

## A new era for amphitheatre studies

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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 (UA 991) no.18, Paris 1988). 2 vols., vol. 1 texte, pp. 459, 65 tableaux; vol. 2, planches, pp. 9, LXXI planches. ISSN 0339-1736. FF900.

Jean-Claude Golvin's monograph supercedes all other works in the field of amphitheatre studies.<sup>1</sup> This is the most comprehensive archaeological and architectural survey of Roman amphitheatres ever undertaken. The complexity of individual monuments, and the very large number of known amphitheatres, has meant that previous efforts have concentrated upon either regional surveys<sup>2</sup> or on more or less superficial attempts to catalogue the whole corpus.<sup>3</sup> His work also comes at a moment when there has been something of a renaissance in this field of study, particularly in Italy,<sup>4</sup> France and the French-speaking parts of North Africa,<sup>5</sup> and in Britain.<sup>6</sup>

### Livre 1: les origines de l'amphithéâtre

The first section deals with the problems of the origins of the amphitheatre — an elliptical arena surrounded on all sides by rising tiers of seats. Golvin sketches the early development of *munera gladiatorum* and *venationes* in Rome, and identifies the venues (most commonly the Roman Forum and the Circus Maximus) in which these took place and the evidence for special alterations needed to accommodate such spectacles in those locations.<sup>7</sup> His detailed account of these developments (pp.18-22, 45-65) is the best summary and most detailed discussion of the evidence yet given.

His discussion (pp.30-32) of the idiosyncratic structure known as Curio's double theatre (52 B.C.), which pivoted into a single amphitheatre while some spectators remained in their seats, is scholarly, and his reconstruction of the various possible configurations for the original theatres and their pivot-points is ingenious. I find his arguments for accepting the reality of this rather bizarre construction convincing, and I particularly like the stress laid upon this structure as a *tour de force* of civil engineering, rather than an important architectural antecedent of the amphitheatre type, which had already existed in Campania

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- 1 E.g. F. Drexel in Friedlaender, *Sittengeschichte* IV. 205-57; G. Forni in *EAA* (1958) I, 380-90, s.v. Anfiteatro; A. Neppi-Modona, *Gli edifici teatrali greci e romani* (Firenze 1961); A. B. Gough, *Roman life and manners under the early empire* (London 1965) IV, 193-255; A. Hoenle and A. Henze, *Römische Amphitheater und Stadien* (Zurich 1981); G. E. Smith, *A guide to the Roman amphitheatres* (Los Angeles 1984).
  - 2 E.g., for North Africa, J.-Cl. Lachaux, *Les théâtres et amphithéâtres de l'Afrique Proconsulaire* (Aix 1979) and H. Slim, *L'Africa romana* I, 128-65; for Gaul, A. Grenier, *Manuel d'archéologie gallo-romaine* (Paris 1958) vol. V, 561-612, 650-713.
  - 3 In addition to Drexel and Forni (supra n.1) see de Ruggiero, *Dizionario epigrafico* I, 453-61 s.v. Amphitheatrum, J. Durm, *Die Baukunst der Römer* II.2 (1905) 667-700, and Forni in *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo* I (1954) 583-604.
  - 4 Note also the new series *Epigrafia anfiteatrale dell'Occidente romano*, and important recent work and publications on the Colosseum by C. Mocheggiani Carpano, R. Luciani, R. Rea, and others (e.g. in *Anfiteatro flavio*).
  - 5 G. Ville's magisterial *La gladiature en Occident des origines à la mort de Domitien* (BEFAR 245, Roma 1981); M. Clavel-Leveque, *L'empire en jeux* (Paris 1984); *Les dossiers de l'Archéologie* 116 (mai 1987); and individual studies of amphitheatres at Tébessa, Lambaesis, Cherchel, and Saintes in other publications, may be mentioned.
  - 6 M. Fulford, *The Silchester amphitheatre. Excavations of 1979-85* (Britannia monograph 10, 1989), with earlier bibliography on Britain (work at Chester, Carmarthen, Cirencester, Dorchester); see also a newly identified rural amphitheatre at Frilford, Oxon. (*Britannia* 18 [1987] pl. IIIb, and the newly discovered amphitheatre at London (*Britannia* 18 [1987] 355; 19 [1988] 461-62).
  - 7 It is odd that for the circus Golvin does not make use of J. H. Humphrey, *Roman circuses* (London 1986), relying instead on an outdated encyclopedia article in *DarSag* by Bussemaker-Saglio. *Venationes* in the arena of the circus are mentioned in Humphrey pp. 71, 73-77.