

Roman amphitheatres revived

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JEAN-CLAUDE GOLVIN, *L'AMPHITHÉÂTRE ROMAIN. ESSAI SUR LA THÉORISATION DE SA FORME ET DE SES FONCTIONS* (Publications du Centre Pierre Paris 18, Diffusion De Boccard, Paris 1988). 2 vols., pp. 458, 64 figs., 68 pls., map. ISSN 0339-1736. FF900.

SPECTACULA -I. GLADIATEURS ET AMPHITHÉÂTRES. ACTES DU COLLOQUE TENU À TOULOUSE ET À LATTES LES 26.27.28 ET 29 MAI, 1987 (Editions Imago Musée archéologique Henri Prades, Route de Pérols, B.P. 52, Lattes, 34972 France). Pp. 316, many figures. ISBN 2-9501586-6-8. FF400.

1. GOLVIN AND THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE

Jean-Claude Golvin's book is the first comprehensive study of the Roman amphitheatre. Students of Roman architecture at last have a book which not only lists all the known amphitheatres with plans and extensive bibliography for each, but also clearly differentiates between buildings that are still visible and those known only from literary and epigraphic sources. Before Golvin's book it was impossible to find a reliable list of all the surviving or inferred amphitheatres. Previous publications (e.g., G. Forni, *s.v.* Anfiteatro, in *EAA*, I, 374-90) had confused the issue with a list of sites where *munera* and *venationes* are known to have existed. As Golvin points out (p.9), written sources attesting to *munera* at a given site do not prove the existence of an amphitheatre. Other publications included building dimensions but listed only selected amphitheatres. The number of known amphitheatres in the Roman world has now been reduced. Forni listed 354 sites, but Golvin lists only 186 amphitheatres in the full architectural sense of the term whose existence is securely attested. Golvin's extensive table of contents, bibliography, and indices (I: literary and epigraphic sources; II: proper names; III: *index rerum*; IV: geography and ethnography) are as intricately divided into categories as was the administrative apparatus behind the Roman games themselves. He has usefully cross-referenced Latin amphitheatre terminology with its more natural modern equivalents (e.g. "machines, see *pegmata*").

Golvin explicitly states his goal on p.11 — to answer questions about the historical and architectural conception of the amphitheatre and to provide essential amphitheatre documentation. He is less concerned with socio-historical questions. Yet this book is much more than a formidable documentary base. It firmly situates the amphitheatre within its architectural, archaeological, and historical context, and attempts to answer two crucial questions: where did the building type come from, and why does it look the way it does? Like J. H. Humphrey's *Roman Circuses* (London 1986), his book will be a vital first step towards broader studies, both archaeological and socio-historical.

The book is divided into three parts that discuss the amphitheatre in terms of its history, its diffusion, and its architectural form. In part I, "Les origines de l'amphithéâtre" (pp.15-67), Golvin traces the historical background and origins of the *munera* and the *venationes*, synthesizing the wealth of information provided in G. Ville's encyclopedic if insufficiently critical *La gladiature en occident des origines à la mort de Domitien* (Roma 1981). He then focuses on the evolution of the monuments in the last century of the republic, before turning to amphitheatres and other entertainment buildings built in the city of Rome before the Colosseum.

Part II, "Typologie, chronologie et répartition des édifices" (pp.71-278), contains a catalogue of amphitheatres, with an original typological classification. The amphitheatres are divided into "à structure pleine" (those buildings whose *cavea* is supported by earthen embankments or is carved out of the rock, like Lepcis Magna) and "à structure creuse" (those buildings whose *cavea* is supported by built substructures, like the Colosseum). He then turns to buildings less easy to classify, labelled "les édifices mixtes" — theatre-amphitheatres in Gaul and "les édifices mixtes d'Orient". The latter is a somewhat confusing classification, as the Gallic variety are truly "mixed" (they have a theatre-like, semicircular *cavea* with a small elliptical arena instead of an *orchestra*), while the eastern types are simply Greek theatres in which gladiatorial combat took place, often adjusted in some way for this purpose (e.g.