

BUILDING A RITUAL LANDSCAPE: THE FIDESTEMPLE AT ELST AND THE LIMES WITH THE BATAVIANS*

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The temple at Elst was built by the Romans based on a clear concept, the Fides concept. This played an active role in the political, economic and military relations between the Batavians and the Romans. This assertion is in contrast with current archaeological theory which clarifies the role of the temple at Elst in the light of events during the year 69 AD and in which the temple's existence is explained as a stone building with its specific role for an indigenous goddess.¹

Introduction

J.A. van Rossum (1992) recently published an article on the 69 AD Batavian rebellion. We have an historic report by Tacitus on this revolt. The archaeological remains are stored in our soil record. Historians and archaeologists are still debating the true nature of this revolt.

Van Rossum's article reflects the viewpoint of many ancient historians. It shows how the Batavians rebelled against Roman domination and the chain of actions and reactions this evoked. Van Rossum informs us about the crisis in the Roman administration, known as the "long year 69". He also emphasizes that Tacitus was the only Roman historian to describe the revolt. In his article van Rossum discusses factual military events, the Batavian tribe's economic situation and the position of the Batavians in the Roman army. Van Rossum defends the thesis that the Batavian rebellion was not a native revolt but much more a quarrel between Vitellius' and Vespasianus' Roman army units which ran out of hand. He mentions, of course, the Batavians' secret oath taking under Civilis, the Batavian leader, during the revolt. He goes on to incorporate

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¹ Bogaers 1955: 183.

Tacitus' theme about the presence of the priestess, which was in a vague way, involved in these events. Finally Van Rossum mentions the building of the temple at Elst and the construction of the legionary base at Nijmegen.

Van Rossum does not provide any causal relationship between the oath taken by the Batavians, the role of the priestess, the rebuilding of the temple at Elst and the construction of the new legionary base at Nijmegen.

In order to fully understand the Romans' rebuilding of the temple at Elst and the Batavian rebellion it is essential to have a clear insight into the relationship between these four elements.

This relationship can be explained from the Fides. Fides ties man to his social environment and this founds the confidence of the other.

The role of the temple in the river area of the Lower Rhine is not expressly mentioned in the literary sources. Some literary sources, however, contain veiled information about the significance of a temple or the meaning of Fides in Roman ideology (Cicero): *rei militaris gloria praestat ceteris omnibus*.² Roymans' & Derks' (1992) preliminary report on the temple of Empel is useful in clarifying the position of the Elst temple within—my position—a system of Roman temples along the Limes in Germania Inferior. This connection becomes obvious when we look more closely at the role of the Fides in the course of the Batavian rebellion.³

My hypothesis is that the Elst temple was not a holy place for the Batavians. It is much more likely to have been a symbol of Roman domination over the *civitas Batavorum*. That is why the Batavians attacked the temple in 69 AD and why in 70 AD Vespasianus had the temple rebuilt: to put the Batavians in their proper place.

The Destruction and Rebuilding of the Temple at Elst

In his *Fasti* Ovidius describes how the feast of "all souls" was celebrated in ancient Rome.⁴ At a certain time the Romans are so *gerunt pugnacibus armis* "so busy making war", they forget to celebrate the festival of the souls. Because of this the dead's souls start wandering through the city and this leads to terrible occurrences. Then the Romans decided to recommence celebrating the festival of the dead, hoping that the dead

² Wells 1972: 3.

³ "Fides ist das im Menschen, was seine gegenüber einem anderen eingegangene Bindung oder Verpflichtung zu einer sittlichen Bindung macht und so das Vertrauen des anderen begründet" (Oppermann 1983: 25). This definition is actually more concrete than the description of Fides in the essay collection Wallace-Hadrill 1990.

⁴ *Fast.* II. vs. 545-565 (Loeb Edition).



Map 1. Sites mentioned in the text. 1. Elst, 2. Empel, 3. Nijmegen [drawing by D.B. Renkes, IPP Amsterdam].

would withdraw to their places of rest and that the people could live in peace with them. Laying the dead to rest after heavy fighting may explain the destruction and rebuilding of the temple at Elst. This Roman holy site⁵ certainly could have been the place where the signal to begin the rebellion in 69 AD was given. Religious sites play an important role in the thinking of both the Germans and the Romans. The destruction⁶ and rebuilding of the temple at Elst may, therefore, be interpreted as political events.

In 70 AD Vespasianus had a strong position in Rome. He could, therefore, have ordered the rebuilding of the temple at Elst to keep the memory of the "long year 69" and the Batavian revolt alive.⁷ The location of the second temple could have been chosen for the same reason as the first. Sticking to the same location shows that the Romans were not willing to give way to the events of 69 AD. They wanted to continue their policy towards the Batavians. The question now arises as to which policy they wanted to continue. With this location in the vicinity of the oppidum Batavorum and the new legionary base, and overlooking the tribal territory of the Batavians, a direct relationship between the geographic, military, political and religious elements of the *rei militaris gloria* ideology becomes obvious.⁸ The use of expensive building

⁵ The first building phase in Elst began under Emperor Claudius and continued until the fire in 69 AD. The second phase commenced in 70 AD and was the work of Vespasianus.

⁶ Bogaers 1955: 46, 192.

⁷ This is Bogaers' Temple II, 1955. Cf. Tacitus, *Historiae* V, 25.

⁸ About the problem of the location of the temple at Elst close to the Limes I refer to the term "liminality" as described by Turner 1985. Turner states that the geographic definition of a border is also visible in the objectives of men. Objectives are all norms and values. A border, therefore, is not only something which may be pointed to in the landscape, but is also part of Roman political ideology. If a temple

material (tufa) also plays a role when thrusting the temple upon the Batavians as a visual landmark of Roman power.

Vespasianus' Activities in the West

Before further investigating the policy behind the expensive construction of the second temple, it is important to shed some light on the role of Vespasianus. Suetonius clearly states, in capita 8 and 9, that Vespasianus put a lot of effort into restoring order in the Empire.⁹ Suetonius describes Vespasianus' reconciliation efforts in the Eastern parts of the empire and in the city of Rome. He does not talk about the activities of Vespasianus in the West. But capita 8 and 9 clearly show Vespasianus' intention to initiate such activities in the West.

Vespasianus restored discipline amongst his soldiers. He did not permit areas freeing themselves from the empire, but was not planning punitive expeditions (caput 8). Furthermore Vespasianus rebuilt houses and buildings in Rome which had been destroyed. He restored the Capitol because he wanted to have the texts of the lost treaties with the provincial tribes (amongst them those of the Batavians) and the decisions of the Senate on the relationships with the provinces available.

These treaties and privileges were kept in a temple and had been in force since the old days. We do not have any evidence of revenge by Vespasianus in our area, but we do have that evidence in the Eastern Mediterranean. One example is the destruction of Jerusalem.

In Rome, Vespasianus proceeded with a program of temple construction. He built one temple for peace and one in memory of Claudius. The construction of these two temples gives us an example of the character of the official building program of the princeps. The construction of the temple at Elst could very well have fitted in with this official building program. When Claudius was emperor he made it his policy to maintain good relations with the provinces. It seems that Vespasianus wanted to follow Claudius in this respect as, according to Suetonius in caput 9, Vespasianus appointed a good candidate from the province in his new senate rather than a corrupt one from Rome. Vespasianus wanted to continue Claudius' policy of incorporating the provinces into the Roman administrative system. Claudius was also the "Limes policy" princeps. Vespasianus wanted to continue this policy. In relation to this policy towards the provinces, the emphasis on the building of the second temple at Elst as a temple for peace, becomes plausible. Of course, in general,

fits in with this ideology, the temple building becomes a geographic and visible sign of "liminality".

⁹J. C. Rolf (ed.), Suetonius (Loeb Edition) I: **Vespasianus**.

Vespasianus wanted peace after the unrest. He wanted to achieve the restoration of the principate as it had existed under Claudius who had built fidestemple I at Elst. For him Nero was not a good "exemplum".

The policy of peace can be recognised in the river area of the Lower Rhine and *Insula Batavorum*. For the Batavians the restoration of a good relationship, as had existed under Claudius, was also a means of escaping a punitive expedition from the new Roman authorities.¹⁰ They would also have referred to the text of treaties made with the Romans and signed under earlier principes. They would have asked for the restoration of the treaty text, and therefore for the restoration of the *fides* relationship between Romans and Batavians, as defined in the tablets in the Capitol.

If the second temple at Elst was built by Vespasianus, then its construction would fit in with the emperor's policy towards the provinces, as described above, on the basis of some of Suetonius' lines.¹¹ The rebuilding of the temple at Elst had, therefore, a memorial function, a piety function and a function in the emperor's policy of reconciliation. The rebuilding also indicates the Batavians' wish for reconciliation¹² with the Roman administration.

The Role of the Fides

I use *fides*¹³ here as the central concept to understand the building of the temple at Elst by the Romans in the context of their position of strength in the *civitas Batavorum*. Bogaers says: "For architectural reasons it is not possible that the two temples formed a direct expression of Roman state religion and official reverence to the emperor",¹⁴

But, architectural reasons alone provide insufficient evidence as to the importance of the two temples at Elst. I see the architecture of the two temples at Elst as the result of *Fides*. Bogaers' statement that Roman temples only have a function when they are devoted to the emperor or to the official pantheon of the Roman gods is also not correct. Dorcey 1992 rightly states that the Romans worshipped not only the Olympian gods but also the apparently insignificant gods to implement their *Res*

¹⁰ Tacitus, *Historiae* V, 26.

¹¹ My interpretation of Suetonius' *capita* 8 and 9 partly relies on the report in Tacitus, *Historiae* V, 25, 26.

¹² See the argument of Civilis in Tacitus, *Historiae* V, 26.

¹³ See note 3, Oppermann 1983. I like to see *Fides* as the binding force of an Roman patronage group. This group operates as an elite versus a minority in force or potentials. When the Batavians revolt against the Romans they want to be free again (*Historiae* V, 25 en 26). But free to operate as an elite against an other tribe.

¹⁴ Bogaers 1955: 183.

Publica. This brings me to the conclusion that in Elst the worship of several gods and several different objectives may have come together in the building of the two temples.

The popular Roman writer Plautus¹⁵ wrote in his play *Aulularia* that greedy Euclio was going to bury his pot of gold in the temple of Fides (in Rome this temple is next to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus). In the play, Plautus mocks averice Euclio is completely at his wit's end with fear that his pot of gold will be stolen. He believes that if he entrusts his treasure to the god of the treaty, nothing can go wrong. But everything goes wrong. This is the *pointe* of Plautus' satire on the existence of honest treaties. As the god Fides is mentioned by Plautus we know that Fides is a recognizable phenomenon in the religious world of the Romans, although Fides isn't a god in the Roman's official pantheon. Dorcey's description of the worship of Silvanus also is a good example of the importance of unofficial Roman gods. This also supports my argument about the importance of Fides.¹⁶

Symbolically, fides can be linked to the Roman policy of subjecting a people to their power. Harris 1985 gives a clear argument on the foreign policy of the Romans and on the role of fides. He emphasizes two aspects of fides, basing his argument on information from Polybius.¹⁷ The fides prevented Rome from attacking a *civitas* with which they had either an official or unofficial treaty. The fides also provided the means to attack a *civitas* when Rome deemed it necessary. Consequently, the Romans could play very subtle games with Fides. Fides operates under all circumstances, but it was most useful on the fringes of the Roman empire.

The Strategic Location of the Temple at Elst

In view of the difficult political situation, the temple at Elst could have been used to shape a good relationship between the Romans and Batavians. It could also have been used to justify a punishment expedition if the Batavians became rebellious again or didn't fulfil their obligations. This provides a legitimate reason for the strongest party to build new castra¹⁸ in the *civitas* Batavorum, in the vicinity of the temple

¹⁵ Plautus, *De Aulularia* (Ambo 1992) verses 578-700.

¹⁶ With my emphasis on the importance of the unofficial gods, I again take a position opposing to that of Bogaers 1955: 194. See the end of this article for this.

¹⁷ Harris 1985: 34.

¹⁸ I see the castra at Nijmegen as Vetera's emergency camp. In my opinion, Vetera falls under the military command of Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium.

at Elst. The genuineness of both faces of Fides in the Roman culture (as described by Harris) gives sufficient reason to see the temple of Elst as a treaty temple for the continuation of Roman military policy towards the Batavians.

The explanation of the role of the temple in the relationship between the Romans and the Batavians must refer to more than religion alone. Politics and economics also play an important role. This theory was developed by Turner 1985. The theory of Turner and the results of the studies by Mitchell and Rüpke are for me the starting point for a new appraisal for all the temples in Gallia and Germania to be landmarks of Rome's imperial policy.

And now we must take a look at the constituting circumstances of this Roman policy in the land of the Batavians.

The Policy of fides in the Land of the Batavians

We may assume that, after the events of 69 AD, the Romans and the Batavians needed peace.¹⁹ This can be seen in the environment which was built by the Romans after 69 AD, in the *civitas Batavorum*, notably in the structure of the Limes rebuilding after 69 AD. The desire for peace can be recognized in the sacred symbols around the goddess Fides. We can see this in the *sacral* topography²⁰ of the environment: temple and castra. Bogaers²¹ mentions a decorative motif on Elst II's capital. This motif corresponds with the motif on the Jupiter pillar in Mainz.

The Distance between Temple and Castra

To have their strategies working, the Romans did not only rely on the building of a new treaty temple, even though this is a particularly nicely decorated one and has the function of bringing rest to those who died in the rebellion. The threat of a legion was necessary to communicate the desired political message to the Batavians. Luttwak 1976 concludes that there is a distinction between a threat of military "power" and a direct presence of troops, a "force".

The distance between the new temple and the castra on the Waal is too small to detract from the coherence of Roman policy. The presence of the 10th legion in Nijmegen, and the honorary titles given to it, all play a role

¹⁹ Tacitus, *Historiae* V, 26.

²⁰ I return to this term later. I place, however, emphasis on similarity in design. Here the ornamentation mentioned by Bogaers of Elst II comes into its own right.

²¹ Bogaers 1955: 156-7.

in this. The princeps Domitianus gave the legion the titles “pius” and “fidelis” in 88/89 AD, after the revolt of Saturninus. Pius for respecting the obligations to the father and the gods.²² Fidelis indicates respecting the Fides. This implies the maintenance of fides by force. The 10th legion’s honorary titles reinforce the goal for which the legion was in Nijmegen. And they are well known from the princeps Claudius who in 53 asked the senate to give these titles to the 11th legion after the revolt of Scribonianus. Pious loyalty means loyalty to the emperor and not, as happened in 69 AD, rebellion. Fidelis means, on behalf of the princeps, consistency in the execution of daily military work: the maintenance of the Fides on behalf of the princeps.

The 10th legion’s fortress was the location where the means of power for the maintenance of the Fides were kept. The temple at Elst was the location where the Batavians could, in practice, honour the Fides. The other functions of the temple (administrative, political) also become visible here and we will follow the lines of thought of Mitchell and Rüpke.²³

The Role of a Temple in Roman Society

Did the temple at Elst have a function in the relationship between the Romans and the Batavians? Mitchell²⁴ points to the role of the temple in the relationship between plebeians and patricians. The role of the patricians in Mitchell’s study, can be compared to that of the Romans in “Nijmegen”, while the position of the plebeians can be compared to that of the Batavians in “Elst”. Mitchell explains the position of the plebeians and patricians in early Rome: “Temples, cults, sanctuaries and shrines were focal points for bringing together the rapidly expanding population; they were centers of economic, political and juridicial organization and administration which enabled the developing city-state to recruit manpower for its own defense and expansion”. Building on his idea about the function of the temple in early Roman society, he says: “small communities, villages, cult centers and even individuals supplied fixed military units”. When we apply this model to the first century AD, we get an idea of the Batavians’ recruitment and, e.g., the supplying of ox hides by the Frisians in 28 AD. The Frisians had administrative obligations enforced upon them as Tacitus tells us.²⁵ I think the Batavians got their obligations imposed from the temples at Elst and Empel.

²² See Nicolet 1991: 41-2 about the relationship between Augustus and the Mars Ultor temple in Rome on the Forum Martis.

²³ Cf. the section Further Research below.

²⁴ Mitchell 1990: esp. 55.

²⁵ Tacitus, *Annales* IV, 72.

Inscriptions, (as yet not) found at any temple in the Rhine provinces, were probably to be interpreted as part of the administrative obligations of the local tribes to the Romans: administrative payments to the god mentioned.²⁶ Such inscriptions might refer indirectly to administrative actions. The god legitimized the delivery of men and goods. When there was no delivery, the fides was broken and the military apparatus could organize punitive expeditions. However, as said, temple administrations have not been found.

That Augustus attempted a recovery of the *mos maiorum*, does not only point to ritualistic aspects, but also to political aspects in the *ordines*, i.e. relationships among the Romans themselves, and those between Romans and non-Romans.²⁷

When attempting to rank the Roman and indigenous gods based on their various cult places, we see that all the indigenous gods were dependent on Roman Fides. My opinion to this is different from the one of Derks.²⁸ The underlying hierarchy of the cult places can be explained in terms of the way in which Augustus set up a system of "arae" militarily dependent from Rome. The most important was the Ara Pacis in Rome. The ara in Lyon derives directly from Rome. The ara in Cologne derives from Lyon. The ara in Elst was a derivation of the one in Cologne. It was the temple from which the Romans organized the delivery of goods and services. Batavians came here to receive their orders and to perform their obligatory religious services. Derks also seems interested in the role of the *arae* in Gallia.²⁹

The building of the temple and the legionary base is evidence of the colonisation model by the Romans. The fides here was a connecting factor between temple and fortress. It directed Roman colonisation policy.

The Battle Hardened 10th Legion

Soon after 70 AD, the Legio X Gemina, coming from Spain, built the castra (Bogaers 1961). Considering the difficulties the Romans had encountered in controlling the permanent frontier zone in northwest Spain, we can hypothesize that ordering a legion precisely from Spain to the Batavian frontier zone shows how seriously the Roman administration judged the situation. With the arrival of the 10th legion at this

²⁶ Contra Derks 1992; see further note 28.

²⁷ See F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, 1992, Chapter VIII.

²⁸ Derks makes an inventory of inscriptions. I choose for the description of the cult places in the broader perspective of fides. That is why an inscription (to be) found on or near a cult place must be related to all the possible functions of a temple.

²⁹ Derks 1992: 18.

ideal position, castra and temple, the Romans wanted to force the Batavians to surrender to the new situation, the *fides* cult. The new Roman fortress after the revolt of 69 AD was, militarily, an intensified continuation of the control over the *insula Batavorum* than had existed before the rebellion. The burning of the temple—the ultimate denial of *Fides*—was not to happen again.

*The Batavian Priestess*³⁰

The image Tacitus evoked for his Roman readers on the events of the long year 69, was that the Batavians were working on their own *fides* in a holy forest,³¹ separate from the Romans and independent of the temple at Elst. Before the rebellion of 69 AD, the temple of Elst, Bogaers' temple I, was the heart of Roman administration of the "*civitas Batavorum*". Tacitus describes the Batavian priestess as an intruder into the sphere of influence of the Roman priest in Elst. The Roman priest, a person in the centre of Rome's power in the *provincia*, embodied the valid administrative structure. Tacitus presents the actions of the Batavian priestess as "historic" facts and—maliciously—as the essential motives of the Batavian rebellion against the Romans. But no explanation is given by ancient historians for this rebellion which began as a quarrel between Vitellius' and Vespasianus' troops and which ran out of control. The Batavians should be blamed for this. As an experienced war reporter, Tacitus put the blame on the rebels. The Batavian priestess became the target of his coloured legitimization. She opposed the basic structure of the "*res publica*" of early Rome and the Roman gods. In *Veleda's* holy forest—evidently a place beyond Roman control—the revolt started. In this way we can explain the position of the priestess, *Veleda*, in the confederate society of the Batavians, as opposing violently Roman *fides* ideology. She embodied the role of the indigenous gods and rejected the Roman gods, among them *Fides*. The location in the holy forest where *Civilis* and his allies took the oath and the location of the new *fides* temple after the events of 69 and 70 AD are not identical, but they are different and represent opposing ideas. This opposition finds further expression in Tacitus' remark on the role of the German women.³² We know the location of the temple at Elst, but where was the oath taken under *Julius Civilis*? We do not need much speculation to surmise that the Batavian pantheon loved that spot.

³⁰ The lady in question is *Veleda*. She is visited by the Batavians and therefore is part of the Batavian religious visions.

³¹ Tacitus, *Historiae* IV, 14.

³² *Historiae* V, 25: the kings of the Romans versus the women of the Germans. The German woman is known to be *Veleda*.

Rüpke's Mental Map

I consider the building of both the temple at Elst and the castra at Nijmegen as a non-verbal message concerning the political situation in this frontier zone.

When discussing the problem of the city boundaries in Rome, in his study on religion and army, Rüpke³³ states that the sacral topography of Rome provides the cadre in which the city boundaries should be seen. The sacred topography of Rome's city boundaries, now offers an explanatory model for the development of sites along the Limes in Germania Inferior and consequently also for the insula Batavorum. The sacral city topography might have been the starting point for Vespasianus' planned building program to create a situation which was acceptable to the Romans in the Batavian civitas, after the events of 69 AD. In this situation, the temple of Fides functions as a centre of domination, which is supported by a strong military force.

Rüpke continues: "Es gilt, die "mental map" der Römer zu rekonstruieren, in der sie ihre natürliche Umgebung interpretiert haben und nach der sie diese—natürliche Umgebung—in Kulturlandschaft verwandelt haben. Künstliche Zeichen, Grenzsteine, Haine, TEMPEL, setzen die "mental map"—zumindest ansatzweise—in geographische Realität um, machen sie so erlernbar." When we apply Rüpke's reasoning to the Limes in our frontier zone during the reign of Vespasianus, we can understand the temple at Elst and the castra at Nijmegen as the built results of design principles equivalent to those applied by the Romans in their urbs. The temple of Elst is an architectural reality and at the same time a metaphorical reality in the context of a political building program. It is a part of the Romans' deliberate strategy. Rüpke calls this the "mental map". I think this is a good description. I see Rüpke's mental map as a cornerstone of fides: it contributes substantially to the development of virtuous and moral ties between groups and individuals. In my perception is the construction of spatial environment in both the city of Rome and the frontier zone of Elst and Nijmegen a function of Fides: the binding principle of all economic, political and military actions between treaty partners. The status of the treaty partners is, almost by definition, unequal: in Rome the senate versus the *populus*; in the insula Batavorum the Romans versus the Batavians.

Temple Systems along the Limes

I use Turner's, Mitchell's and Rüpke's cited observations to look at the situation in the frontier zone shortly after the 69 AD revolt. Following

³³ Rüpke 1990: 29, 30.

their interpretations I come to a conclusion: after 70 AD, the temple at Elst is part of a temple system along the Limes, in the same way as the castra near Nijmegen are a part of the Limes defense system. The Limes consists of a military as well as a religious component—the “virtuous ties” of Fides.

In such a perspective temples at sites as Elst and Empel are landmarks in a political building program in the frontier zone of Germania Inferior. We can relate this temple building program with the function of a temple as described in the quote from Mitchell.

The Role of Religio

Central to Cicero's thinking is the idea that in Rome no public activity could take place without consulting the *auspicia*. He states: *urbem religione quam ipsis moenibus cingitis*, i.e. Rome is as surrounded by religion as by its walls. Religion surrounds her people. The Romans were surrounded by their religion and they emphasized this by building temples on their frontiers. Elst was situated, geographically, on the border between the Romans and the Batavians and in the religious sense, between the Romans' religion and the Batavian pantheon. Official Roman ceremonies, with the objective of reinforcing Roman religion and the Fides to the subjected Batavians, must have taken place in Elst. In Elst traces of sacrificial ceremonies have been found. These offerings belong to the rituals of Roman religion. In the same way as political events in Rome were determined by sacrificial ceremonies by the pontifex maximus, the Romans in the provinces wanted to emphasize moments of political decision to those concerned with sacrificial ceremonies by a Roman pontifex. A Roman priest was naturally connected to the execution of these ceremonies. Remains of rituals belonging to the *suovetaurilia*—the offering of ox, pig and sheep—whether standardised or not, have been found in Elst. Such a sacrifice was possibly made, e.g., on the occasion of the *lustratio* at the spot where temple II was newly built after the destruction of temple I.³⁴

The Hierarchy of Elst and Empel and the Roots of Medieval Diocesan Administration

Empel was also a cult place with an administrative and political function in the Fides relationship between the Batavians and Romans. In my opinion, this claim can be strengthened on the basis of Roman material found in Empel.³⁵ Material of the period before the arrival of the Romans demonstrates that Empel was an important Batavian religious site. This

³⁴ See Bogaers 1955: 141-42 and Lauwerier 1988: 112.

³⁵ Roymans & Derks 1992.

material points to the conclusion that the Romans annexed and overruled Empel. Are we allowed to draw the conclusion from this annexation that they also built a military fortress at Empel? A fortress which archaeologists have not yet found and also a fortress which ancient historians theoretically never expected would exist. We have to find the fortress either by excavation, or revaluation of earlier excavations (Rossum?) or discovery of an underlying relationship between the temples of Elst and Empel, the castra at Nijmegen being the military pendant of the temple of Elst. Most archaeologists, however, will not subscribe to such a position.

However, we arrive at the question whether hierarchy between the Roman temples may be surmised. Was Elst more important than Empel on the Roman "mental map", in the same way as castra were more important than castella?

For an answer to this question, we have to turn to the Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippiniensium. Following Cicero's statement that the Romans used their religion as their walls, the expansion of the Roman Empire should be visible through a complex system of temples and altars. The Agrippina altar in Cologne was the centre of Fides in the Provincia Germania Inferior. The altar in Cologne was dependent on the large altar in Lyon, which was founded by Augustus as one of his larger Fides monuments. The Lyon Tres Galliae altar must have been dependent on the Ara Pacis of the *Campus Martis* in Rome. From the perspective of this greater range of mutually dependent temples, it is likely that, on a local level, Elst has been more important than Empel. Within the province of Germania Inferior, both Empel and Elst were dependent on Cologne.

At this point I arrive at a conclusion different from Bogaers' in his thesis.³⁶ Bogaers wants to explain caput 25 of book five of Tacitus' *Historiae*. I think Tacitus' caput 25 is not self-supporting, but should be regarded in relation with Suetonius' description of the *vita* of Vespasianus, capita 8 and 9. From Tacitus' lines it becomes clear that after their failed struggle for self-government the Batavians strove for a repositioning in respect to the Romans and away from Civilis and Velede, which I want to explain as a new fides pact. Suetonius' work also presents information from which Vespasianus' plan for Elst and Nijmegen might be deduced. Bogaers explains caput 25 of Tacitus in isolation and concludes: "At the peace negotiations the Romans must have created conditions through which the Batavians became extremely loyal allies to the empire, again. The treaty must have been very favourable for the Batavians. A wonderful confirmation of this seem to me the remains of the second temple at

³⁶Bogaers 1955: 194.

Elst. This indigenous sanctuary became the new symbol for the alliance between the Romans and the Batavians. Soon after the revolt it was rebuilt, in great style, by the Romans to replace the temple which had been destroyed shortly before". However, we are not concerned with an indigenous temple, but with a preconceived concept of Roman colonisation policy—irrespective of their specific Gallo-Roman plan.

Here we see a fundamental type of landmarking: *religio* creates a built environment which has long-term consequences. Remains of this provincial policy by the Romans are visible in the medieval dioceses in the Netherlands. Historians have studied the organization of the early Christian church in the dioceses of Nijmegen and Utrecht between 400 and 800 AD. They concluded that Utrecht and Nijmegen were dependent on Cologne. But they have not been able to find a reason for this dependency. Cicero's quote on *religio* as a wall around the city, the acceptance of a well-founded model of conquest by the Romans, of a Roman bureaucracy in Germania Inferior, of an *ara* structure within the Roman empire, and the *fides* model provide an answer to this question. Van Dam 1985 concludes that the Roman upper class in Gallia in the 5th century AD is the link between the organisational model of the Roman provincial structure and that the "new" one of the emergent Christian church. The landscape, built by Rome's *religio*, continued to work in the early medieval society along the Lower Rhine and its division into dioceses and parishes.

Finally, it is, in my opinion, important to question the administrative function of the temple in the context of the *fides* within the Roman bureaucracy in the province of Germania Inferior if we try to establish the hierarchical order of temples. Derks, in his 1992 article on the temples in northern Gallia, does not consider this question.

Conclusion

The temple at Elst had many functions. It was a memorial temple to commemorate those who died in the rebellion. It is, even more, a monument with which the Romans wanted to impress upon the Batavians that they had to demonstrate their *fides* to the Romans again, and not to a king or priestess of their own. It is clear that, for the Romans, the temple was a dynamic link in the political power play between conqueror and conquered. The Batavians had to deliver a number of men to the Romans, as a visible symbol of their *fides* to the Romans. The temple itself forms part of the building program to make visible the *fides* that was owed to them. The temple at Elst and the castra at Nijmegen together form the Romans' built environment, intended to show the Batavians that if they do not obey *Fides*, the military force of Mars or Hercules would be used

against them. The partial departure of the legion from Nijmegen in 104 AD is not the end of the Romans' political concern with the Batavians, but means the disappearance of the threat from the god of war, Mars, or Hercules against the Batavians. This indicated the full restoration of the Fides between the Romans and the Batavians. The temple at Elst is, therefore, the visible Roman Fides monument of the political, economic and religious aspects, even after the Roman legionary force left the Batavian scene in 104 AD.

Further Research

It is important that the excavations and the revaluation of cult places be continued. Without a temple, military presence is impossible. The nature of their ranking will no doubt become clear when the excavations in Nijmegen West (Ulpiā Noviomagus) will have provided more information about the two temples, which we know there since 1916, but which are still awaiting full interpretation.³⁷

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³⁷E.g. Willems 1990: 63-70. New excavations at the site are undertaken by the head of the municipal archaeological service, J.R.A.M. Thijssen.

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