

Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia

Materiality and Religious Experience

Csaba Szabó



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Contents

List of Figures.....	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Abbreviations.....	vii
I. Introduction.....	1
I.1. Space sacralisation and the Lived Ancient Religion approach	2
I.2. Rethinking sacralised spaces in Roman Dacia: a research history	5
I.3. The material: sources of the book	8
II. Sacralising the space in urban context	11
II.1. Urbanism and religious communication.....	11
Urbanism in Roman Dacia: general and local specificities	11
The city, as a religious agent	13
The city as religious agent in Roman Dacia.....	14
II.2. Walls and religious experience	14
Walls in Roman Dacia: some short remarks	15
Colonia Sarmizegetusa.....	16
Apulum.....	16
II.3. The Roman fort and its sacralised spaces	20
The fort as a space of religious communication.....	20
The case of Apulum: the topography of the fort and its finds	22
The Principia as sacralised space in Apulum: some notes	24
The Eagle and its officers in peace and war: religion and military morale.....	26
Between moral individuality and lived experience: further case studies.....	31
II.4. The omnipresent god: locating Jupiter.....	35
Jupiters everywhere: the topography of the finds.....	36
Jupiter and the memory of the place: two case studies	40
II.5. Sanctuaries and spectacles	42
Amphitheatres as places of religious communication	42
Sacella of Nemesis: analogies from Dacia and the Danubian provinces	43
The archaeological record from Apulum: topographic and iconographic aspects	45
A case study: Nemesis in the camp?	46
II.6. Monopolising space: religious competition and the power elite	47
Religion and competition in Apulum: the urban elite.....	47
Religion and the senatorial elite in Apulum	51
Hidden religion: the Praetorium Consularis	53
The ‘visible’ senators: the accessibility of the socio-political elite	56
Providing religion: priesthood beyond the titles	58
Social networks between urban and provincial.....	63
Sacerdotes: beyond religious specialization	63
Read the liver to be famous – the case study of Caius Iulius Valens	64
Religious specialists of small religious groups.....	66
Conclusions.....	68
II.7. The Asklepieion in Apulum: a regional centre for healing	68
Creating sacred landscapes: transformation and manipulation of the natural environment.....	69
Choreography and commemoration: actions and events from the healing sanctuary of Apulum	73
Individual options in the Roman health-care system of Apulum.....	75
II.8. Lived religion in secondary spaces	78
Discovering Liber Pater in Apulum: a short overview.....	78
From sanctuary to dining room: redefining the space of small religious groups.....	80
Limits of a lived ancient religious experience: the shrine of Liber Pater in Apulum.....	80
More equal among equals: various identities within a religious group	86
Communal identity as mental constructions in small-group religions	89
The lost lamps of the eternal god: a curious case study	92

Spatial aspects and cultural identities in small-group religions	93
Sacralisation and spatial dynamics of identities: some analogies	95
II.9. Mithras in Apulum: between local and universal	98
Appropriation and religious bricolage between local and universal.....	99
Creating, maintaining and ending a Mithraic sanctuary	100
Mithraic groups in Colonia Aurelia Apulensis	100
Mithraic groups in Municipium Septimium Apulense	106
The Mithraeum: religious network and local appropriation	110
The building: between pragmatism and religion	111
The group and its individuals: power, hierarchy and religious communication in the mithraeum	114
Representing Mithras in Apulum: some considerations on iconography and production	116
Final remarks	120
II.10. The missing church: questioning Christianity in Apulum	120
Christianities in Romanian historiography.....	121
Early Christianity before AD 313 in provincial contexts.....	121
A critical re-assessment of the so-called Early Christian artefacts from Apulum	121
III. Sanctuaries and networks in military settlements:	
Porolissum and Praetorium.....	128
III.1. The ‘plateau of the sanctuaries’ in Porolissum: an overview	128
III.2. The Dolichena from Porolissum and Praetorium: a comparative study.....	130
The Dolichenum from Porolissum	132
Praetorium (Mehadia): some further remarks	135
IV. sacralised spaces in the countryside.....	141
IV.1. Landscape of Dacia: between myth and reality	141
Tales about Dacia: the imaginary landscape of the province and its inhabitants	141
Geography of Dacia: some recent results.....	142
IV.2. Memory of the sacred: on the continuity of pre-Roman sacred spaces	143
IV.3. Transformation of the natural environment: Ad Mediam and Germisara.....	145
IV.4. Deep in religion: space sacralisation in the mining settlements of Ampelum and beyond	154
Discovering and forgetting Ampelum: a brief history of research.....	155
Religion outside the mines: case studies of religious appropriation	156
Religious entrepreneurs from Commagene: Syrians in Ampelum	162
Mithras for your home: a particular case study from the private sphere.....	164
Religion in mining settlements: further case studies	165
IV.5. Religious appropriation in rural contexts: further case studies.....	168
Mithras in rural Dacia	168
Production and religion in the countryside.....	171
V. Beyond Lived Ancient Religion in Dacia.....	175
Facts and results: how ‘lived’ was Roman religion in Dacia?	175
The story of Dacia: culture, religion and memory	178
VI. Annexes: Sanctuaries of Roman Dacia	180
VI.1. Archaeologically attested sanctuaries of Roman Dacia.....	181
VI.2. Epigraphically attested sanctuaries of Roman Dacia.....	184
VI.3. Presumed sanctuaries of Roman Dacia	185
VII. Összefoglaló.....	190
VIII. Bibliography	194

List of Figures

Figure 1. Altar dedicated by Dasas and Dazurius in Alburnus Maior (source: AE 1990, 831=ILD 363, lupa 15241)	1
Figure 2. The LAR space taxonomy in Roman Dacia.....	4
Figure 3. Roman Empire and it's spaces in D. Clarke's space theory	6
Figure 4. Map of Dacia with the archaeologically, epigraphically attested and presumed sanctuaries (map based on Schäfer 2007, 357, abb. 1. with the kind permission of the author)	9
Table 1. Urban settlements and their chronology in Roman Dacia	12
Figure 5. Map of Roman Dacia with the urban settlements (after Höpken <i>et al.</i> 2016).....	12
Figure 6. Urban plan of Colonia Sarmizegetusa (after Boda 2015a, 304, fig.1.)	17
Figure 7. Map of the legionary fort of the XIII Gemina in Apulum (based on http://castrul-apulum.ro/).....	18
Figure 8. Topography of Colonia Aurelia Apulensis (with the contribution of L. Korodi-Vass).....	19
Figure 9. Urban plans of cities with archaeologically identified walls (from left to right: Municipium Septimium Apulense, Romula, Napoca and Sarmizegetusa).....	20
Figure 10. Plan of the aedes principiorum from Apulum (based on http://castrul-apulum.ro/)	24
Figure 11. Excavations in the aedes principiorum from Apulum in the autumn of 2011 (photo: author)	25
Figure 12. Figurative representation of an Aquila on an architrave from the principia (photo: author).....	26
Figure 13. Plan and reconstruction of the Principia with the aedes signorum from the legionary fort of Potaissa (after Bărbulescu 1994, 40).	27
Figure 14. Statue base of L. Aninius Firminus from the fort (photo: author).....	27
Figure 15. Altar or statue base of P. Catius Sabinus from the fort of Apulum (photo: author).....	29
Figure 16. Statue base or altar of Olus Terentius Pudens Uttedianus (photo: Ortolf Harl - lupa 6737).....	31
Figure 17. Altar or statue base of Caius Aurelius Sigillius (photo: Ortolf Harl - lupa 11522)	32
Figure 18. Principia buildings from Dacia: aedes with apsidal and rectangular forms (based on Marcu 2009)	34
Figure 19. Statue of Jupiter from Apulum (photo: Ortolf Harl - lupa 17354).....	36
Figure 20-21. The dedications of the <i>Tapetii</i> from the Colonia Aurelia Apulensis (photo: Ortolf Harl - lupa 11504, 11505).....	37
Figure 22. Dedication for Diana from the Colonia Aurelia Apulensis (photo: Ioan Piso, EDH)	38
Figure 23. Construction plaque of a sanctuary from Colonia Aurelia Apulensis (photo: Ioan Piso, EDH)	39
Figure 24. Monumental statue of the Capitoline Jupiter from the territory of the Municipium Septimium Apulense (photo: author)	40
Figure 25. Altar dedicated in a bidental (photo: lupa 12241)	41
Figure 26. Plan of the Nemeseion from Porolissum (after Wittenberg 2014, 111, fig. 30.).....	43
Figure 27. Plan of the Nemeseion from Colonia Sarmizegetusa (after Schäfer 2007, 381, abb.29.)	44
Figure 28. Statue of Nemesis (after Alexandrescu 2013).....	47
Figure 29. Marble plaque erected by Publius Aelius Rufinus in the Asklepieion (lupa 10943).....	49
Figure 30. Inscription from the time of Volusianus in Colonia Aurelia Apulensis Chrysopolis (lupa 10937)	51
Figure 31. Plan of the Palace of Governors (<i>praetorium consularis</i>) from Apulum (after Schäfer 2014b, 273, abb. 281)	54
Figure 32. Sacralised space within the palace of governor from Apulum with the altar dedicated to Minerva Victrix (photo after Szabó 2016a, fig.89)	56
Table 2. Priests and religious specialists in the settlements of Apulum	60
Figure 33. Construction plaque of a Dolichenum from Apulum (photo: Ioan Piso, EDH 038325)	66
Figure 34. Geophysical survey results of the Asklepieion area from Apulum (Source: http://foto.cimec.ro/cronica/2004/030/rsz_0.jpg) ...	70
Figure 35. Construction plaque of a Roman bridge near the Asklepieion of Apulum (lupa 11021).....	71
Figure 36. Dedication plaque with anatomical representation from the Asklepieion of Apulum (lupa 10968)	74
Figure 37. Statue base dedicated to Glykon from Apulum (lupa 11284).....	77
Figure 38. Preliminary plan of the Liber Pater sanctuary (after Schäfer 2014a, 49, pl.I.1.)	81
Figure 39a-b-c: statues of Liber Pater from its sanctuary from Apulum (lupa 19339, 19340, 19341)	84
Figure 40. construction plaque of the Liber Pater sanctuary from Apulum (photo: Ioan Piso, EDH 38362).	88

Figure 41. Bronze statuette of Artemis Ephesia from Apulum (photo: MNUAI, Szabó et al. 2016a).....	91
Figure 42. Map of the Municipium Septimium Apulense (photo: author).....	94
Figure 43. Funerary monument of Neses, son of Ierheus from Palmyra buried in Tibiscum (photo: lupa 15016).....	96
Figure 44. Plan of the Palmyrene sanctuary from Colonia Sarmizegetusa (after Piso-Țentea 2011, 114, fig.2.).....	97
Figure 45. Album of the cultores of Malagbel from the Syrian sanctuary from Colonia Sarmizegetusa (after Piso-Țentea 2011).....	98
Figure 46. Statue of Mithras Tauroctonos from Apulum (Lupa 17291)	101
Figure 47a-b. Column and altar dedicated by Dioscorus in Apulum (photos: Szabó et al. 2016b, fig.1 and 3.).....	102
Figure 48. Statue base dedicated by Statorius mentioning the rebuilding of a mithraeum from Apulum (lupa 12244)	105
Figure 49. Mithraic relief from the so called mithraeum of Oancea (lupa 19324)	109
Figure 50. The mithraeum discovered in 2008 in Apulum (photo after: Rustoiu et al. 2015, 260, fig. 1.).....	111
Figure 51: The 'road of the sanctuaries' on the southern part of the Municipium Septimium Apulense. The mithraeum is marked in red (I.7.). Photo: author.	112
Figure 52. Large Mithras relief from Colonia Aurelia Apulensis (photo after: Szabó 2015a)	118
Figure 53. Cautes with a bucranium from Apulum (photo: author)	118
Figure 54. Mithras Petrogenitus from Apulum (lupa 17355).....	119
Figure 55. Mosaic from Apulum (after Snogov 1996: 37-38).....	123
Figure 56. Cross-marked pottery fragments (after Moga 2007).....	124
Figure 57. Gemstone discovered in Apulum (after Nemeti 2013b, fig. 133a).....	125
Figure 58. Menas ampulla from Apulum (after Moga 2000).....	126
Figure 59. Sucidava belt-buckle from Apulum (after Moga 2007)	126
Figure 60. Late antique lamp with cross-mark (MNUAI, photo: author).....	127
Figure 61a-b. The fort of Porolissum and its environment with the so called road of sanctuaries (after Opreanu et al. 2013, 104, fig. 20 and 24).....	129
Figure 62. Construction inscription from the Dolichenum of Porolissum (after EDH 043639)	132
Figure 63. Plan of the dolichenum from Porolissum (photo: author, after Gudea-Tamba 2001).....	133
Figure 64. Column from the Dolichenum in Mehadia with a local iconography (after Boda-Szabó 2011).....	138
Figure 65. Relief representing Jupiter Dolichenus and Juno Dolichena from Porolissum (photo by Dan Deac, Museum of Zalău) ..	139
Figure 66. Map of the Dacian Kingdom with possible pre-Roman sacralised spaces (after Pescaru 2005)	144
Figure 67. Map of Ad Mediam drawn by Grisellini (after Benea-Lalescu 1998).....	147
Figure 68. The modern site of Germisara (photo: Aurora Pețan)	148
Figure 69. Gold plaques from Germisara (after Rusu 1994 and Ardevan-Cocis 2014)	149
Figure 70. Topography of Roman Germisara and its sites (after Pescaru-Alicu 2000)	150
Figure 71a-b. Monumental inscription dedicated by C. Sentius Iustinus in Germisara (after Piso 2015)	152
Figure 72. Healing sites and sacralised spaces in Roman Dacia (map based on Schäfer 2007, 357, abb. 1. with the kind permission of the author).....	154
Figure 73. The gold and iron mines of Roman Dacia (after Hirt 2010)	157
Figure 74. Topography of Roman Ampelum (after Pătrășcanu 1967): purple – cemetery; red – civilian settlement; nr. 1 – Jupiter temple/Capitolium; nr. 2 – Asclepeion; nr.3 – Fortuna Salutaris sanctuary; nr. 4 – dolichenum (map after Pătrășcanu 1967)	158
Figure 75. Jupiter Verospi head from Ampelum (after Diaconescu 2014).....	160
Figure 76. Mithraic sanctuaries in Roman Dacia (map based on Schäfer 2007, 357, abb. 1. with the kind permission of the author)	169
Figure 77. Plan of the mithraeum from Marosdécse/Decea Mureșului (after Takács 1987)	171
Figure 78. Mithras Petrogenitus from Romula (after Sicoe 2014, cat. nr. 236).....	171

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Abbreviations

ABRRD	Addenda for the Bibliography of Roman Religion in Dacia. Online: http://brrd2014.wixsite.com/brrd
AÉ	L'Année épigraphique
ANRW	Haase, W. - Temporini, H. (eds): Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt/Rise and Decline of the Roman World. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung, Berlin-New York, 1972
BBRD	Boda, I. - Szabó, C., Bibliography of Roman Religion in Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2014
CCAR	Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România
CCID	Hörg, M. - Schwertheim, E., Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni , Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 106, Leiden, 1987
CIGD	Ruscu, L., Corpus inscriptionum Graecarum Dacicarum, Hungarian Polis Studies 10, Debrecen, 2003
CIL	Corpus inscriptionum latinarum. Consilio et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae editum
CIMRM	Vermaseren, M. J., Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae I-II, The Hague, 1956-1960
Clauss-Slaby	Epigraphik Dantebank Clauss-Slaby
CSIR	Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani
DMA	Digital Map of Apulum = Szabó 2016b
EDH	Epigraphic Database Heidelberg
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain (founded by M. J. Vermaseren)
HA	Scriptores historiae Augustae
IDR	Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae I-III, București/Paris
IG	Inscriptiones Graecae
IGUR	Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae I-IV
ILD	Petolescu, C. C., Inscriptiile latine din Dacia. (Inscriptiones Latinae Dacicae), București 2005
ILS	Dessau, Hermann. Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae Berlin 1892-1916, 3 vols
IvP	Fränkel, M. (ed.), Altertümer von Pergamon (Band VIII, Band 2): Die Inschriften von Pergamon, Berlin, 1895
LIMC	Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae, Zürich, München, Düsseldorf, 1981-1999 and 2009
LSCG	Sokolowski, F., Lois sacrées de cités grecques, Paris, 1969
LTUR	Steinby, E. M. (ed.), Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae (1993-2000)
lupa	http://www.ubi-erat-lupa.org/simplesearch.php
MMM	Cumont, F. V., Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra: pub. avec une introduction critique, Bruxelles, 1894-1896
MNR	Museo Nazionale Romano, catalogues

MNIT	Muzeul Național de Istorie a Transilvaniei
MNUAI	Muzeul Național al Unirii Alba Iulia
OPEL	Onomasticon Provinciarum Europae Latinarum / ediderunt Barnabas Lorincz et Franciscus Redo, Budapest-Wien, 1994-2002
PGM	Betz, H. D., The Greek Magical Papyri in translation, Chicago-London, 1986
PIR	Prosopographi Imperii Romani saec. I. II. Ill (2nd edn), Berlin 1933
RIB	The Roman inscriptions of Britain / by the late R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, Oxford, 1965-2009
RIC	The Roman Imperial Coinage
RIU	Barkóczi, L. - Mócsy, A., Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns, Amsterdam, 1972-1991
SEG	Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum, 1923-
ThesCRA	Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum 2004-2014
Tit. Aq.	Kovács, P. - Szabó, Á., Tituli Aquincenses I-III. Vol. 1. Tituli operum publicorum et honorarii et sacri / ediderunt Ádám Szabó ... [et al.] - vol. 2. Tituli sepulcrales et alii Budapestini reperti / adiuvante Bence Fehér ; ediderunt László Borhy ... [et al.] - vol. 3. Tituli instrumenti domestici / cura Bence Fehér, Budapest, 2009-2011
TIR	Meredith, D., Tabula Imperii Romani: Map of the Roman Empire, based on the International 1: 1,000,000 map of the world, Oxford, 1958
TLL	Thesaurus linguae Latinae, München, 1894

I. Introduction

Dasas and Dazurius, two Illyrian men from the Māvioi tribe, lived close to the Pelješac peninsula, on the picturesque gulf of the Neretva (Narona) river – considered the coldest in the known world.¹ Their tribe lived near various Illyrian groups that specialised in the long-distance trade of wine and olive oils in the Adriatic, but also in mining. Barely speaking Latin, the first language of the Roman Empire, the small Illyrian group worshipped their local divinities, with specific Illyrian names, adopting Roman religious practices already in Dalmatia. They learned from their parents, friends, teachers, neighbours how to name a god, a spirit, which had superhuman powers. They also learned in Illyricum what kind of objects, scents, prayers, dances or chants these divine agents needed. They knew where these divine agents could be addressed most effectively. In other words, they learned the “religious” lesson and gained a religious knowledge, which probably included several common aspects from each group and family from this part of the Empire; however every single individual built this religious knowledge up differently, as their own identity.

At a certain moment between AD 106 and 271, Dasas and Dazurius, together with numerous other people from Dalmatia, changed their environment radically: they moved to Dacia, the latest province of Rome, once known as the Kingdom of the Dacians.

What did they know about this part of the world before they moved there? Hard to say. Perhaps only some legends from soldiers and merchants about a foggy, wild and barbarian province, where the feared enemy of Rome, the Dacians, lived in marvelous richness. They certainly knew that the province became part of the Empire, conquered by Trajan in the summer of AD 106 and celebrated in Rome on coins and all over the Roman world. With such ethnographic knowledge about the former kingdom of the Dacians, they left their homeland and moved into the mountains of the Apuseni. A world without seaside, without olives, a much colder, foggy and woody area, rich in gold and various other mines.

The group of Dasas and Dazurius preserved their mother language and their unpolished Latin, chose a site on the Hābad hill, where, together with other Illyrian groups, they built a small, rectangular building, where they continued to communicate with their gods in the manner, as they learned at home, on the bank of the

Narona. Dasas and Dazurius worshiped Maelantonius, a divinity who is uniquely attested in the Roman Empire, on their poorly elaborated, rudimentary altar (**Fig.1**).²

Maelanto/nio Dasas / e(t?) Dazurius / pro salute(!) / Maniatium / v(otum) s(olverunt) l(ibentes)

Maelantonius – whatever he might represent in the divine world, was part of the religious memory and



Figure 1. Altar dedicated by Dasas and Dazurius in Alburnus Maior (source: AE 1990, 831=ILD 363, lupa 15241)

¹ For a complete bibliography of the Illyrian groups of Dacia, see: Wollmann 1996; Damian *et al.* 2003; Piso 2004a; Ardevan *et al.* 2007; Ciongradi 2009; Nemeti-Nemeti 2010; Ciongradi 2014. See also Chapter IV.

² AE 1990, 831=ILD 363=Ciongradi 2009, nr. 75.

indigenous identity of the two movers. The small, rectangular building was at least in the beginning, the centre of the world for these Illyrians: a place where they can speak their mother language, speak with their gods in their home manner, meet their friends and make new connections. On this hill, more than 30 altars were found, several of them attesting different groups from Dalmatia. The number and position of the altars within the sanctuary suggest a regular, but not an intense activity on the hill. We do not know if there were charismatic religious entrepreneurs, priests acting at this site, making new narratives or strategies of communicating with gods. However, through their altars, they maintained a successful communication with their home divinities. They sacralised a space.

Dasas and Dazurius, and all the other people coming to Roman Dacia temporarily for some weeks, or months, or for long years of service might have had special, individual religious knowledge and habits when they arrived here, but the province itself, with its people, climate, geography, economy, administrative and political specificity, changed forever these movers and their religion too. The settlement of the two Illyrians was known as *kastellum Ansium* and was part of the larger administrative unit of the *Aurariae Daciae*, the golden district of the province. The area was dominated by the local elite of Ampelum, but the strong influence of Apulum and its legion was also present. They lived and interacted daily with people from all over the Roman Empire and, perhaps, with Dacians too. This special condition from Dacia, from these mountains and small settlements, the new social and economic roles they gained with intense networking, changed their religious communication too. These dynamics in communication with gods, the religion in the making, is memorised most visibly in the changes of the sacralised space, which became now not only a transporter of indigenous, group identities, but also an agent of social competition and group-networking. Maintaining such a special space was crucial for individuals, groups and settlements too. Some of these sacralised spaces remained small, almost invisible, used and visited by a single person, a family or a special group. Others however became large, monumentalised ‘instantiations’ in the architectural and natural landscape, gaining local or even provincial fame and visitors.

The sacralised space of Dasas and Dazurius, together with all the other hundreds of spaces where Romans communicated with divine agents, had a sudden end: its maintenance was dependent on human agency and the possibility of using special tools, in this case, a large number of altars, as votive offerings. After AD 271, or even a decade before, a large part of the population left the province, leaving the material presence of the Roman Empire without their human agency.

This case study of the Hăbad site represents the story of Dacia in a nutshell. It shows, how the former kingdom of the Dacians and the remaining, apparently rural population of the indigenous people, was suddenly cohabited by a large number of people from all over the Roman Empire. It illustrates also the economic and political motivations of the short- or long-term mobilities attested in the province and the major networks (familial and economic) bonding the population of Dacia between AD 106 and 271 with the rest of the Empire. The research history of this site was focusing till now on the publication of the excavation reports, cataloguing the altars and some of the small finds, establishing the ethnic and onomastic specificities of the human agency, and dealing with the epithets of gods and supposed syncretism of their religious communication. These focus points are common for almost every case study in Dacia.

What I intend to do in this book, is to go beyond Roman religion as part of the ‘Romanisation of Dacia’ and ask some new, sometimes radical, questions to highlight unasked dimensions of religion in Roman Dacia and in the archaeology of Roman religion in provincial contexts:³ what were the strategies and local appropriations to create, maintain and fail a sacralised space in Roman Dacia? What made a space more effective and intense in communication with divine agents? How does an individual or group bring religion into play in his/her interaction with other people? And finally: How did these special spaces, and the religious communication in them, shape and change individual and group identities? Following a radically new methodology,⁴ tested for the very first time in a case study from the Danubian provinces,⁵ this book will focus on the role of space sacralisation in the ‘Lived Ancient Religion’ approach.

I.1. Space sacralisation and the Lived Ancient Religion approach

The case study presented above and the major questions I addressed, introduced some of the key theoretical notions operating within this book. Notions such as space sacralisation, religious appropriation, religious individualisation, group identities and strategies of maintaining religious communication are just a few of the major innovations of a new school in the study of Roman religion, called the Lived Ancient Religion (LAR) approach.

Hosted by the Max Weber Centre of Erfurt University between 2012 and 2017, the ERC Advanced Project

³ Bloch 1944: 77 cited by Albrecht *et al.* 2018

⁴ Rüpkke 2012: 198 using the notion of ‘radical alternative’.

⁵ On religion in the Danubian provinces, see: Zerbini 2015; Szabó 2018a; Szabó 2018b.

entitled *Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning 'cults' and 'polis religion'*, financed by the European Research Council and embedded in the research group on 'Religious individualisation in historical perspective'⁶ aimed to question some of the major characteristics of Roman religious studies from the last few decades. The methodological background of the project was presented in numerous paradigmatic publications,⁷ showing itself a dynamic evolution of notions and terminological clarifications.⁸ Its methodological core lies in the critical approach on older assumptions that focused on polis religion, cults and religions essentialised as the ultimate religious agents, archaeology of religion reduced to an archaeology of belief systems, the marginality of the individual, as religious agent,⁹ or the contrastual presentation of 'ancient Roman religion' and 'Oriental religions'.¹⁰ The LAR approach criticised also the old assumption, that all inhabitants of ancient societies were 'religious' in the same way, depth or manner (*homo religiousus* fallacy).¹¹ Finally, the project united Christianity, Judaism, magic, and the so-called 'pagan' religions under the same research focus in a well-established geographic area, named as 'Mediterranean' religion.¹² Instead of these old assumptions, Roman religion is presented in the LAR approach as a 'religion in the making', focusing on the 'inherently dynamic quality of those cultural products that we identify as a religion in the course of historical analyses'.¹³ The project introduced several notions from contemporary religious studies and anthropology. Lived religion itself derives from the contemporary American school of religious studies, although its original meaning changed in the last decade, describing now mostly everyday religious experiences.¹⁴ LAR however does not try to focus exclusively on everyday religion. Instead, it tries to go beyond the dichotomy of subjectivity and communicative action. To do so, the project focused on individual religious appropriations, a notion from M. de Certeau defined here as 'the situational adaptation and deployment of existing practices and techniques, institutions, norms and media to suit contingent individual or group aims and needs'.¹⁵ Religious competence plays another important role in this approach. Defined shortly as prioritising personal engagement, knowledge and skill,¹⁶ facets of religious competence (religious agency,

identity, communication)¹⁷ were used to describe the experience and knowledge necessary for the success of religious action.¹⁸ Mediality and the situational meaning are other aspects which can guide us to understand more deeply the religious actions of the Romans and, generally, ancient peoples. Analysing the tools of religious communication, the project shifted its focus from agency to so-called religious 'instantiation', defined as the focus on the form and content of religious agents, mostly on material agency, but also narrated religions, such as the embodiment, or the narrated body as religious instantiation.¹⁹

Temporality and spatiality played a secondary role in the LAR project, highlighted only in the last publications.²⁰ It created also a space taxonomy, focusing on primary, secondary, and shared spaces in religious communication (**Fig.2**).²¹ Instead of focusing on the false dichotomy of public and private, urban and rural, military and civilian, small and monumental, this space taxonomy analyses the visibility, accessibility and connectivity of these sacralised spaces with their human agency, but also with other similar spaces and the broader environment.²² Sacralisation here is defined, therefore, as a spatial strategy of religious communication between humans and super-human divine agents.²³ As a result of sacralisation, 'special' spaces of various size, position, visibility, accessibility and connectivity can be created.²⁴

Creating such places could have various beginnings in primary, secondary and shared spaces. In primary spaces, such as the body of a pilgrim, a house shrine, a portable altar or the micro-space of using miniature objects (gems, amulets),²⁵ the relationship of humans and divine agents could be much more personal, individualised. Individual religious appropriations are much higher in this category. One can find great lacunae in this present study when it comes to this category: our sources of primary sacralised spaces in Dacia are very poor. The LAR project itself produced few case studies from this category, using mostly

⁶ Fuchs-Rüpke 2015.

⁷ Rüpke 2012; Raja-Rüpke 2015b; Rüpke 2016; Rüpke 2018; Gasparini *et al.* 2018. See also: Szabó 2017.

⁸ In comparison with Rüpke 2012, see: Albrecht *et al.* 2018.

⁹ Rüpke 2012: 193.

¹⁰ Albrecht *et al.* 2018. See also: Versluys 2013; Alvar 2017.

¹¹ Albrecht *et al.* 2018.

¹² Rüpke 2018: 1-5.

¹³ Albrecht *et al.* 2018. For several other major questions, see: Rüpke 2018: 9.

¹⁴ Albrecht *et al.* 2018: 2.

¹⁵ Albrecht *et al.* 2018: 3. For an earlier definition, see: Rüpke 2012: 197.

¹⁶ Albrecht *et al.* 2018: 3.

¹⁷ On religious communication and its cultural and social aspects in provincial cases, see: Rüpke 2014: 104-108.

¹⁸ Rüpke 2018: 11.

¹⁹ Albrecht *et al.* 2018: 17.

²⁰ Especially: Rüpke 2017; Rüpke 2018: 95-98, 196-200.

²¹ Based on the space taxonomy of D. Clarke. See: Raja-Rüpke 2015b: 5. See also: Smith 1987: 28; Smith 2004.

²² See also Szabó forthcoming.

²³ For the rich bibliography on spatial aspects of religion, see: Cancik 1986. See also: Cancik 2008: 3-60; Coomans *et al.* 2012, especially their inspiring introduction on the evolution and role of sacralised spaces in secular or non-religious societies; Moser-Feldman 2014: 1-13; Laneri 2015. See also: Brockman 2011: XIII-XIV. For other models, see also: Smith 2004: 325; Knott 2011. See also: Biehl-Bertermes 2001: 20; Fontana 2013: 1-11; Shaw 2013: 1-11; Jaffe 2015: 4-8; Meier-Tillessen 2014; Raja-Rüpke 2015b; Laneri 2015; Leisten-Sonik 2015.

²⁴ On the notion of 'special', see: Taves 2009; and for a critique of this: Knott 2010.

²⁵ For the notion of micro-space, see: Raja-Rüpke 2015b: 5.

The LAR space taxonomy in Roman Dacia

Sacralised places in primary spaces

Apahida (CIL III 7656), Căianu (CIL III 7655), Mera (ILD 607), Sic (CIL III 6247), Vălcele Aiud (CIL III 942-3), Berghin (IDR III/4, 41), Dragu, Daia Română (CIL III 7788), Gușterița, Valea Nandruului, Sebeș (IDR III/4, 18), Sănmiclăuș (IDR III/4, 89), Vințul de Jos, Orlea, Ciunăfaia. In numerous houses in urban settlements (for example in Apulum) and military contexts (Marcu 2004; Petruț 2015). Possibly III.3.

Sacralised places in secondary spaces

Alburnus Maior (I.1-4), Almașu Mare (III.2), Ampelum (III.3, III.4), Apulum (I.6,7,8, II.3, II.8, 9, 10, III.6-17), Caranșebeș (III.21), Cincșor (III.22), Cioroiu Nou (III.18-19), Decea Mureșului (I.15), Dierna (III.23), Drobeta (II.11, III.24-25), Gherla (III.26-27), Micia (I.20, I.21, II.12, II.13, III.29-31), Napoca (III.34-37, 39, 40), Peștera Veterani (III.41), Peștera lui Traian (III.42), Pojejena (III.43), Porolissum (I.23, I.24), Potaissa (II.14, III.44-47), Praetorium (I.28), Războieni Cetate (III.49), Romula (III.49-50), Sarmizegetusa (I.34, I.43, I.46, I.47, II.16, III.56-59), Samum (III.52-53), Slăveni (I.50, III.61) Sucidava (III.62), Tibiscum (I.52, II.19, III.65-66), Valea Săngeorgiului (III.67)

Sacralised spaces in shared spaces

Ampelum (II.1, III.5), Apulum (I.5, II.2, II.4-6), Arcobadara (I.9), Buciumi (I.10), Caranșebeș (III.21) Călugăreni (I.11.), Cămpulung-Jidova (I.12), Cigmău (I.13), Cumidava (I.14), Drobeta (I.16), Germisara (I.17), Gilău (I.18), Grediștea Muncelui (III.28), Inlăceni (I.19), Micia (III.32), Napoca (III.38), Peștera Veterani (III.41), Peștera lui Traian (III.42), Pojejena (III.43), Porolissum (I.22, I.25), Potaissa (I.26-27), Praetorium (I.28), Racovița (I.29), Răcari (I.30), Războieni Cetate (III.49), Resculum (I.31), Romula (III.49-50), Sarmizegetusa (I.33, I.35-42, I.44-45, III.54-55), Samum (I.32), Săcelu (III.60), Slăveni (I.50, III.61) Sucidava (II.18), Tibiscum (I.51), Vărădia (I.54)

Figure 2. The LAR space taxonomy in Roman Dacia

literary sources,²⁶ magic,²⁷ or case studies with abundant sources of both literary and archaeological evidence.²⁸ In secondary and shared spaces, however, the factors are much more diverse and the number of tools used by the *homo faber*²⁹ in creating sacralised places are much higher. Instantiated religion can be attested much more easily in such case studies, as many of the examples presented here later will show. Religious communication in secondary and shared spaces means also social and political competition and the intensification of the activity of religious providers, entrepreneurs and other social actors.³⁰ LAR produced numerous case studies in this category, focusing on complex sanctuaries,³¹ Palmyrian priests,³² Isiac groups,³³ Bacchic associations,³⁴ and sacralised spaces from the Near East.³⁵

Integrating the LAR taxonomy in the systemic model of past societies of G. Clark, and with the space archaeology of D. Clarke, can give us a much more accurate approach to Roman religion and its material agency too,³⁶ In this model (Fig.3.), sanctuaries (shared/public, secondary and primary spaces) are interpreted as semi-micro spaces, influenced by urban factors (citification)³⁷ and by larger systems, macro-spaces, such as provinces, customs-systems (*Publicum Portorium Illyrici*), large economic units and clusters (Black Sea area, Danubian provinces, Adriatic area, Silk Road, Amber Road), or the Roman Empire itself.³⁸

This book presents carefully selected examples from all of these spaces, although this sharp distinction of spatial taxonomy is not always adaptable for our case studies, numerous examples showing overlapping and a constant interaction between them. Instead of choosing one particular aspect of the materiality of sacralised spaces, such as architecture³⁹ or the art-historical analysis of objects,⁴⁰ I will present the

archaeological sources as tools and products in the process of sacralisation and religious communication in a cultural-historical framework.⁴¹ In this approach, the rich variety of objects will lose some traditional labels such as 'provincial',⁴² 'Christian',⁴³ 'votive' or 'cultic' artifacts, the focus of the analysis being on the use and occasional agency of them in space sacralisation and other forms of religious communication.

The materiality of Roman religion used and accumulated through religious experiences contributed to the maintenance of the sacralised spaces. In this process, inscriptions and figurative monuments, known also as instantiated religious agents – the most significant part of the corpus of this work – played an important role, connecting humans and gods beyond the limits of time and space. As the title of this book already suggests, this work will focus on the *materiality* of space sacralisation and its role in religious communication, sometimes memorised as *religious experiences* of the ancient people from Dacia.⁴⁴

1.2. Rethinking sacralised spaces in Roman Dacia: a research history

The above-presented approach is tested on a province, which is often cited only as a footnoted case study in Western scholarship.⁴⁵ To understand the aims and sources of this work, a short, historiographic retrospection is necessary beforehand.

Roman sacralised spaces and their materiality were always present in the geographic and cultural landscape of the ex-territory of Dacia.⁴⁶ Although few of the sacralised spaces from Roman times were used

who are the intended subject of study, but the symbolic process is easily inverted, and peoples under terms such as 'cultures' become viewed principally as labels for groups of artefacts, which are the immediate subjects of analysis. The focus is then on the relationship between the objects themselves, which in the 1960s became the centre of interest.' (Hicks 2010: 55). Almost none of the sanctuary-monographs focus on the ritual/agent-based approach, presenting the architectural and material features through the role-identity theory of objects. On this approach, see: Weiss 2012: 200, fn. 111, with further bibliography. See also: Weiss 2015.

⁴¹ Some of the archaeological material used as tools in maintaining the sacralised space were used also before the existence of the place (everyday pottery, architectural elements, Bauornamentik for example), while others (specific cultic pottery, instrumenta sacra, magical gems, reliefs, etc.) were produced as a consequence of space sacralisation. Still, they are not only products of religious experience but also tools for maintaining sacralised spaces. See also: Taylor 1997: 187.

⁴² Versluys 2014: 7.

⁴³ Rebillard 2015: 427.

⁴⁴ In my book I use the intensively discussed notion of 'religious experience' as the short- or long-term effect of religious communication on the individual or group. See also: Taves 2009.

⁴⁵ Dészpa 2012. See the research history below.

⁴⁶ Despite this, in his Foreword of the first – and until now the only synthesis on Roman temples of Dacia – Mihai Bărbulescu emphasised that the sanctuaries of Roman Dacia were never observed and remained unknown to the next generations: Pescaru-Alicu 2000: Foreword.

²⁶ Petridou 2016b.

²⁷ Gordon 2015a.

²⁸ Rome or the early followers of Jesus: Urciuoli 2013.

²⁹ J. Z. Smith transformed the 'homo religiosus' of M. Eliade into a 'homo faber', who is always busy using and constructing tools for religious communication: Smith 1987. See also: Bonnet 2013: 53.

³⁰ Gordon-Petridou-Rüpke 2017.

³¹ Raja 2015.

³² Raja 2017.

³³ Gasparini-Veymiers 2018.

³⁴ Gordon 2017a.

³⁵ Rieger 2016.

³⁶ Clark 1957; Clarke 1977: 9. See also: Bintliff 2014: 258-259.

³⁷ <https://www.uni-erfurt.de/max-weber-kolleg/forschungsgruppen-und-stellen/forschungsgruppen-am-max-weber-kolleg/the-city-in-the-history-of-religion/> (last accessed: 20.05.2018). See also Chapter II.1.

³⁸ Hingley 2012. See also: Pitts-Versluys 2014.

³⁹ As a model for this kind of discourse, see: Segal 2013, IX. He even uses a 'Vitruvian' and 'Non-Vitruvian' typology, although the analysis of the architectural features focuses on their role and function in rituals and processions too: Segal 2013: 103-104. See also: Szabó forthcoming.

⁴⁰ 'Stone tools and ceramic sequences were increasingly studied in themselves. This resulted in a kind of fetishism that archaeology is always prone to. Objects start by standing for prehistoric peoples,

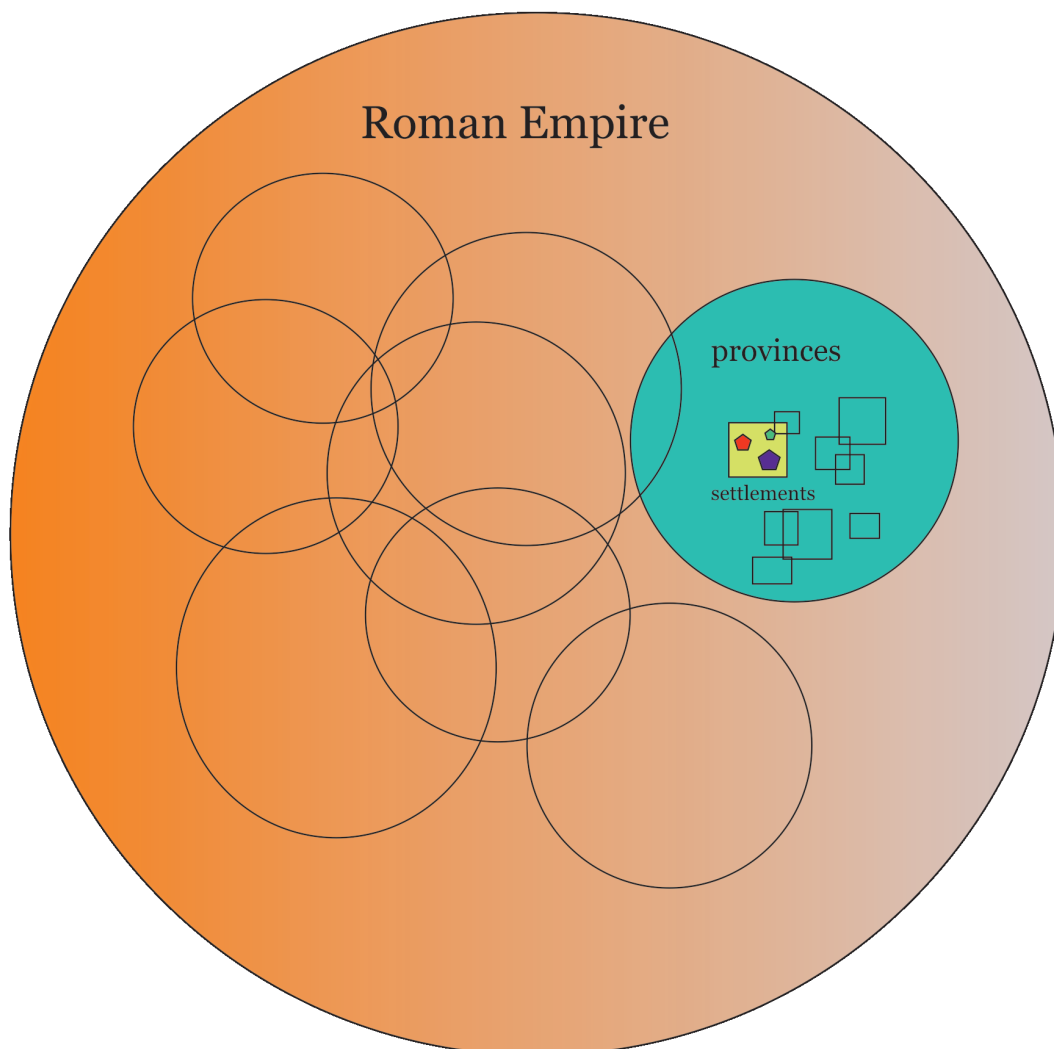
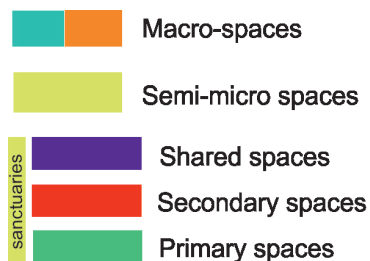


Figure 3. Roman Empire and it's spaces in D. Clarke's space theory

in any form by later societies, their presence is attested in the antiquarian tradition since the 15th century. As the mutilated Jupiter statue from the Colonia Aurelia Apulensis shows,⁴⁷ the most prominent temples and sanctuaries of the province were visible in Early Medieval times too. In the 1690s, L. F. Marsigli was able to draw the outlines of the Ara Augusti and the provincial forum from Sarmizegetusa,⁴⁸ while, in 1715, G. Ariosti

described standing Roman statues and possible temples of Apulum.⁴⁹ The first report about a discovery of a sanctuary comes from A. Bartalis⁵⁰ and Gy. Aranka,⁵¹ from the end of the 18th century, while in the 19th century the number of discovered or identified Roman sacralised spaces increased significantly.⁵² Except

⁴⁷ Szabó 2015f.

⁴⁸ Szabó 2004a: 83-119. In the text I use the short denomination of the Roman city (Sarmizegetusa). In Romanian literature there are numerous versions still in use (Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa

or Colonia Sarmizegetusa). In the case of the Roman finds from Sarmizegetusa Regia, the Dacian capital, I emphasise the difference.

⁴⁹ Szabó 2014b.

⁵⁰ Szabó 2013a.

⁵¹ Aranka 1796, Szabó 2014a.

⁵² See also: Boda 2014b; Szabó 2014b.

for the seminal work of Pál Király on the Mithraeum from Sarmizegetusa,⁵³ none of the publications tried to contextualise the finds and the sacralised places discovered.⁵⁴

In the first half of the 20th century more than 30 sanctuaries were identified in urban and non-urban settlements, mostly in Tibiscum, Porolissum, Micia, Sarmizegetusa and Apulum. The archaeologically attested sites excavated between 1918 and 1989 are relatively well documented, although none of them were published in monograph form.⁵⁵ The epigraphic and statuary material discovered in this period, however, suggest that numerous sacralised places have now vanished in Napoca, and especially in Apulum, due to the severe urbanisation of these sites since the 13th and 14th centuries, and which accelerated in the Habsburg era.⁵⁶ Although this period produced numerous important studies and books on the religious life of the province, the spatial and 'lived' aspects of religion were not emphasised in these works. Roman religion in Dacia was understood and presented as spiritual interferences or specific case studies of religious syncretism.⁵⁷ Although the number of possibly identifiable sacralised spaces in Dacia is reflected by the dozens of urban settlements and hundreds of rural

environments uncovered recently,⁵⁸ the Romanian literature focused almost exclusively on shared and secondary spaces (public temples and houses of small-group religions), the sacralised spaces in the domestic and private spheres being almost totally neglected.⁵⁹ Roman archaeology in Romania had always two major focus points: forts (*Limesforschung*) and, rarely, urban archaeology. This is one of the main reasons why this present work cannot deal in details with funeral and domestic (household) religion within the perspective of the LAR approach.⁶⁰

A milestone in the research is represented by the discovery and systematic excavation of the Liber Pater shrine from Apulum between 1989 and 2003, which revolutionised the archaeology of religion in Romania and introduced numerous new questions and aspects in the local academic discourse (I.6). This case study is the best application to date of new field methods (GIS, geophysical surveys, single context recording, archaeobotany and archaeozoology) and international collaboration. Unfortunately, as with many other important case studies from the province, this one remains unpublished.⁶¹ Due to its exceptionally rich material evidence, this site has produced to date the most relevant studies on lived Roman religion from Dacia. Similarly, the excavations of the Dolichena from Porolissum and Mehadia (I.23, 28),⁶² the shrine of Domnus and Domna from Sarmizegetusa (I.37) and the Mithraeum from Apulum (I.7) represent a development in the archaeology of Roman religion in Dacia.⁶³ Some relevant publications and catalogues appeared after 2000, although focusing mostly on architectural and topographic features of sanctuaries and temples of the province.⁶⁴

⁵³ *Ad absurdum*, this short book is still the only synthesis of a systematically excavated Mithraeum from the provinces of Dacia: Király 1886, Szabó 2014e. The sanctuary cannot be identified today in the field: Boda 2014b.

⁵⁴ Most of the publications are short archaeological reports or even less, personal notes and eye-witnesses. Although in the second half of the 19th century there were already important studies and articles on Roman religion, and its material and spatial aspects, the local literature did not adopt the first tendencies of German *Religionswissenschaft*. On the historiography of the discipline, see: Phillips 2007; Rives 2010.

⁵⁵ Despite the fact, that some of the identified sanctuaries – such as the shrine of Jupiter Heliopolitanus or the temple of the Dii Mauri from Micia, the temple of Apollo from Tibiscum or the Asklepieion from Sarmizegetusa – were unique or rare discoveries of this kind, not only in the province but also for the whole Empire. A large part of the small finds and the ceramic material was just partially published or, as the case of the Bel-Liber Pater assembly house from Porolissum shows, never published. See Chapter III.1.

⁵⁶ Szabó 2014b.

⁵⁷ One of the most important one being the seminal work of M. Bărbulescu on 'spiritual interferences' of Dacia. In this work the author intentionally changes the paradigm of research, opening a phenomenological discourse on Roman religion in Romania. This is the first work where some unresearched aspects of religion, such as workshops, economy, funerary practices, architecture and – most importantly – 'religious feelings' (sentimental religions) are presented together. In his most intriguing chapter on so-called 'religious feelings' (Bărbulescu 1984: 230-250), the author presents various, sometimes hardly compatible currents of history of religion and religious studies (Mircea Eliade, Paul Veyne, Cumontian ideas and, especially, the French school of history of religion), but he is the first in Romanian literature to introduce some new topics – although he does not name them clearly in every case – such as embodiment (Bărbulescu 1984: 237-238), superstition (231-233), theophoric names as agents of religious individuation (244-245), festivals (246-247), and prodigies (247-249). The Romanian book republished in 2003, but never translated in a foreign language, is still the best synthesis on Roman religion from Dacia: Szabó 2014d. See also: Nemeti 2012.

⁵⁸ On the landscape of the province and an incomplete list of Roman sites, see: Bărbulescu *et al.* 2005; Oltean 2007; Gudea 2008. See chapter IV.5.

⁵⁹ On religious life of rural and domestic environments, see: Bărbulescu 1993; Popa 1993; Gudea 2008. See also: Opreanu 2008.

⁶⁰ There are numerous cemeteries excavated in recent years in the conurbation of Apulum and Porolissum, but none of them were published systematically: Petruț *et al.* 2010; Bounegru 2011; Bounegru 2017. See also: Oltean 2007: 190-192. On funeral religion in Dacia, see also: Bărbulescu *et al.* 2003.

⁶¹ A possible date of publication in 2018 or 2019 was mentioned by A. Diaconescu (verbal confirmation of the author).

⁶² Gudea-Tamba 2001; Benea 2008. While the dolichenum from Porolissum was highly popularised and emphasised in numerous articles and foreign publications, the sanctuary from Mehadia remained until now almost unknown in the international literature (see the list from Schwarzer 2013): chapter IV.2. See also: Blömer 2014.

⁶³ Although the archaeology of religion is evolving rapidly due to the above-mentioned new discoveries and excavations, a large part of the literature still reflects old topics and currents, focusing exclusively on architecture, iconography and material typology.

⁶⁴ Most relevant, and to date the only comprehensive catalogue of 'temples' in Roman Dacia, is the book by A. R. Pescaru and D. Alicu, later extended by some supplementary articles of D. Alicu. Their work introduced a typology based on 'archaeologically attested, epigraphically attested and presumed or uncertain' temples. The book does not have a well-defined terminology for sacralised spaces and is focused mainly on architectural features, typology, chronological

Studying Roman religion of Dacia in Romania was for a long time but a single chapter of the 'cultural life' of the province.⁶⁵ It was presented as a consequence of the 'deep Romanisation'⁶⁶ and the 'massive presence of the Latin-speaking element' in the society,⁶⁷ proving the large-scale mobility exemplified in almost all of the major Romanian works, with the proverbial reference of Eutropius (VIII, 6.2): '*ex toto orbe Romano*'.⁶⁸ Traditional approaches present the materiality of Roman religion in secular old categories, dealing with ethnic and geographic pantheons,⁶⁹ emphasising the supremacy of 'Italic cults and divinities',⁷⁰ limiting their bibliographies to the old French literature⁷¹ and giving a much higher focus on the institutionalised tools of religion, such as priesthood,⁷² temple architecture,⁷³ and the 'Greco-Roman' cults.⁷⁴ Important studies, focusing on the 'Oriental' cults, emphasised the dichotomy with the traditional Roman religion.⁷⁵ Religion appeared as an already prepared, fixed norm and language, acculturated by the Romanised society of Dacia.⁷⁶ Due to the political situation, scholars from

phases, and short presentations of the buildings. Their list dates from 2002 and has not been updated: Pescaru-Alicu 2000; Alicu 2002; Alicu 2004; Marcu 2009. Another important work regarding the temples and sanctuaries of Sarmizegetusa was published in German, without a relevant impact in Romanian or Western literature: Schäfer 2007. See also: Szabó 2014d.

⁶⁵ Macrea 1969: 338-404 (on religion, 358-404). Art and literacy usually is presented just before religion. Including religion as one aspect of the cultural life of the province is still practised. See also: Gudea-Lobüscher 2006: 64-89 dedicates, however, an integrated chapter on cults; Ardevan-Zerbini 2007: 175-186; Bărbulescu 2010. On research history see: Szabó 2014d.

⁶⁶ Macrea 1969: 385.

⁶⁷ Petolescu 2010: 272. His short summary on Roman religion – published perhaps not accidentally in the same year as the new edition of the great companion volume on the history of Romanians, where M. Bărbulescu wrote the synthesis on Roman religion – is a perfect example of the old, but still very popular discourse which dominates Romanian scholarship on Roman religion. See: Petolescu 2010: 264-272.

⁶⁸ *because Trajan, after he had subdued Dacia, had transplanted thither an infinite number of men from the whole Roman world, to people the country and the cities; as the land had been exhausted of inhabitants in the long war maintained by Decebalus*. translated, with notes, by the Rev. John Selby Watson. London: Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Convent Garden (1853). This quotation is constantly cited by every Romanian scholar as the foremost argument for large scale colonisation in Dacia: Bîrliba 2011. It is worth to not however, that the sources of Eutropius are debated and not clarified yet: Bird 1993.

⁶⁹ Petolescu 2010, 265 even affirms, that the best way to present the materiality of Roman religion is to '*classify the cults after their ethnic and geographic origin*'. Ad absurdum, in the same year was published the article of Carbó-García questioning Orientalism for the first time in Romanian literature: Carbó-García 2010c.

⁷⁰ Petolescu 2010, 265, footnote nr. 804. See also: Zerbini 2010; Zerbini 2015.

⁷¹ One can observe the supremacy of F. Cumont and R. Turcan. In some works, especially from the Cluj School of epigraphy and Roman provincial archaeology, the dominant presence of A. Domaszewski and Wissowa is more eloquent.

⁷² Ardevan 1998; Szabó 2007; Petolescu 2010, 266-267.

⁷³ Pescaru-Alicu 2000.

⁷⁴ Bărbulescu 1985; Bodor 1989.

⁷⁵ Sanie 1989. See also: Carbó-García 2010a for a slightly better, but still, ambiguous approach.

⁷⁶ Few studies existed till recently, where art in Roman Dacia was analysed in details and focusing on local particularities,

abroad up until 1990 used the materiality of Roman Dacia, almost exclusively, based on great corpora and works published before 1948.⁷⁷

Recently, the rich material evidence of Roman religion from the territory of Dacia is under a new focus. The accelerated internationalisation of classical studies and Roman 'provincial archaeology', and the urge of interdisciplinarity, has created a vast bibliography, which tries to fill the gaps of historiography, creating new catalogues and introducing new trends and topics in the research.⁷⁸ The present work can be enrolled in this tendency too, testing the methodological framework of 'The Sanctuary Project' and the 'Lived Ancient Religion' approach on the materiality of Roman religion from Dacia.

1.3. The material: sources of the book

This research presents carefully selected case studies (around 30) from the 142 sacralised spaces attested or presumed from the territory of Roman Dacia (AD 106-271)⁷⁹ through their material evidence (Fig.4.).⁸⁰ The selection was guided especially by the methodology presented above, but also by some pragmatic factors, such as the accessibility (or inaccessibility) of the material, which in many cases is still not published or only partially available.⁸¹ In some cases, the examples were selected because of their importance and the current disrepair in the Romanian archaeological heritage or academic discourse.⁸² This book does not discuss in detail the sacralised spaces of

transformations and appropriations. Important to mention the review of Toynbee written by A. Bodor, the works of M. Gramatopol, C. Pop, M. T. Marinescu and recently, the works of A. Diaconescu, although the emphasis is still on the elaboration (technical skills, workshop networks) and iconographic typologisation instead of a social history of Roman art in Dacia. See: Stewart 2008.

⁷⁷ Here one need to highlight the great influence and success of the small and almost unaccessible book of W. Jones from 1929, cited even today especially in American literature. See: Byros 2011. Due to the rich network of M. Vermaseren however, the materiality of Roman religion from Dacia is relatively well represented in the EPRO series. Especially C. Daicoviciu, E. Condurachi, M. Gramatopol, S. Sanie and A. Bodor had a large international network with French, German and English scholars which influenced the accessibility of the Romanian material by foreign scholars, but also, the exchange of new ideas and books from the West. The great publicity of the *Apulum* journal contributed also to some kind of internationalisation of the field already in the 1970's. See: Matei-Popescu 2007; Szabó 2014d.

⁷⁸ On the recent state of research and the perspectives see: Nemeti-Marcu 2014; Szabó 2014d.

⁷⁹ A catalogue of sanctuaries was published separately: Szabó forthcoming. See also Chapter VI.

⁸⁰ For the transcription of the epigraphic material we use the Leiden Convention and the rules established by the BBAW CIL group. For the figurative monuments we use the standards established by the latest publication of the CSIR group.

⁸¹ For example, the Palmyrian sanctuary from Sarmizegetusa (Piso *et al.* 2011), the *aedes principiorum* of some recently excavated auxiliary forts (Pánczél 2015) or buildings identified recently as 'urban sanctuaries' or 'sacred spaces': Diaconescu *et al.* 2014. See Chapters II.8 and II.9.

⁸² The selection of *Ampelem* and some sites from *Apulum*, for example, was based on this criteria.

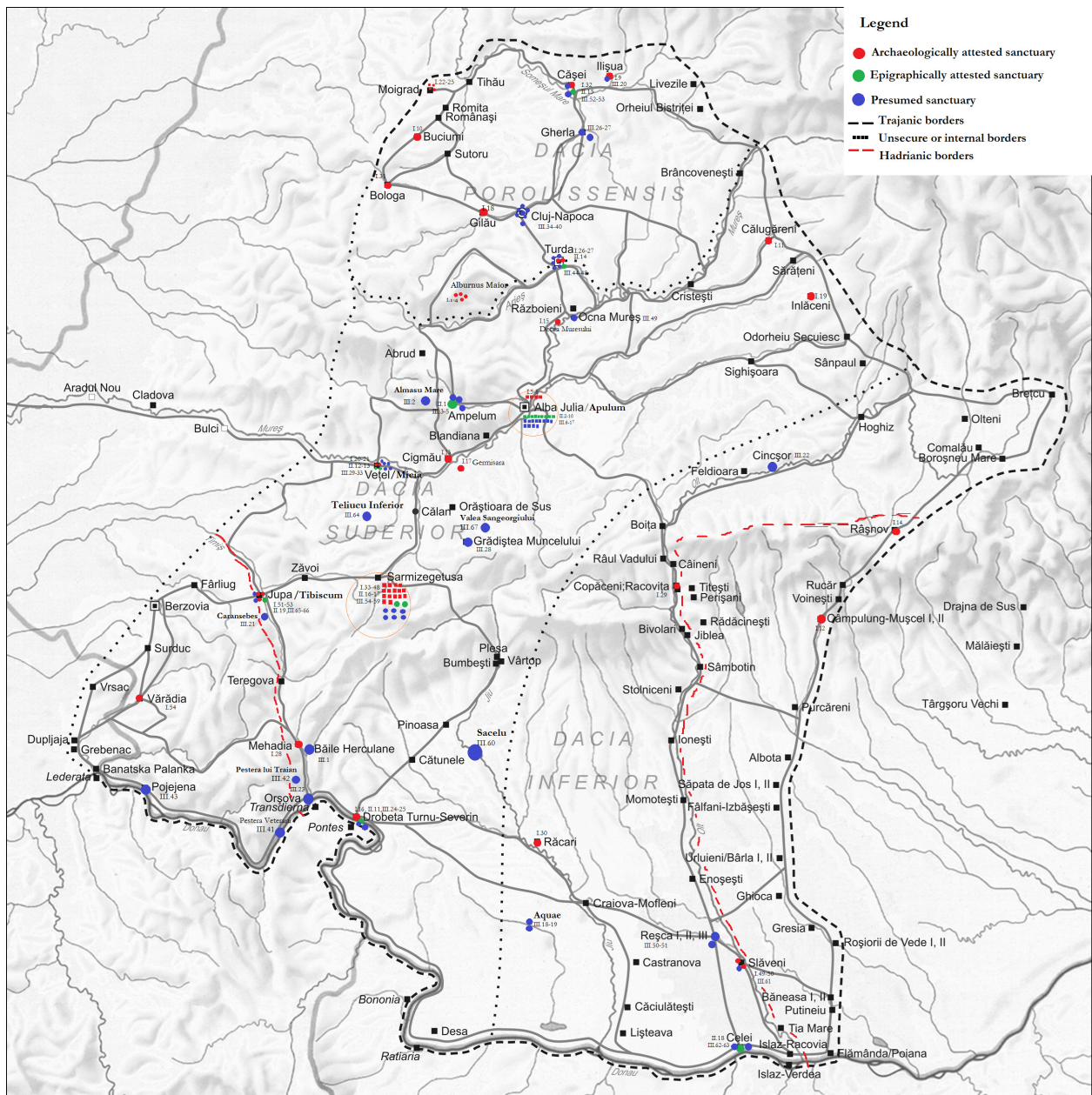


Figure 4. Map of Dacia with the archaeologically, epigraphically attested and presumed sanctuaries (map based on Schäfer 2007, 357, abb. 1. with the kind permission of the author)

Sarmizegetusa, which has had much more attention in recent years in Romanian and Western literature too. Most of the examples focus on the reinterpretation of already published material, but a significant number of artifacts and case studies presented here were discovered by the author and represent new sources for the materiality of Roman religion from Dacia.⁸³ A large part of the selected case studies are sacralised spaces revealed by systematic excavations, but some of the presented material in the corpus comes from older excavations, where the archaeological context is problematic or unsecure. In these cases, the

interpretations need to be reduced on a particular aspect or segment of the methodological model, focusing on the worshipper, as religious agent. The two most significant groups of evidence for Roman religion in Dacia are the inscriptions and figurative monuments. In both cases this research aims to show the importance of these types of materials as the most common tools and products of the processes of space sacralisation and their maintenance.⁸⁴

⁸³ Especially in Chapter II.9.

⁸⁴ Recent studies focus intensively on *instrumenta* inscriptions as sources of religious individuation and experience. On epigraphy and religion, see: Scheid 2012; Witschel 2014. On a new approach of altars as sources of religious experience, see: Busch-Schäfer 2014.

The main aim of this work is to present for the very first time the already known, as well as some unpublished material evidence of Roman religious communication as tools and products of space sacralisation and everyday, lived religious experiences. It will use for the first time a case study from the Danubian provinces, an area of the Roman Empire often ignored by the leading works on Roman religious studies.⁸⁵

Sacralised spaces are not presented here as architecturally defined places known as sanctuaries or temples, but as examples of ritual density and accumulation of religious materiality, augmented by other spaces, such as city walls,⁸⁶ forts,⁸⁷ the countryside,⁸⁸ or modern, artificially created fictional/

ideological spaces.⁸⁹ The study aims also to implement some terms already accepted by the Western literature, such as the discussion on ritual deposits (*favissae*),⁹⁰ or the Roman nature of the Mithras cult.⁹¹ Other notions, such as the ‘small-group’ religions, ‘embodiment’, ‘religious market’ and ‘religious entrepreneurs’, need to be placed within Romanian literature.

This book intends to create a dialogue between various disciplines (mostly the archaeology of religion and religious studies) through cases studies from Dacia, where this approach has not yet been tested. In this sense, the work could also serve as an intriguing experiment for other case studies of the Roman Empire.

⁸⁵ See also: Alföldy 2004; Zerbini 2015; Szabó 2016c; Szabó 2016d; Szabó 2018a; Szabó 2018b. For my new project on Roman religious communication in the Danubian provinces see: www.danubereligion.com. Last accessed: 15.09.2018.

⁸⁶ Chapter II.2.

⁸⁷ Chapter II.3.

⁸⁸ Chapter IV.

⁸⁹ Chapter II.10.

⁹⁰ See Chapter II.8.

⁹¹ Still cited as ‘the Persian cult’ or ‘the cult of Mithra’ or even ‘Mitra’, many of the Romanian references still use the old-fashioned Cumontian terminology. On the Persianism of the Roman Mithras, see: Gordon 2017b.