida cotidiana en un santuario egipcio / Isis and Serapis, gods of sailing and sea trade: everyday life in an Egyptian sanctuary* (pp. 21-27) authored by J. Ruiz de Arbulo in which a contextualization is created for the Isiac cults from their origin in Ancient Egypt to their evolution throughout the Graeco-Roman period and eventual arrival in Hispania at the end of the 2nd c. BCE, emphasizing the daily activity and rituals which were performed in such sanctuaries. Ruiz de Arbulo worked extensively on the study of the Isiac cults, for instance, making an important contribution related to the early stages of these cults in Hispania, as revealed by the case of *Emporion / Emporiae* (Ruiz de Arbulo and Vivó, 2008; latest Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, pp. 26-27, with a recent bibliographic list of references). The second chapter is authored by J. M. Abascal Palazón and is called *Cultos orientales y alexandrinos en Carthago Nova / Oriental and Alexandrine cults in Carthago Nova* (pp. 29-34). Here, J. M. Abascal Palazón introduces the reader to the wider context of reli-

gious epigraphic habit from late Republican Hispania from a statistical stance and to the three monuments bearing epigraphic evidence of the Isiac cults at *Carthago Nova*, highlighting the discrepancies between the epigraphic material and its dating, and the consecration of the sanctuary during the Flavian period (RICIS 603/0201-202, where the editor, L. Briault, dates them to the 1st c. CE; see as well the latest analysis in Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, pp. 17-21, who dates them 2nd – 1st c. BCE). This analysis includes the latest such discovery which had been published some years ago (Abascal, Noguera and Madrid, 2012, pp. 287-289, no. 1 = AE 2012, 798 = RICIS Suppl. III 603/0204 = Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, p. 22), usually dated to the last decades of the 1st c. BCE, except for Alvar and Gasparini who propose the middle of the 1st c. BCE. For the latter, the formula *Sera-/Sara-* has been recently analyzed including from the paleographic point of view as the deity Sarapis is rendered in the form *Sera(pi)* (Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, p. 22, note 28). Nevertheless, the debate regarding their dating remains open, albeit it seems that prior to the 1st c. CE the Latin dedications usually use the formula *Sera-* only here, at *Carthago Nova*, and at *Puteoli*, on the text dating to 105 BCE (RICIS 504/0401). Although the illustration accompanying the discussion is of an excellent quality, I should stress upon the fact that the Isiac texts and their translation discussed in this chapter were not given, which would have been of great help for a potential reader that is not that accustomed to the topic. Furthermore, a catalogue (pp. 34-36) is

1 I would like to express my gratitude to Inés Sastre, the scientific secretary of the editorial board of the *Archivo Español de Arqueología* for inviting me to publish the review in this journal.

provided referring to small finds from various locations in the Roman town revealing Isiac iconography. The third chapter is authored by two of the editors of the book, J. M. Noguera Celdrán and M. J. Madrid Balanza and is called *Arqueología de los espacios sagrados en Carthago Nova: el santuario isiac del Molinete (insula II) / Archaeology of Sacred Spaces in Carthago Nova / The Isis Sanctuary in Molinete (insula II)* (pp. 37-95) followed by a catalogue of the finds that were recovered during the archaeological excavations of the sanctuary (pp. 96-113). Naturally, this chapter is the most consistent one of the entire book. The identification of the edifice with an Isiac sanctuary is beyond doubt in my view, although the paucity of discoveries linking it to the Isiac cults was noted (Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, p. 22). What stands out in this chapter is the ability of the authors to summarize the archaeological data clearly and easily understandable, and the careful use of terminology or the intriguing hypotheses that will find the reader captivated in the cases where neither archaeology nor epigraphy provide sufficient data, not to mention the elaborate discussions while referring to analogies. Perhaps the most ardent question relies on whether the possibly epigraphically attested *magarum/megarum* (?) (Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, pp. 17-19, with previous interpretations) was located beneath the excavated sanctuary where there were edifices identified existing prior to the Augustan city layout (pp. 75-78) or if it initially had been located on the Molinete hill (see latest discussion in Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, in particular pp. 17-22). In any case, given that only two letters can be distinguished on the inscription in the area where this potential term should be, M and the left side of an A, and the fact that there is space left for two or three other letters, the debate remains open in this regard as well. It should be added that the graffiti on pottery vessels (RICIS 603/0203a-c) dated to the 2nd c. BCE are difficult to connect to the Isiac cults (p. 76 n. 56), although these still represent an argument for the possible existence of a sacralized space on the Cerro de Molinete hill (e.g. Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, p. 21). To sum up, recent archaeological investigations point out to the first hypothesis, although conclusive evidence lacks for the moment. Since we are not completely sure of the destiny of the Republican sacralized space dedicated to Isis and Sarapis, the question remains open as well for those inscriptions found near the sanctuary, that is if these were discarded once the former sacralized space had been dismantled or if these had been part of the newly erected Isiac sanctuary from the *insula* II and only discarded once the sanctuary had been abandoned in the 3rd c. CE (Noguera, Abascal and Madrid, 2018, pp. 69-81, n^{os}.

5-19 for other fragmentary epigraphic evidence discovered in the *insula* II). An analogy for the second hypothesis is offered, for example, at *Savaria*, where the dedication made by Ti. Barbius Valens to Isis *Augusta* during the Flavian period was still part of the sanctuary's religious inventory once the edifice had been rebuilt from scratch during the early 2nd c. CE (RICIS 613/0501 = Biró and Sosztarits, forthcoming). As far as the location of the sanctuary is concerned, I should add a short observation. A recent analysis provided by the situation in Pannonia seems to reveal that the Isiac sanctuaries were built during the Flavian period outside the *pomerium* of *coloniae* in this particular province; in *municipia* on the other hand, it was argued that since these had no physical religious boundaries, Isiac sanctuaries could have been placed anywhere, as for instance the *Iseum* at *Scarbantia* shows, which is located in the proximity of the *forum* (latest discussion in Mráv, 2016, pp. 105-106 with further bibliographic references). Turning to Hispania, the *Isea* of *Baelo Claudia* and *Italica*, for instance, were built in connection as well as next to the *fora* but by the Flavian period none of these settlements had reached colonial status (Dardaine *et al.*, 2008 and latest Alvar and Gasparini, 2020, pp. 35-39; respectively Alvar and Gasparini, 2020; Jiménez Sancho, 2020). However, the case from the Isiac sanctuary at *Carthago Nova* precisely disproves a hypothetical empire-scale model scenario, in which there was a universal approach of the local urban provincial elites of *coloniae* in religious matters concerning the Isiac cults during the 1st c. CE. This aspect still needs further inquiry but at a first glance it seems that the consecrations of Isiac sanctuaries in or outside the *pomeria* of the *coloniae* relied on local religious strategies and religious entrepreneurs (see further Alvar and Gasparini, 2020). The next two chapters of the book are authored by M. V. García-Aboal and V. Velasco Estrada, entitled *El barrio artesanal de la Insula II del Molinete / The industrial quarters of Insula II* (pp. 115-121) followed by a catalogue presenting a glass furnace found in the precinct of the sanctuary (pp. 122-124) and *Epílogo o comienzo? La ocupación bizantina en el antiguo santuario de Isis / Epilogue or beginning? The former Isis sanctuary and Byzantine occupation* (pp. 125-132) authored by J. Vizcaíno Sánchez. Both explore the data retrieved from the archaeological excavations of the *insula* II about the period after the 3rd century – which represented the period when religious activity ceased in the sanctuary – namely the 'industrialization' of the area in the 4th-5th c. CE and the Byzantine shaping and re-modelling taking place in the 6th-7th c. CE by the hands of the *milites Romani* sent by Justinian to accomplish the

renovatio Imperii. The last two chapters, the sixth, authored by I. Martínez Peris, entitled *Trabajos de conservación y restauración en la insula II (santuario de Isis) / Restoration and consolidation work undertaken in Insula II (Isis sanctuary)* (pp. 133-150) and the final one, the seventh, entitled *El silencio de Isis / Isis' silence*, signed by A. Cánovas Alcaraz, N. Maruri Gonzáles de Mendoza and A. Amann Alcocer (pp. 151-161) play an important role in the overall structure of the book. As everywhere else, these sections of the book are accompanied by excellent illustration. Although I am not an expert on the topic, I must confess that from my point of view, these two chapters serve not only as a great example of collaboration between archaeologists, historians, restorers, conservators, architects, and so forth, but also as an example of best practices regarding the preservation and museology capitalization of historical buildings.

To conclude, the book is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Isiac cults in Hispania and of course, to the Roman town's layout as revealed by the archaeological investigation of the Isiac sanctuary of the *insula II* of *Carthago Nova*. It has achieved its main purpose, which I think was to disseminate the scientific results to both Spanish speaking and international audience by the bilingual publication, both to specialists and the general public as well, an aspect that I find not only very important but welcoming as well. It is my great hope that the restoration and conservation of the edifice and the publication of this book will help raise awareness of the importance of the cultural heritage part of the archaeological park of Cerro del Molinete. Finally, I emphasize on the fact that religion was omnipresent and infiltrated every aspect of Roman daily life, while the performance of rituals staged in these Isiac sanctuaries can be reconstructed in many instances. To a certain extent this includes the case from Cartagena and I cannot help but wonder what a spectacle this must have been!

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

- Abascal, J. M., Noguera, J. M. and Madrid, M. J. (2012). "Nuevas inscripciones romanas de Carthago Nova (Cartagena, Hispania Citerior)". *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 182, pp. 287-296.
- Alvar, J. and Gasparini, V. (2020). "The gens isiaca in Hispania. Contextualizing the Iseum at Italica". In: Bricault, L. and Veymiers, R. (Eds.). *Bibliotheca Isiaca IV*. Bordeaux: Ausonius Éditions, pp. 15-44.
- Bíró, S. and Soszartits, O. (forthcoming). "Architectural and infrastructural changes in Savaria in the 1st half of the 2nd century".
- Bricault, L. (2005). *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les*

cultes isiaques (RICIS). Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, XXXI. Paris : Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.

- Bricault, L. (2014). *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques. Supplément III*. In: Bricault, L. and Veymiers, R. (Eds.). *Bibliotheca Isiaca III*. Bordeaux: Ausonius Éditions, pp. 139-195.
- Dardaine, S., Fincker, M., Lancha J. and Sillières (2008). *Belo VIII. Le sanctuaire d'Isis*. Collection de la Casa de Velázquez, CVII. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez.
- Jiménez Sancho, Á. (2020). "The Iseum of Italica. A Sanctuary in the Theater's Porticus". In: Bricault, L. and Veymiers, R. (Eds.). *Bibliotheca Isiaca IV*. Bordeaux: Ausonius Éditions, pp. 45-51.
- Mráv, Zs. (2016). "Considerations on the archaeological and natural contexts of cult places and sanctuaries in the Pannonian provinces". *Carnuntum Jahrbuch*, 101-108, taf. XLIV-LII. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1553/cjb_2016s101
- Noguera Celdrán J. M., Abascal Palazón, J. M. and Madrid Balanza, M. J. (2018). "Nuevas inscripciones romanas del Molinete (Cartagena) (campañas 2008-2017)". *Mastia*, 14, pp. 63-101.
- Ruiz de Arbuló, J. and Vivó, D. (2008). "Serapis, Isis y los dioses acompañantes en Emporion: una nueva interpretación para el conjunto de esculturas aparecido en el supuesto Asklepieion emporitano". *Revista d'Arqueologia de Ponent*, 18, pp. 71-140.

Dan Deac

History and Art County Museum, Zalău
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania