

Perspectives

Interest in early Rome has seemed to grow in recent years, as evidenced by an explosion of publications. The results of this thesis add to the expanding field by investigating early Rome using archaeological evidence and archaeological scientific studies. In combination with the ongoing accumulation of archaeological finds and the increase of studies and excavations employing scientific methods, we will doubtlessly continue to see research providing a greater understanding of Rome's early history in the coming decades.

Facts about the empirical basis of the dissertation

The study of Archaic Rome is based almost exclusively on archaeological remains. The outset of the investigation is the Archaic site in the Caesar's Forum area and the remains inside the so-called Servian wall as well as a few comparable examples from the suburbs of Rome.

About Nikoline Sauer

Nikoline Sauer is a classical archaeologist (MA, University of Copenhagen). She produced her PhD dissertation at the Centre for Urban Network Evolutions at Aarhus University, where she has been part of the Caesar's Forum Project. Her research focuses on Rome in the Archaic period, with a special focus on archaeology. She is currently working as a research assistant at the Centre for Urban Network Evolutions at Aarhus University.

The Carlsberg Foundation as part of the Caesar's Forum Project has externally funded the PhD project.

Time and place for the defence

7 October 2021 at 14:15–17:15

Aarhus University, 1441–112 (Aud. 2), Tåsingevej

Contact

Nikoline Sauer

E-mail: nsp@cas.au.dk

Mobil: 40766078



AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ARCHAIC ROME (6TH–EARLY 5TH CENTURY BC): A CASE STUDY OF AN ARCHAIC SITE IN THE CAESAR'S FORUM AREA

PhD dissertation by Nikoline Sauer



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

Summary of the main points of PhD dissertation *An Archaeological Approach to Archaic Rome (6th–Early 5th Century BC): A Case Study of an Archaic Site in the Caesar's Forum Area* by Nikoline Sauer, Department of History and Classical Studies/Centre for Urban Network Evolutions, Aarhus University.

New Insights into Archaic Rome Through an Archaeological Approach

Most studies in the field of Rome in the Archaic period have tended to focus on myths from ancient literary tradition, which has provided the framework for the city's early history. The main contribution of the dissertation lies in its focus on the merits of archaeological sources in the reading of Archaic Rome.

Over the last few decades, the upsurge of scientific methods in archaeology has offered new perspectives and more archaeological finds, making possible a new understanding of this pivotal era in Rome's early history, which includes the provision of more scientific answers to new questions and old assumptions.

A Solid Account of Archaic Rome Must Begin With Archaeology

The investigation of archaeological remains and archaeological scientific studies has shown that Rome was an important urban centre in the Archaic period. In this relatively short era, the 6th and early 5th century BC, significant changes occurred on a number of fronts. The development of housing structures to stone-built houses with tiled roofs (investigated in Ch. 5) was one of them, but also population growth, monumental architecture, urban planning, public inscriptions, fortification, intensified specialisation, and solid international connections (examined in Ch. 6) are archaeological symptoms of broader economic and socio-cultural developments.

The Literary Tradition Has a Major Impact on the Interpretation of the Material Culture

The dissertation shows that the literary narratives surrounding Archaic Rome have a stronger hold on the interpretation of the material culture than previously thought. Ancient literary tradition has played an important role in shaping both scholarly and popular representations of Archaic Rome. The prevailing tendency is to spread the “myth” of early Rome. The literary texts have been repeatedly overlaid on the archaeological remains to create a more complete, but sometimes misleading, picture of Archaic Rome. Moreover, the attempt to match literary and archaeological sources has led to circular reasoning and hypothetical reconstructions.

The Forum of Caesar Offers a Rare Glimpse Into Early Rome

The area of the Forum of Caesar is fundamental to the study of Archaic Rome, as the site

holds some of the richest and most well-preserved stratigraphies from the Archaic period. Intact stratigraphy from the Archaic period was recently uncovered in the southeastern part of the site. Through a comprehensive investigation of the abundant archaeological remains from this area, including finds of stone-built domestic houses, numerous wells, and a large number of tiles and domestic pottery, the dissertation sheds new light on domestic sites in Archaic Rome.

Advancing Knowledge of the Early History of Rome Rather Than Spreading the Myth of Early Rome

Scholarship on archaeology has become increasingly independent of ancient literary tradition. This dissertation provides a new methodological tool to study Rome's earliest history. This effort interprets archaeological remains in their own terms and encourages more attention to the results of scientific studies and separation of robust archaeological evidence from overinterpreted notions deriving from literary texts. Further, the dissertation advances recognition of the immense effect of literary myths on inferences made from the material culture of Archaic Rome.

Facts about the field of study

- Archaic Rome is situated underneath the modern city centre of Rome in Italy. The core of the Archaic settlement covered the area within the Palatine, Capitoline and Velia Hills, while the burial ground was established on the Esquiline Hill.
- The Archaic period is traditionally defined as the historical phase between the end of the Orientalising period and the beginning of the Republican period. The traditional chronology of the Archaic period in central Italy is fixed to ca. 580–480/50 BC.
- ‘The Archaic period’ has by convention become the cultural label for an early and formative period.
- Rome's transformation during the Archaic period is tied to the last three legendary kings of the Tarquin dynasty: Tarquinius Priscus (616–578 BC), Servius Tullius (578–535 BC) and Tarquinius Superbus (535–509 BC).
- The representation of Archaic Rome derives primarily from ancient literary tradition. The works of Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae*, are the two main narrative sources.
- Excavations in Rome have investigated 2–5% of the area corresponding to the Archaic city.