CHAPTER FOURTEEN

RITES

i. Cult Places

The focal point of provincial rites was either the provincial altar or the provincial temple.\(^1\) We have seen that an altar was the principal monument at early regional sites, at the federal sanctuary by Lugdunum down to the reign of Hadrian and again under the Severi, possibly at Camulodunum under Claudius, at Arae Flaviae in the Agri Decumates, and at all provincial centres established during the Antonine period in the Danube region. In other provinces worship centred on a temple as at Tarraco, Emerita, Narbo Martius, eventually at Camulodunum, Lugdunum and Corduba, presumably at Carthage, perhaps also at Carales, Caesarea and elsewhere (above, p. 183)—not that any physical traces have so far appeared at these latter locations. At all provincial temples rites will naturally have been performed at an exterior altar so placed as to give the officiant a direct view of the cult idol within the temple (Vitr. 4, 5, 1; cf. 9, 1).\(^2\) Conceivably at Camulodunum, certainly at Lugdunum, the original altar continued to serve as the focus of ritual once a temple had been erected immediately to the rear (above, pp. 142–3, 124). In strict accord with standard Graeco-Roman practice, therefore, provincial rites were always performed at an altar whether this was an independent monument in its own right or the altar complementary to a provincial temple. Nothing supports the notion that rites would have been performed in the provincial council, that is—presumably—within the provincial curia.\(^3\)

Direct knowledge of the appearance of these cult places is nevertheless very slight. In practice the coins have preserved the image of only three monuments: the Ara Trium Galliarum decorated with imperial insignia and flanked by twin Victories perched on columns, the

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\(^1\) See in general Vol. II, 1, 518–25.  
\(^2\) Vol. II, 1, 519, n. 271; III, 1, 72, n. 119.  
\(^3\) Vol. III, 1, 238 with n. 83.
octostyle “Temple of Augustus” standing on a broad stylobate at Tarraco, and what can only be the tetrastyle provincial temple of Lusitania at Emerita; if this is the temple in Calle Holguín at Mérida, as seems very possible, its archaeological remains confirm the details of the structure shown on Tiberian coins of Emerita. An outline of the temple at Camulodunum can be reconstructed from its podium but all other provincial monuments are known essentially on the basis of references in the epigraphical sources. The argument has been developed at length that the octostyle temple depicted on coins of Tiberius at Tarraco illustrates the projected form of the provincial temple on the upper level of the triple-tiered sanctuary at Tarraco and that this replicates the archaeological and iconographic scheme of the Forum Augustum at Rome (above, pp. 15–17). In that case one wonders whether the altar which must have stood before it was built into the temple steps on the model of the arrangement at the temple of Mars Ultor. Whatever the facts in this regard, at all other provincial temples the associated altar was presumably erected a short distance before the temple steps. The archaeological record shows that this was certainly the case at Camulodunum and the formula ad aram apud templum vel sim. at Lugdunum points to a similar arrangement at this centre too.

As for the principal features of the imperial image or idol, the evidence one has to go on is even more tenuous. At Lugdunum coins show that the centre of the mensa supported two aediculae within each of which can be seen what appears to be a statuette (above, pp. 117–20). Conceivably these are representations of Roma and Augustus respectively and will have been on view during the performance of rites, possibly also carried in procession on appropriate occasions (see below, pp. 276–8). Whether similar shrines containing images stood on other altars on ritual occasions we have no idea. Cult idols within provincial temples are even harder to devise as no physical trace of these has survived, not unless one can count the differing representations of the projected statue within the “Temple of Augustus” at Tarraco as pictured on coins (below, pp. 241–3). The only recourse under the circumstances is to turn to comparative evidence elsewhere and on the basis of this to draw cautious conclusions regarding the possibility of similar arrangements at provincial temples in the Latin west.

First the Greek east. Here too no cult statue from a provincial temple has left any trace but at two centres in particular an idea of the image