Rural Cult Centres in the Hauran

Part of the broader network of the Near East (100 BC – AD 300)

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Cover: Reconstruction of the cult centre Sīʾ with Sīʾ 8 in the foreground by Annarita Mazzilli

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This monograph is the first comprehensive study of rural cult centres in the Hauran in the period immediately before its annexation to the Roman Empire and during the Roman period itself (roughly the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD). The majority of recent scholars have identified these sanctuaries as having a unique character which mirrored local cultural identity in the Hauran. Most earlier, and a few recent, specialists supported the idea of the presence or influence of different political authorities in these religious buildings (mostly the Nabataeans and the Romans, rarely the Herodian kingdom). In all previous studies, scholars adopted a monothematic approach.

My aim, in contrast, is to re-evaluate rural cult centres and the Hauran itself as integral parts of a human network on a macro level. I argue that rural cult centres are dynamic components of Hauran society, functioning in, and therefore influenced by, continuously fluctuating contexts, shaped by interactions of the people who built and used these centres with the wider world. I will attempt to discuss how the people who used those rural cult centres were connected to and influenced, directly and indirectly, by neighbouring cultures and by cultures that did not border the Hauran. I will examine these relations in view of recent theories and approaches in archaeology, such as globalisation and networks, that draw attention to connectivity between people (§ Ch.1.2).

In contrast with previous work, this monograph pursues the study of the social meaning of sanctuaries and adopts an interdisciplinary and comparative approach. I will attempt to reconstruct the role of these sanctuaries in terms of their social meaning in the pre-Roman and Roman periods, which recent scholars have developed when examining buildings (§ Ch.1.2). This means reconstructing the life of these buildings, including what kind of activities were undertaken in them, and the life of the people who commissioned, maintained, visited and used them. Furthermore, my study combines the analysis of sanctuary architecture with a study of gods and benefactors (through the examination of inscriptions and statues) in their socio-cultural landscape. It also compares the aspects of rural cult centres of the Hauran mentioned above with parallel ones in the Near East. I examine why architectural styles and beliefs in the Hauran share so much with those from other parts of the Near East by considering the relationship of the elite of the Hauran to other cultures in the Near East and by looking at the socio-economic and political landscape.

I will undertake a bottom-up analysis starting from the end result of the process of diffusion of elements of rural cult centres (e.g. architectural features, gods) that are recovered elsewhere in the Near East. Common patterns between the Hauran and other parts of the Near East will offer only a glimpse of what the social interactions between people adopting similar religious and architectural elements could have been in the past, and of the social routes that made possible the movement of religious and architectural ideas. This monograph does not aim to offer a new interpretation of the structures of these cult centres or their dating but to use those that have already been published and amply examined by various experts in order to discuss them in the broader context of the Near East.

In terms of the bigger picture, the results of this research aim to suggest that future work on religious buildings or buildings should comprise a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of religious buildings contextualised within the socio-economic landscape, in order to provide a better understanding of the people in the past. This multidisciplinary study will also encourage future researchers to develop a new perspective on past communities, including rural ones, on a macro level. This means to perceive identities of the pre-Roman and the Roman worlds as complex entities shaped by the different surroundings and more distant cultures, and, therefore, to re-evaluate their connection with other cultures.

The Hauran is a small area in present-day southern Syria, roughly south of Damascus, extending to 90 km from east to west and 105 km from north to south. Despite covering a limited area, the Hauran is a valuable and interesting region for the investigation of rural cult centres and the society that used these sanctuaries for two reasons.

Firstly, it was a junction of different kingdoms and cultures: the Herodian and Nabataean kingdoms, the people who used the Safaitic script and the Romans (Map 1). In the 1st century BC it was bounded by the borders of the Herodian kingdom (the north and centre of the Hauran, until AD 93/94) and the Nabataean kingdom (to the south, until AD 106). The territory of the Hauran under Herodian control was integrated into the Roman province of Syria in the late 1st century AD, whereas the territory of the Hauran under the Nabataeans was annexed to the province of Arabia at the beginning of the 2nd century AD. These two politically

separated territories became part of the same Roman province of Arabia at the end of the 2nd century AD (§ Ch.2). In this study, I will refer to the pre-provincial and provincial periods (roughly 100 BC–AD 300) rather than to pre-Roman and Roman times, since the former terms best indicate the political change, namely, from the presence of pre-existing local kingdoms (pre-provincial) to the annexation of Syria to the Roman province (provincial). Using the adjectives pre-Roman and Roman could imply Roman imposition over pre-existing cultures, an imposition that did not actually take place in the Roman Empire, as will be elucidated in Chapters 5 and 6.

Secondly, the Hauran is a valuable and interesting area for the investigation of rural cult centres because of the preservation of many ruins of rural cult centres and inscriptions, together with a minor but still substantial number of statue fragments. Much information about them has been published from the 19th century to the present day. On the basis of this literature, I have identified 57 rural cult centres that will, for the first time, be systematically analysed.

Before going into details of my research framework (§ Ch.1.2), I will explain what type of evidence I take into account. This is to ensure that the reader is aware of the use of cult centres in this analysis and of the constraints of this study, both of which depend on the archaeological and epigraphic evidence preserved, recorded and published by scholars (§ Ch.1.1).

1.1 Cult centres

I deliberately use the term 'cult centre' to emphasise that these religious buildings were places for people: they were public meeting places visited by people who commissioned the temples, made dedications, attended sacrifices and other activities, such as ritual dramas and fairs that were most likely undertaken during religious festivals.[1] The use of a cult centre implies that we cannot consider them as empty buildings: they are entities with a life that can offer us a story about cultures and communities of this region, about the people who visited them and about their interactions with other cultures. People and the buildings they constructed and used did not exist in isolation, but their interaction with others contributed to shaping their own individuality, identity and culture (including the sanctuaries), as this monograph aims to demonstrate.

The term cult centres refers to public religious buildings where evidence of their existence survives. These may be architectural remains and/or inscriptions that inform us about the erection of a temple or a part of a cult centre, such as standing walls to delimit the temenos. Statues of deities or benefactors and written dedications to gods and altars are included only if there is definite architectural evidence of a temple or an inscription that mentions the erection of a temple or a part of it.

Therefore, this study does not include sacred natural places, such as mountains, hilltops, rocks, springs or woods that have been referred to as sacred, because, according to ancient sources, they were inhabited by deities.[2] In these cases, cult activities would have been undertaken but no permanent stone structures would have necessarily been required, as temporary altars and structures would have been adequate to perform rituals. The lack of long-lasting monumental evidence of these cult sites makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify them. As a result specialists have not considered this type of cult site in the Hauran in any detail. Furthermore, I have not included *kalibé* and *naïskoi*, because they are not typical religious public buildings that would have been used as meeting places, although some scholars have suggested their sacred nature.[3] The *kalibé* consists of an elevated, tripartite, apse-shaped open-structure, entered by a staircase, which would have been used to display statues.[4] *Naïskoi* were small niches with reliefs representing gods carved into the rock, which would have held statues or symbolic icons of a certain religious significance.[5]

[1] Nielsen 2002 for ritual dramas; de Ligt 1993 for fairs during religious festivals.

[2] Bradley 2000: 24–7; Horden and Purcell 2000: 412–6 and 440. For instance, according to Pausanias, the Greek geographer of the 2nd century AD, deities were believed to inhabit natural place such as lakes (*Paus.* 3: 23.5), springs, waterfalls and groves of trees (*Paus.* 9: 3.4, 7:18.7).

[3] For the sacred nature of *kalibé*: Zayadine 1989; Clauss-Balty 2008a: 271–3; for the sacred nature of *naïskoi*: Arnaud 1986: 373–97.

[4] Inscriptions named this type of building *kalibé* at Hayāt, Umm as Zeitūn and Shaqqā; they are all situated in southern Syria. Other buildings have been interpreted to be *kalibé* on the basis of their similar layout to the structures that have this name in the inscriptions. Butler claimed that *exedra* of the forum of Philip the Arab at Shahbā and *nymphaeum* at Bosra were also *kalibé* (*PAAES* II: 382). Segal argued that Temple 'C' at Canatha, the hexastyle temple in the city Philippopolis, and the exedra at Bosra could be also *kalibé* (Segal 2001: 2008). *Kalibé* has been interpreted as a religious building because of the adjective 'sacred' that preceded the term *kalibé* on the inscriptions placed on this structure; however, there is no explicit evidence as to whether a god or which god was worshipped (Clauss-Balty 2008a: 271–3). Therefore, the religious aspect attributed to these structures is still debatable (Segal 2001; Class-Balty 2008). This structure could have been used to display statues; their religious subject is uncertain. The sacred adjective associated with this structure could give a sense of a holy structure, but it does not indicate that it was a centre of worship and sacrifice. Ball did not even mention the possibility of the religious character of *kalibé*. He has considered it to be *nymphaeum* because of the similar layout (Ball 2000: 292 ff.). However, this is unlikely as there is no evidence that water could come out from these niches, or they are not close to water sources, such as natural springs or cisterns.

[5] *Naïskoi* are known in high numbers from the Hauran (Arnaud 1986), possibly thanks to the systematic investigation in this area. These could be considered miniature deity-dwellings because of the representation of gods sometimes inserted in a frame with miniature columns and tympanum at the top that could stand for the systematic structure of a temple (Zayadine 1989: 113). Despite the sacred nature of these small niches, they do not function as cult centres.

The term cult centre includes religious buildings ranging from simple temples to more complex sanctuaries, comprising more than one temple and other structures, such as courtyards. However, their variety from small cult centres to multi-structure ones does not necessarily reflect the different nature and proportions of what they were in pre-provincial and provincial times, but may be the result of the following interlinked factors: the preservation of the ruins or their state at the time they were recorded, the standards of the time when they were recorded and what kind of investigation has been undertaken since. The first factor depends on the location of the site within the present-day townscape. Since the ruins of rural cult centres are often in small, present-day villages, it is common to find that their buildings have been altered; their decorative remains or inscriptions have often been removed from the original structure to be reused in modern or late antiquity buildings. They have often become scattered in the modern landscape, or remains are no longer preserved, apart from inscriptions. Because of this, a high number of cult centres (23) have been identified only on the basis of inscriptions, which has been facilitated by a focus on epigraphy in the Hauran from the 19th century to the present day (§ Ch.1.2). Therefore, because of the ongoing phenomenon of dismantling temples, information about these sites is often, but not always, based on records from the late 19th or early 20th century. The early descriptions of sites were not always accurate and may provide a misleading reading of the ruins, as, for example, in the case of the sanctuaries at Sīʾ and Saḥr (§ Ch.4.1).

While it is true to say that their architecture, layout and, especially, inscriptions have been discussed by more recent scholars, only in few cases has a full assessment of the site been undertaken and published (Sīʾ, Saḥr, Khirbet Massakeb, Shāʾrah, Rimet Hazem, Ṣanamein and Sleim). Excavation has been undertaken only at Sīʾ, Saḥr, Khirbet Massakeb and Shāʾrah. However, Sīʾ, followed by Saḥr, is the site that has been most intensively investigated and a remarkable quantity of published materials has been produced.

We can group rural cult centres into seven 'types' on the basis of their complexity. This grouping is based on published data and is affected by the preservation of their architectural remains and inscriptions; therefore, their grouping and the identification of the type of these sites can be deceptive.

Sīʾ and Saḥr appear to be the main rural cult centres of the region (Type 1). Excavation was carried out mostly by a French team in the 1980s and 1990s but their findings exist alongside a record of the first explorers and early scholars in the 19th and early 20th century.[6] More recent interest in these two sites is due not only to the remains of their temples but also to the surrounding structures that have partially survived because of being situated away from present-day villages. Recent scholarly investigation has, therefore, provided more accurate data for these sites than others in the Hauran, and, consequently, the discussion in this monograph will revolve mainly around these two sites. Sīʾ forms the main religious centre on the top of the hill consisting of three identified temples, all preceded by a courtyard, enclosed by a sacred wall with a monumental gateway between the second and the third forecourt, and another at the entrance of the third forecourt. A pathway from the cult centre leads to the fourth shrine in the valley that is conventionally known as Sīʾ 8. It consists of a small cella that opens into a courtyard. This sanctuary also includes minor later additions from the provincial period (the monumental gate at the entrance of the third courtyard and a structure of unclear purpose in the north-western part of this courtyard).[7] The sanctuary at Saḥr consists of a reduced cella (adyton) facing a small courtyard with a colonnaded portico where re-worked elevated rocky terrain on the sides could have been used for banquets or seating. An elevated horned altar would have been situated in the middle of the courtyard. The courtyard leads to a bigger courtyard where a statuary complex on a podium is situated almost in the middle. A chapel or *naïskos* was situated at the far end of the courtyard next to the entrance and in axis with the entrance of the small courtyard.[8] The sanctuary is placed next to a 600-seat theatre.[9] Both structures are surrounded by various, possibly multi-functional, buildings.[10]

Although Sīʾ and Saḥr seem to be the major sanctuaries in the region, there are sites that could potentially have been complex religious centres, as the recovery of the remains of a sacred precinct wall or the mention of a temenos in an inscription indicates a wide sacred area that could have been used for cult activities. This suggests the presence of a substantial religious centre (Type 2). Such sites include al-Mushennef, Dāmā-Dāmit

[6] For Sīʾ: *RAO* I no.11; *CIS* II 163; *Wadd*. no. 2364–7; *PPUAES* III no.767–9, no.772, no.774; *PPUAES* II: 365–99; *PPUAES* IV no.100–1, no.103; *PAAES* III no.427b, no.428, no.428a, no.428b, no.431–2; *PAAES* II: 322–424; *PAAES* IV no.1; Dunand 1926: 328 pl.69; Cantineau 1932: 11 no.1; *Suw*. 1934 no.15, no.27, pl.8–9; Mascle 1944: no.15, no.27; Sourdel 1957: 28, 64; Dentzer 1985; 1991; Bolelli 1986: 351 no.44–7 pl.11; *Suw*. 1991 INV 15 [190] (5, 23); INV27 [191] (5, 33); Dentzer-Feydy 1986; 1990a: 652 ff. Fig.18; 1992: 76 fig.14; 2003: 189 fig.13; 1993: fig.10; 2010; 2015; Augé 1985; 2003; Milik 2003; Steinsapir 2005: 13–24; Weber 2006, 109–14 fig.41–2; *Hauran* IV: II, 141–5; Kropp 2010a. For Saḥr: *PPUAES* II: 441–6 ill.387–8; *PPUAES* III no.805 1–5; Freyberger 1991: 10, 25; Kalos 1997; 2003; Dentzer-Feydy 2003: 90; 2010; Weber 2003a; 2003b; 2006; *Hauran* IV II; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 73–90; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 301; Segal 2013: 206–13; *Hauran* IV I.

[7] See footnote above.

[8] *PPUAES* II: 441–6; Kalos 1997; 2003; Weber 2003a; 2003b; *Hauran* IV II; Dentzer-Feydy 2010; Segal 2013: 169–70; *Hauran* IV I: 81 ff.

[9] Kalos 1997; 2003; Nielsen 2002: 246; *Hauran* IV I: 157–68.

[10] Kalos 1997; 2003; *Hauran* IV I: 187–302.

al-'Aliyyah, Deir as-Smeij, Is-Şâfiyeh, Kafr Shams, Khirbet Massakeb, Manāra Henū, Rimet Hazim, Ṣanamein, Shā'rah, Şmeid, Smeij/Deir Smeij and Sūr al-Lejā on the basis of archaeological evidence, and Ḳaraba,[11] Qrayya[12] and Mseikeh[13] only on the basis of inscriptions that mention the presence of a temenos. Amongst these examples there are some key differences. Apart from an archaic phase of the cult centre (consisting of an altar in an open area circumscribed by walls, from the second half of the 2nd century BC), a later phase of the layout of the cult centre at Khirbet Massakeb (1st century BC–1st century AD) resembles the core of the cult centres at Sī' and Saḥr as it has a reduced cella (like the small adyton at Sī' and Saḥr) facing a courtyard.[14] The fortuitous recovery of a sanctuary at Shā'rah by a French team in 2000 has revealed, not only its presence, but also its complexity in terms of structure and its ritual activities.[15] However, scholars have pointed out the possibility of another sanctuary where fragmentary statues have been identified, next to one intensively investigated (the Mithraeum)[16] as well as the presence of another sanctuary outside the village.[17] However, at present, no full assessment of the last two sanctuaries has been published. Inscriptions from this site were also recovered but it is unclear which cult centre they referred to.[18]

The examples at al-Mushennef, Sūr al-Lejā and Dāmā-Dāmit al-'Aliyyah have been widely discussed because of the preservation of their architectural fragments together with inscriptions that inform us of the deities worshipped in these centres. The description of these sites is mostly based on the late 19th–early 20th-century record.[19] Their architecture, layout and inscriptions have been discussed more recently but without any further systematic fieldwork.[20] Only Freyberger investigated al-Mushennef as a 'complex' rural cult centre because of its layout together with the cistern behind it.[21] Thanks to a recent systematic study by Dentzer-Feydy, it has been possible to reconstruct the cult centre of Rimet Hazim. It consisted of a rectangular cella on a podium enclosed in a sacred wall, having architectural features and decorative motifs from the provincial period.[22] Although detailed information is not provided, thanks to a recent publication we know that Kafr Shams seems to have a central structure like a podium,[23] and Manāra Henū has a chapel within a sacred enclosure.[24] Furthermore, these sites not only resemble the layout of the large courtyard with a podium in the sanctuary at Saḥr but also its statuary complex.[25] Manāra Henū has additionally inscriptions dedicated by soldiers.[26]

Apart from the preserved provincial architecture of a *Tychaion* (a temple dedicated to Tyche) at Ṣanamein, in front of a cistern together with a substantial set of inscriptions, there are additional architectural remains at the back of the cistern that have been suggested to be either a colonnade that encloses the religious complex or a second temple.[27] It could be the religious building dedicated to the Zeus in the pre-provincial period mentioned in inscriptions.[28]

The presence of a temple within an enclosed sacred area at Deir as-Smeij and Smeij/Deir Smeij has been suggested on the basis of the decoration in a church that resembles those found in other temples in the Hauran, and the preserved pavement that could have been part of the courtyard of the cult centre.[29] Also inscriptions dedicated to gods have been found at both sites.[30] Scholars have only mentioned that the site at Is-Şâfiyeh, thought to be a Roman village, has remains of Roman rectangular building, masonry and structures, including remains of walls that would have delimited the temenos.[31] The early 20th-century Princeton University team suggested that there was a shrine on one side of an almost rectangular paved area from a highly altered

[11] *PPUAES* III no.220.
[12] Nehmé 2010: 270.
[13] Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 207–8 no.140a.
[14] Kalos 1997; 2003; Dentzer-Feydy 2010: 230–2, 236.
[15] Kalos 2001.
[16] *Hauran* IV II: 114–9 fig. 237–55.
[17] Dentzer-Feydy 2010: 226, 229, fig.5–6.
[18] *PPUAES* III no.693, no.803 1, no.803 2; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 103–19.
[19] For al-Mushennef see: *Wadd.* no.2211–2, no.2216; Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 308, 324; *PAAES* III no.380, no.381a, no.381, no.382; *IGRR* III 1260; *PAAES* III: 346–51; *PPUAES* II: 340; *Suw.* 1934 no.55. For *Sūr al-Lejā see: CIL* III 13.604; *PPUAES* II: 428–31 ill.371; *PPUAES* III no.797, no.797 4, no.797 9. For Dāmā-Dāmit al-'Aliyyah, see: *Wadd.* no.2453; Ewing 1895: 76; Dussaud and Macler 1903: 242 no.10; *PPUAES* II: 433–4 ill.377; *PPUAES* III no.800 5, no.800 7.
[20] For al-Mushennef, see: Sourdel 1957: 71 no.6; Bolelli 1986: 322, 332, 342, 348 no.7 pl.2; Denzter-Feydy 1986: 286–97; 1990b: 651–2 fig.14–7; 1993: 110; 2003, 97 footnote 237 and 239; Freyberger 1989; 1998: 59–62; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 241; Weber 2006: 117–8; Segal 2013: 213–6.
For *Sūr al-Lejā,* see: Dentzer-Feydy 2003: 81–3, 97 footnote 237, 100, 107 pl.78.8, pl.88.1; *Hauran* IV II: 121–2; Segal 2013: 180–1; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 156–9 no.95–7. For Dāmā-Dāmit al-'Aliyyah, see: Sourdel 1957: 55 no.2, 72 no.4; Sartre 1993: 121; Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 266; 2003: 98, 100; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 359–61, 313–4 no.297–299 no.302.
[21] Freyberger 1998: 62.
[22] Dentzer-Feydy 1998.
[23] *Hauran* IV II: 138–9 fig.329–31; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016: 511–2.
[24] Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 97 ff.
[25] For Kafr Shams, see: *Hauran* IV II: 133–9. For Manāra Henū, see *Hauran* IV II: 99–105.
[26] Speidel 1998: no.32–3; Stoll 2001: 468–70 no.87–8; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 97–102.
[27] *PPUAES* II: 315–22 ill.287–92 pl.11 abb.288, 291; Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 286–97; Freyberger 1989: 101 pl.23b, 38a–b. 39b–d; 1991, 21; Dentzer-Feydy 2003: 81–2, 97, 100, 190–3, pl.65 no.182–4 pl.78; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 68–75, 239–41; Segal 2008: 105–7; 2013: 171–7.
[28] *RAO* V, 27; *Wadd.* no.2413 j; *PPUAES* III no.655 2, no.655 3; Sourdel 1957: 26 no.3–4; Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 310; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016: 545–8 no.558–60.
[29] For Deir as-Smeij, see: *PPUAES* II: 352–54 ill.317; Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 297; 2003: 85, 97 note 236 pl.79 no.7; Segal 2013: 191. For Smeij/Deir Smeij, see: *PPUAES* II: 108–9 ill.86; Sartre 2011: 105.
[30] For Deir as-Smeij, see: Dussaud and Macler 1903: 648 no.20; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 299 footnote 20. For Smeij/Deir Smeij, see: *RES* no.2031; *PPUAES* IV no.11–2.
[31] *PPUAES* II: 124; Braemer *et al.* 1999: 164; 165, 159 fig.6, fig.12a.

site at Şmeid. From this site a fragmentary inscription seems to mention a temenos.[32]

In addition to sites from the group mentioned above (Type 2), ʻAtīl can be included. Although it does not present evidence of a temenos wall, it has two temples, one to the north, the other to the south, implying the complexity of the religious centre, because their similar structure and decoration can suggest that they belong to the same complex. However, no further structure has been recorded in the surroundings and no more intensive fieldwork has been undertaken. Therefore, not much can be inferred about this site apart from its architecture and layout, together with its inscriptions, which are all subjects that recent scholars have discussed the most.[33] Freyberger provides a new interpretation of the two temples.[34]

Hebrān and Ṣalkhad seem to be major pre-provincial cult centres that continued to be used in the provincial period (Type 3). Due to the lack of preservation of their permanent structures, the information available to us is mostly limited to the information gained from inscriptions.[35] Nevertheless, they still inform us about the patrons of these two sanctuaries, their deities and long-term use of these centres. Architectural fragments and inscriptions laid in the backyard of a modern house are the only remains of what used to be a temple at Hebrān; the Princeton University expedition of the early 20th century provided a reconstruction of its layout.[36] In an analysis of architecture at Sī', Dentzter-Feydy included isolated architectural blocks found at Ṣalkhad.[37] Therefore, we cannot overall verify archaeologically the significance of the centres at Hebrān and Ṣalkhad that the inscriptions have identified.

There are cult centres where only the temples are preserved, and their layouts are discernible apart from the recovery of inscriptions (Type 4). They are: Breikeh, Deir al-Meshqūq, Mismiyyeh, Sleim and Tell Ahmar. Researchers have mostly considered Sleim and, occasionally, Breikeh, together with al-Mushennef, ʻAtīl and Ṣanamein because of the extent of their preserved architecture dated back to the Roman period and the resemblance of their layout.[38] Freyberger has undertaken a systematic building survey of the temples only at Sleim and Ṣanamein, and he has used al-Mushennef and ʻAtīl as comparative examples.[39] Scholars have not discussed the temple at Deir al-Meshqūq to a great extent, although its layout is known[40] and the interesting inscriptions associated with this site.[41] Apart from mention of the layout,[42] Mismiyyeh has been discussed recently mostly because of the important association with the Roman army on the basis of the inscriptions.[43] Tell Ahmar, near the village of Mesad, presents a unique cult centre, comprising a cave with secondary rooms, remains of building blocks and an altar.[44] Segal has recently provided a description of 12 rural cult centres amongst the major rural cult centres in the Hauran that are mentioned in the types of site so far listed, but he does not often include new and recent interpretations of the sites. They are: al-Mushennef,[45] ʻAtīl,[46] Breikeh,[47] Deir as-Smeij,[48] Hebrān,[49] Mayāmas,[50] Mismiyyeh,[51] Saḥr,[52] Ṣanamein,[53] Sī',[54] Sleim[55] and Sūr al-Lejā.[56]

[32] *PPUAES* III: 415–6 no.786, no.786 6; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 545–52.

[33] For architecture, see: Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 102–6; *PAAES* II: 343–46, fig.120; *PPUAES* II: 355–6; Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 286–97, pl.15a; 2003, 81–2 pl.78; Freyberger 1991: 21; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 39, 106–9, 169–71; Segal 2008: 103–05; 2013: 200–5; Freyberger 2015: 290–2. For inscriptions, see: *CIG* 4609; *Wadd.* no.2374a; Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 105, 322; *PAAES* III no.427a; *IGRR* III 1238; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 302.

[34] Freyberger 2015: 290–2.

[35] For Hebrān, see *CIS* II 170; *PPUAES* III no.659, no.663, no.665; *Suw.* 1934 no.172, no.176, no.178–9 pl.3, pl.35. For Ṣalkhad, see *CIS* II 182–4; *Wadd.* no.1990; *PPUAES* III no.155; *PPUAES* IV no.23–4; Cantineau 1932: 16–7; *Suw.* 1934 no.200, no.374–5, no.377; 1991 INV311 [218] (5, 32); Mascle 1944: no.311; Milik 1958: 227–8 no.1; Sourdel 1957: 24.

[36] *PPUAES* II: 323–5, pl. 20; Dentzer-Feydy 1986; 1990b: 653 fig.25; 2003, 85, 96 footnote 219, 96, 100; Segal 2008: 102–3; 2013: 218–9.

[37] Schlumberger 1933: pl.27: 2; Dentzer-Feydy 2003: 81–2, 100.

[38] For architecture at Breikeh, see *PPUAES* II: 409–12 fig.352 pl.29 ill.371; Denzter-Feydy 2003: 107, pl.88.1; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 139–41; Segal 2008: 109; 2013: 184–6. For inscription at Breikeh, see *Suw.* 1934 no.20 pl. 8; 1991 INV20 [12] (5, 31); Mascle 1944: no.20; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 458–9 no.405. For architecture at Mismiyyeh, see Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 286–97; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 103–6, 132, 217–21; Segal 2008: 109–12; 2013: 163–70. For inscription at Mismiyyeh, see *Wadd.* no. 2525–8, no.2528a, no.2530–2, no.2536a; *RAO* 5, 367–8; 6, 372–3; Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 316–8; *PPUAES* II no.800 1; Sourdel 1957: 24, no.1 no.7, 48 no.4, 92 no.7; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 104, 106; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 38–42, 44, 46–7, 51–3 361–2 no.1–5, no.7, no.11, no.13, no.17–20, no.300; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 303. Statues at Mismiyyeh have also been recovered, see Weber 2006: 59–60; *Hauran* IV II: 109–10, 112–3. For architecture at Sleim, see *PPUAES* II, 356–9 fig.319–20 pl. 26–7; Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 266, 277–9; 1990b: 646, 651–2 fig.7–8 fig.19–20; 1992: 76–77 fig.16; 1993: 110; 96 footnote 219, 97 footnote 237; Freyberger 1991; 1998: 55–62; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 65, 115; Segal 2008: 99–101; 2013: 191–4. For inscription at Sleim, see *SEG* VII 1107; *PPUAES* III no.765 3, no.765 4. Statues at Sleim have also been recovered, see *Suw.* 1934 n.73; Bolelli 1986: 322, 332, 342, 348 no.6 pl.2; Dentzer-Feydy 1992: 76 fig.16; *Hauran* IV II: 161–2.

[39] Freyberber 1989; 1991.

[40] *PPUAES* II: 129–31 ill.106; Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 266.

[41] Dussaud and Macler 1903, 277 no.109; Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 321; *IGRR* III 1335, *PPUAES* IV no.27; Milik 1972: 341.

[42] Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 286–97; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 103–6, 132, 217–21; Segal 2008: 109–12; 2013: 163–70.

[43] *Wadd.* no. 2525–8, no.2528a, no.2530–2, no.2536a; *RAO* 5, 367–8; 6, 372–3; Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 316–8; *PPUAES* II no.800 1; Sourdel 1957: 24, no.1 no.7, 48 no.4, 92 no.7; Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 104, 106; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 38–42, 44, 46–7, 51–3 361–2 no.1–5, no.7, no.11, no.13, no.17–20, no.300; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 303.

[44] Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 306.

[45] Segal 2013: 213–6.

[46] Segal 2013: 200–5.

[47] Segal 2013: 184–6.

[48] Segal 2013: 191.

[49] Segal 2013: 218–9.

[50] Segal 2013: 218.

[51] Segal 2013: 163–70.

[52] Segal 2013: 169–70.

[53] Segal 2013: 171–7.

[54] Segal 2013: 206–13.

[55] Segal 2013: 191–4.

[56] Segal 2013: 180 –1.

For Amra, Bteineh, Buʿaḍān, Deir (South), Dhakīr, Mashāra, Mayāmas, Hit, Inkhil, Lubbên, Qirata, Saneh, Sawarat al-Kebireh, Shaqrā and Tsil we cannot identify the layout of the temple but scattered remains of statues, decorative motifs or inscriptions can still suggest the existence of a religious centre because of the following elements associated with temples (Type 5): architectural decorations that resemble those used in other rural cult centres in the Hauran (as in the case of Deir (South),[57] Mashāra,[58] Mayāmas,[59] Muṭāʿiyyeh[60] and Dhakīr);[61] statues of deities (Mashāra,[62] Mayāmas);[63] statues of most likely dedicators (Dhakīr);[64] inscriptions that offer information about the deity who might have been worshipped in the cult centre (Amra,[65] Bteineh,[66] Buʿaḍān,[67] Deir (South),[68] Khabab,[69] Mseikeh,[70] Muṭāʿiyyeh,[71] Hit,[72] Qirata,[73] Tsil,[74] Saneh,[75] Sawara[76] and Sawarat al-Kebireh[77]), and/or about a temple's dedicator (Mseikeh[78] and Shaqrā[79]) or inscriptions that mention the temple's treasurers who dealt with non-religious matters related to the religious centre (Lubbên[80] and Inkhil).[81]

Despite their fragmentary nature, the analysis of the scattered remains of these sites will reveal and contribute towards the information regarding decorative style, deities, potential dedicators, or the elite of the local community in the Hauran, the organisation of temples and their non-religious activities.

Not much information can be gained about the following rural cult centres apart from their possible existence suggested by scholars (Type 6): they are: (mid 2nd century AD) Būsān,[82] (1st century) Dneibeh,[83] Khurāyeb,[84] and Sahwit il-Khidr.[85] Finally, although it was initially thought a *Tychaion*, or more than one, had been constructed at Obṭʿa, Zebīreh and Tibneh on the basis of inscriptions (Type 7),[86] only recently Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre have reinterpreted the inscriptions in these three instances as dedications to Tyche or as small altars or *ediculae* that were dedicated to Tyche.[87]

1.2 Towards a new perspective and approach

The research described in this monograph originated from the need to look at the different aspects of rural sanctuaries in the Hauran together from a more up-to-date perspective.

After an initial focus on recording inscriptions, architectural remains and statues,[88] the presence and influence of the Nabataean kingdom on rural cult centres in the Hauran has been discussed for over a century, but there is still no unanimous picture of the matter (§ Ch.4.1).[89] Some specialists mention the occasional presence of Herodian honorific statues in some rural cult centres and architectural elements at Sīʾ that are also used in the Herodian realm (§ Ch.4.2).[90]

Most recent scholars – Dentzer, Dentzer-Feydy, Sartre, Bolelli, Kropp, Freyberger, Wenning and Alpass – have concurred on the unique character of these sanctuaries

[57] *PPUAES* II: 101–5; Sartre 2011: 93.
[58] Dentzer-Feydy 1992: 79–80; 2003: 96 footnote 129; 2008: 87, 96 footnote 219–20.
[59] *PPUAES* II: 326–29; Denzter-Feydy 1986: 297; Segal 2013: 218.
[60] *PPUAES* II: 88–91; Sartre 2011: 131.
[61] Bounni 1991; Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 297; 2008: 87. Inscriptions were also recovered; for them, see Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 576 no.498; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 306 footnote 89.
[62] Dentzer-Feydy 1992: 79–80 fig.20; 2008: 87, 96.
[63] Seyrig 1949: 28–32 pl.2; 1971: 94–7; Gawlikowski 1990a: 2629 ff. pl.8 fig.20; Dentzer-Feydy 1992: 83–6 fig.27 a–c.
[64] Bolelli 1991: 75, 77; *Suw.* 1991 INV566 [343], (8, 36), INV608 [341] (7, 22), INV568 [346] (7, 28) pl.18–9; Dentzer-Feydy 1992: 73, 76; *Hauran* IV II: 124–5.
[65] Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 298–9 footnote 18.
[66] *Wadd.* no.2127; Dussaud and Macler 1901: no.1; Sartre-Fauriat 2007: 8.
[67] Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016: 605–6 no.611.
[68] *PPUAES* III no.58; Sartre 2011: 94 no.9571.
[69] *Wadd.* no.2514; Sourdel 1957: 41, 51; Sartre-Fauriat 2007: 8, 11; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 129–32 no.74–6; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 300 footnote 25.
[70] *PPUAES* II no.795, no.795 1, no.797–8; Sourdel 1957: 2, 22, 96 no.2; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 204–8 no.137–9, no.140a, no.141; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 307.
[71] *PPUAES* II: 88–91 no.42; Sartre 2011: 131–2 no.9642.
[72] Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 298 footnote 15.
[73] Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 298 footnote 13, 16.
[74] Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 298 footnote 12.
[75] Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 301 footnote 45.
[76] Sartre-Fauriat 2004: 14; 2007: 4–5 no.2; 2015: 301 footnote 39; Sartre 2011: 293–4 no.9882.
[77] Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 301 footnote 48.
[78] *PPUAES* II no.795, no.795 1, no.797–8; Sourdel 1957: 2, 22, 96 no.2; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 204–8 no.137–9, no.140a, no.141; Sartre-Fauriat 2015: 307.
[79] *Wadd.* no.2506; *Suw.* 1934, 80 no.164; Sourdel 1957: 51 no.3; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 217–21 no.152–4.
[80] *Wadd.* no.2455, 2456; Ewing 1895: 69–70; Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 324–5; *PPUAES* II no.793, no.793 1.
[81] Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016: 447–9 no.461a.

[82] *PPUAES* II: 386–7; Dentzer-Feydy 1986: 297.
[83] Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 289.
[84] *PPUAES* III: 105–6; Sartre 2011: 95.
[85] *CIS* II 188; *PPUAES* IV no.96–7; Lewis and Macdonald 2003: 75 no.34.
[86] *Wadd.* no.2512; Dunand 1950: 152 no.336, no.355; Sartre-Fauriat 2006: 8, 11; Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014: 143–7 no.90.
[87] Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016: 348–9, 564–5 no.363, no.578.
[88] Amongst them are: Seetzen 1805; Burckhardt 1810; 1812; von Richter 1815; Buckingham 1816 in *Hauran* I and Fauriat-Sartre and Sartre 2014; *Wadd.*; de Vogüé 1865–77; Dussaud and Macler 1901; 1903; Dussaud 1927; 1955; Brünnow and Domaszewski 1904–9; *PUAAES* I–IV; *PPAES* I–II.
[89] For scholars who have argued for the Nabataean presence in the Hauran, see *PPUAES* II: 380, 385–90, Glueck 1942: 7 ff.; 1966: 6 ff.; Dussaud 1955: 57; Sourdel 1957: 28, 64, 100–3; Dussaud 1955: 57; Hammond 1973: 62–4, 79 ff.; Peters 1977: 263–75; Negev 1977: 613 ff.; Busink 1980: 1255–320; Wenning 1987: 25–51; Gawlikowski 1989: 329–30; Patrich 1990: 45; Ball 2000: 343; Netzer 2003: 102–15; Bowersock 2003: 347; Segal 2013: 45–7. For scholars who discredited idea of the Nabataean presence and influence in rural cult centre, see Freyberger 1998: 52, pl.32d; 2008: 131, 134 fig.6; 2013: 154; 2014: 132; Healey 2001: 62; Alpass 2013: 166–99. For scholars who favoured the idea of a minimal Nabataean presence and influence in the Hauran, see Starcky 1985; Dentzer 1986: 414; Wenning 2007: 37; Dentzer-Feydy 1979: 332; Dentzer 1986: 282–3.
[90] Lichtenberger 1999: 170; Japp 2000: 150; Dentzer-Feydy 2003: 96–8, 101; Weber 2003a: 356; 2003b: 162; *Hauran* IV II: 71–88; Kropp 2013a: 261 ff.; Krumeich and Lichtenberger 2014.

in the pre-provincial period, which mirrored local cultural identity in the Hauran (§ Ch.5).

Dentzer, Dentzer-Feydy, Sartre, Sartre-Fauriat and Bolelli are the main French specialists working on the pre-provincial and provincial phases of the Hauran with contributions published in five monographs on this region,[91] three catalogues of Greek and Latin inscriptions in the north of the Hauran (Leja),[92] in the south (Bosra)[93] and in the east (Jawalan),[94] and a catalogue of the finds from the museum of as-Suweidā',[95] as well as various articles.[96]

Dentzer discussed the main features of the religious architecture in the Near East[97] especially of Sī'[98] and offered an overview of the population of the Hauran (§ Ch.5–6).

Dentzer-Feydy focused on the architecture across the Hauran in the pre-provincial and provincial periods,[99] with a particular interest in the architectural decorations;[100] whereas Bolelli provided an overview of statues across the Hauran from the same timespan[101] (§ Ch.5–6). Apart from an interesting article on the impact of soldiers in the Hauran,[102] Sartre-Fauriat focused on the gods mentioned in isolated inscriptions and in cult centres, arguing for the predominance of local deities,[103] although she pointed out the presence of foreign deities in the pantheon of the Hauran.[104] Her work is on the same lines as Sourdel's work in 1957, which divided the gods worshipped in the Hauran between different Semitic/Arabic gods and foreign deities.[105]

Weber, working jointly with the French team, has examined statues in the Hauran with a particular emphasis on statue fragments recovered at Saḥr; he has catalogued the statues, including those displayed and stored in the Museum of Damascus,[106] and has also published some articles.

Freyberger has conducted his own continual research on sanctuaries in the Hauran over the past 30 years.[107]

Kropp has published a single paper about Sī'.[108] Wenning has dedicated a section of his book to the Hauran when discussing the Nabataeans and published an article.[109] Alpass devoted a chapter of his monograph on the Nabataea to the sanctuaries in the Hauran[110] (§ Ch. 4–5).

Providing an understanding of cultural identity when discussing the data from sanctuaries is a common practice because religion is a key aspect of that cultural identity. Religion delineates an individual's identity, as it shapes and reflects the system of values by which a person lives his or her life: this is especially pertinent in the case of the Roman Empire.[111] By 'cultural identity' I mean a sense of individuals recognising themselves as belonging to a group with shared meanings and cultural traits, such as language, style and material culture. This is a short definition that is conventionally used by scholars, although it is far from being exhaustive.[112] As we deal with data associated with rural sanctuaries across the Hauran, rather than simply cultural identity, it is more appropriate to talk about religious cultural identity – this is the term that I will use in this monograph.

When considering the architecture of rural sanctuaries from the end of the pre-provincial to the provincial period, some scholars, such as Segal and Freyberger, have stressed that they followed Graeco-Roman models,[113] whereas others, such as Dentzer, Dentzer-Feydy, Ball and Butcher, have maintained that the architecture of the sanctuaries still expressed a region's individuality, although it adopted some Near Eastern elements in the pre-provincial and the provincial periods.[114] Both currents of thought focused mostly on a small number of examples in the Hauran or an aspect of these sanctuaries, often when scholars offered an overview of the religious architecture in the Near East (§ Ch. 6).

Steinsapir is the only scholar who has examined in detail the cult activities in the rural cult centre at Sī', by offering a phenomenological perspective of the sanctuary and the ritual landscape, when looking at rural sanctuaries in Syria[115] (§ Ch.7).

From this extremely synthetic outline of previous work on rural cult centres, which will be fully discussed in the following chapters, it is clear that there is no comprehensive study of rural cult centres in the

91 *Hauran* I; II; III; IV I and II; V.
92 Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2014.
93 Sartre 2011.
94 Sartre-Fauriat and Sartre 2016.
95 *Suw*. 1934, 1991.
96 Dentzer 1989; Dentzer-Feydy 1989; 1990a; 1990b; 2003; Sartre-Fauriat 2005; 2007; 2015.
97 Dentzer 1989.
98 Dentzer 1986.
99 Dentzer-Feydy 1986; 2010; 2015.
100 Dentzer-Feydy 1989; 1990a; 1990b; 2003.
101 Bolelli 1986; 1991.
102 Sartre-Fauriat 2005.
103 Sartre-Fauriat 2007; 2015.
104 Sartre-Fauriat 2015.
105 Sourdel 1957.
106 Weber 2006; *Hauran* IV II.
107 Freyberger 1989; 1991; 1998: 46–62; 2013; 2014.

108 Kropp 2010a.
109 Wenning 2001.
110 Alpass 2013: 166–99.
111 Geertz 1973: 90; Rives 2000: 245, 257.
112 Hall 1997; Grahame 1998: 159; Huskinson 2000: 5 ff., 10 ff.; Hodos 2010: 3.
113 Freyberger 1989; 1991; 1998; Segal 2008; 2013.
114 Dentzer 1989; Dentzer-Feydy 1989, Ball 2000: 357–8, 394, 396; Butcher 2003: 274.
115 Steinsapir 2005: 13–24.

Hauran. Only through a comprehensive analysis of these cult centres, together with a comparative study of other examples in the Near East, can we move away from considering sanctuaries as simply expressions of a local identity in the Hauran or the result of the political authorities that previous scholars discussed when looking at some aspects of rural cult centres and at only some of the 57 rural cult centres in the Hauran. Only through this type of approach is it possible to grasp the complexity of these centres and of the people of the Hauran whose identity and rural cult centres were shaped by the different cultures that entered the Hauran and the different cultures that the people of the Hauran could have encountered over time.

This new perspective on rural cult centres in the Hauran has been specifically nurtured by various approaches and theories applied to archaeology and Roman archaeology, in particular, that have been fully developed in the last 20 years, but have not been considered by other scholars when looking at rural cult centres in the Hauran. They are: the social meaning of buildings (e.g. research by Johnson, Pearson and Revell),[116] Alcock's work on Greece in the Roman period in 1993,[117] the recent theory of globalisation (e.g. work by McGrew, Pitts and Versluys),[118] the concept of network analysis, along the lines of Collar's research,[119] and recent scholarly interests in discussing religion and identities as more dynamic aspects of the Roman Empire. In my research I have neither aimed to verify nor follow any of the specific theories and approaches listed above, but have used their key concepts to offer a better understanding of rural cult centres and of the people who used them, as I explain below.

With regards to the social meaning and role of buildings, scholars, such as Johnson, Pearson and Revell,[120] do not view the aesthetic of the buildings but their use and the people who built, maintained and used them, since they, including temples, are steeped in cultural traits of these people which can be recognised by an analysis of these buildings. Similarly, Steinsapir aims to provide a partial social meaning of one the major sanctuaries in the Hauran (Sīʾ): she especially focuses on the religious role of Sīʾ and devotees' experience in the sanctuary. However, she does not unravel the diversity of people who visited and shaped not only the building but instead all aspects of a sanctuary as a public gathering centre, including the people who built it, which this monograph aims to do. Furthermore, a single example will not enable us to fully understand the complexity of one or multiple communities in a region. Thus, I have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of all cult centres recovered across the Hauran.

According to Alcock, we should not consider Greece, her case study in her monograph, as an isolated area with a quality of 'uniqueness', but instead as an active part of the empire and comparable to many other examples within the Roman Empire, as well as other empires, such as the British Empire.[121] Likewise, I consider the Hauran not as an isolated region with a quality of 'uniqueness' but as a part of a Near Eastern network, comparable to other areas and cultures of the Near East.

In addressing the concept of 'globalisation',[122] I do not propose a flat cultural homogeneity[123] but rather a 'world as a single social place' reshaped by 'the patterns of human interaction and awareness', to adopt McGrew's definition.[124] This theory does not imply the imposition of Roman rule over local cultures and one-way influence from Rome to indigenous people. Cultural change, due to Roman rule, has instead been viewed as multidirectional, simultaneously encouraging unity and differences in pre-existing provincial societies and the centre of the empire.[125] Therefore, the concept of globalisation operational here does not exclude the presence and

[116] Nicolet 1980; Parker Pearson and Richards 1994; Johnson 1997; Revell 2008; 2013; 2015.
[117] Alcock 1993.
[118] McGrew 1992a; Versluys 2015; Pitts and Versluys 2015. The earliest studies on globalisation have discussed some of its aspects (e.g. the role of networks and connectivity) but they have not discussed its concept in detail (Pitts and Versluys 2015: 19–20). Some of the major works are: Horden and Purcell 2000; Hingley 2005; Malkin 2005; Morris 2005; Malkin, Contantankopoulou and Panagopoulou 2009; Van Dommelen and Knapp 2010; Versluys 2015; Pitts and Versluys 2015; Witcher 2015. Horden and Purcell's work has been considered as an account on globalisation only because of its emphasis on connectivity and flows (Witcher 2015, 199). Hingley titled one of his books, *Globalizing Roman culture* where, while providing valid discussion on Romanisation and identity, he ended up discussing the drawbacks of the concept of globalisation in the Roman Empire and the risks of using it nowadays as an excuse for global capitalism (Hingley 2005), as Witcher similarly argued (Witcher 2000). Since the late 1990s, historians and archaeologists have employed the concept and/or the vocabulary of globalisation also for Iron Age/Hellenistic Mediterranean (Hodos 2010) and for early medieval Europe (Heather 2010).
[119] Collar 2012; 2013. Collar is the only scholar who has applied network analysis when discussing religion; she examined the distribution of one of the main gods of the Roman army (Dolichenus) across the Roman Empire, including the Near East. For network theory in sociological research: Granovetter, 1973. Amongst the earliest important contributions on network theory in antiquity: Horden and Purcell 2000; Malkin 2005; Van Dommelen and Knapp 2010; more recent references on networks: Graham 2006; Collar 2013; Seland 2013; 2014; Brughmans 2013; 2014; Brughmans *et al.* 2014; 2015. For ongoing research on network analysis to archaeology and history, see http://connectedpast.net/ and https://archaeologicalnetworks.wordpress.com/

[120] Nicolet 1980; Parker Pearson and Richards 1994; Johnson 1997; Revell 2008; 2013; 2015.
[121] Alcock 1993.
[122] Alongside the concept of local identities, the theory of globalisation associated with the Roman Empire started indirectly in the 1990s in contraposition to the concept of Romanisation (Pitts and Versluys 2015: 19–20).
[123] McGrew 1992a: 65; 1992b: 262.
[124] McGrew 1992a: 65.
[125] Wells 1999: 192–3; Witcher 2000; Laurence 2001; Hingley 2005; Sweetman 2007; Pitts 2008; Versluys 2013; Pitts and Versluys 2015: 19.

persistence of local identities but considers them to be connected with each other and part of a global system.[126] Similarly, I wish to disregard the erroneous notion of Roman imposition over local cultures. Rather, I consider that the fact of belonging to the same Roman province, as other parts of the Near East, favoured human interactions between the pre-existing cultures in the Near East and the Hauran; moreover, I suggest that the building of a Roman road network in the Near East facilitated these interconnections. Similarly the local population of the Hauran and their cult centres can be considered as part of a world interconnected with other cultures of the Near East. This was not determined and dictated by the Roman rule but by human interactions (i.e. the contacts, over time, of the elite of the Hauran with other cultures of the Near East). These interactions were developed from the pre-provincial period and facilitated by caravan routes in the pre-provincial period as well as by Roman roads in the provincial period. These social interactions in the provincial period were eased by the fact that different cultures, including the Hauran, were under the same political authority and belonged to the same Roman province.

Bearing in mind that the problematic nature of the theory of globalisation in the Roman Empire is still a challenge,[127] the monograph takes inspiration only from the general concepts of networks, which is a central part of this notion shared with the network analysis.

Recent scholars, such as Brughmans, Seland and Collar, have discussed network analysis in detail and have applied it to archaeological matters.[128] Network analysis considers the dynamic interactions that shape and dissolve networks as significant factors that affect cultural change and influence ideas and their accomplishment.[129] Networks not only link different cities together in various ways, but they also incorporate every point between them, including any rural settlements, from humble farmsteads upwards.[130] These networks are created from relationships (called ties) between individuals (agents or actors) (called nodes) that, by carrying information (e.g. commerce, culture, their own ideas, their customs), are able to transfer, spread and influence people's decisions and other individuals' ideas.[131] Therefore, actors and actions are interdependent.[132] This interdependency makes the world interconnected and 'globalised', where the action of an individual in one place may have consequences on an action somewhere else. Networks are not static: they evolve on the basis of the decisions that people make, and networks also influence those decisions.[133] The different types of information that spread between actors/agents also include religious beliefs that spread thanks to social relationships, as demonstrated in sociological research by Granovetter.[134] For instance, Collar has applied network analysis to research into the diffusion of the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, eased by the military networks of the Roman army, the Jewish Diaspora in the West and the cult of Theos Hypsistos.[135]

This monograph does not create or use different network models to estimate and measure the different ties between actors.[136] Rather, it uses principles from the network analysis as heuristic concepts,[137] in order to propose that there were relationships (which would have been called 'ties' by researchers working on network analysis) between the population of the Hauran and other Near Eastern cultures. Such relationships could have shaped the culture of the Hauran itself, including its religious life (which would have been called 'flows' in network terms).

Especially Bendlin, Kaiser and Butcher but also scholars in recent volumes on Roman religion in the Near East, from the series *Contextualising the Sacred*, have considered religion and religious identities as dynamic aspects. They have focused on interaction between native and Roman and Greek cultures which resulted in local response to Roman and Greek religious traditions on different levels.[138] Specifically in 1997 Bendlin argued, as endorsed by Kaizer in 2000, that religion was an open system and the form it took resulted from this constant renegotiation

[126] Whitmarsh 2014: 2.
[127] Insoll 2006; Hingley 2015. Some scholars argued that globalisation cannot be applied to the Roman world or any ancient cultures because overall they considered globalisation as a phenomenon associated with the 20th century and modern society and capitalism (Giddens 1990; Tomlinson 1999; Witcher 2000; Hingley 2005; 2015; Naerebout 2006–7; Greene 2008). However, the idea of belonging to a whole and common entity was already embraced in Roman culture in 160–120 BC and in the 2nd century AD according to ancient authors. According to Polybius (*Polybius, Histories* 1.3) every action in a region, such as Italy and Africa, would have triggered other events in another region, such as Asia and Greece, despite their distance, and they would have determined common outcomes. According to the Greek orator Aelius Aristides, in the middle of the 2nd century AD contemporaries were aware of the fact that they inhabited a common connected and organised world – thanks to the Roman rule that 'bridged the rivers in various ways, cut carriage roads through the mountains, filled the desert places with post stations and civilized everything with your way of life and good order'. His narration was a panegyric speech, so its purpose was to please and compliment his Roman audience (Sommer 2015). The Roman world had several typical traits of forms of globalisation in the past; some of them have been identified, namely: the increased connectivity, the existence of a common market, the domestic impact of market, integration, the idea of belonging to one world (Rothschild 1998; Hopkins 2002: 24; Jennings 2015: 9, 12; Pitts and Versluys 2015: 15–9).
[128] Collar 2012; 2013; Seland 2013; 2014; Brughmans *et al.* 2015.
[129] Collar 2012: 1.
[130] Graham 2006: 49.
[131] Brughmans 2013: 625, 632.
[132] Wasserman and Faust 1994: 4.
[133] Graham 2009: 683.
[134] Granovetter 1973; Collar 2012: 110.
[135] Collar 2012: 110; Collar 2013.
[136] This is oversimplified; for a better understanding of network analysis and different network models, see Knappett 2013; Brughmans 2013; http://connectedpast.net/, for instance.
[137] Fulminante 2014.
[138] Bendlin 1997: 52–4; Kaizer 2000: 225–6; Butcher 2003: 335; Blömer et al. 2015; Raja 2017.

of religious elements between imperial dominion and local response.[139] This dynamic interaction is not limited to these two dual forces but also between multiple non-Roman, specifically Near Eastern cultures in the case of the Near East, as Kaiser discussed.[140] Religion and religious identities have been considered dynamic entities because they responded by circumstances and various factors including political and socio-economic powers.[141] Therefore, in the study of religion there has been a recent emphasis on the geographical, historical, socio-political and cultural context where religion and religious identities developed.[142]

Additionally, the joint Roman Archaeology Conference and Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference in 2016 was an extremely inspiring forum to discuss religion and identities in the Roman Empire from different angles. The following sessions and papers were of a particular interest: 'Dynamics of cults and cult places in the expanding Roman Empire' organised by Tesse Stek, 'Diversity and Identity in Roman Iudaea/Syria Palaestina' organised by Adi Erlich, 'Religious diversity in the Roman Province of Dalmatia: new approaches and challenges' organised by Nirvana Silnović and Dora Ivanišević, and the paper 'Worshipping the Roman emperor: uneven and combined developments?' by Dies van der Linde, together with my own paper, 'Marxist dialectic vs. the predominant notion of local identities: the study of cult centres in the Hauran (southern Syria) (100 BC–AD 300)' from the session 'Marxist tradition in Roman archaeology' organised by Andrew Gardner and Mauro Puddu. Together, they also convey the diversity of approaches to religion and identities in the empire along with their validity. Their findings fuel the perception of the annexation of pre-existing cultures to the Roman Empire as resulting in a complex, variable and dynamic phenomenon between those 'pre-existing' and 'new' traditions arriving with the Romans. Based on these premises, the monograph will seek this constant dynamic renegotiation between different cultures but on multiple levels. It will not limit attention to the dual discourse between local culture and imperial dominion, but will also view how religious elements used in different cultures were integrated or adopted in the Hauran.

I have undertaken a comparative study, which is a widely used method, together with a more innovative approach, landscape analysis. However, I use a systematic comparative study of multiple datasets, instead of an aspect or an element of rural cult centres of the Hauran. In contrast to previous work, I also question resemblances by considering concepts from recent work and theories on religion and cultures as mentioned above. They are: the social meaning and role of sanctuaries, interactions of different cultures that influenced and shaped religious and building traditions, and the multidirectional dialectical changing discourse over time derived from different cultures in the Near East.

By a systematic comparative study I mean looking systematically at resemblances of multiple aspects of rural cult centres (architecture, gods, onomastics of benefactors and dedicators) in the Hauran, firstly, with those from the territories that had the same political authorities as the Hauran (the Nabataean and the Herodian kingdoms) (§ Ch.3), and, then, with those from neighbouring populations and cultures that did not border the Hauran but did share common patterns and beliefs with the study area (people associated with Safaitic script, Palmyra and Parthia in the pre-provincial and the provincial periods) (§ Ch.4–5).

The people of the Hauran represented by the rural cult centres and who can be identified through analysis of cult centres were a segmented part of the population of the Hauran, i.e. its elite. They would have been benefactors of rural cult centres as they played the major role in the religious life of monumental public cult places: they had the funds for building temples; they commissioned major dedications and statues; they were responsible for performing the cult acts and deciding which gods people would worship.[143] However, the study of cult centres can provide us with information about a wider spectrum of people of the Hauran than just its elite. While the identification of benefactors can offer up the identity of a segment of Hauran society, the identification of the character of a deity (e.g. a local or a widely worshipped god in the Near East) might indicate who commissioned a temple and local and non-local devotees who visited. Sanctuaries were not just expressions of a wealthy individual but expressions of a collective agency; of worshippers who could have come from different social classes and who could still have shared common beliefs and religious traditions and participated in rituals during religious festivals. This is reinforced by some examples of rural sanctuaries in the Hauran, for instance those at Dâmit Il-'Alyā[144] and Lubbayn[145] where village communities commissioned the cult centre. Sanctuaries were public centres and meeting places for communities. Devotees would have worshipped the god that a temple was dedicated to and participated in religious practices in a sanctuary only if they recognised the god represented as their own and if they were familiar with the space where they worshipped. So looking at the layout of cult centres, their architecture and gods can give us an

[139] Bendlin 1997: 52–4; Kaizer 2000: 225–6; 2002: 27; 2013: 66–7.
[140] Kaiser 2015.
[141] Frood and Raja 2014; Blömer et al. 2015.
[142] http://www.brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=CS

[143] Rives 2000: 258.
[144] *PPUAES* III no.800 2, 8.
[145] *Wadd.* no.2045–6; Ewing 1895: 69–70, Brünnow and von Domaszewski 1904: 324–5; *PPUAES* III no.793.

insight into a broader spectrum of the society than just the elite.

It is necessary, therefore, to analyse a comprehensive series of datasets in order to have a better understanding both of the elite and of who visited these sanctuaries.

The aspects of the rural cult centres that will be considered are: the layout of cult centres; the style of their architecture and decoration; the style of statues; the gods that the sanctuaries were dedicated to and the gods mentioned in inscriptions that can be identified as belonging to the cult centres; the benefactors mentioned in inscriptions and those represented in statues; and epigraphic and archaeological evidence of cult and economic activities associated with these sanctuaries.

The type of script used in the inscriptions (i.e. Greek, Nabataean or Aramaic) will not be considered as a separate determinant in understanding the society of the Hauran, but it will be included in the discussion of rural cult centres, bearing in mind some limitations. Macdonald argues that the use of a specific writing is not a matter of ethnicity or a political expression, as suggested by the following examples. In several papyri in the Nabataean kingdom some members of a Jewish community wrote in Nabataean, whereas others used Jewish Palestinian Aramaic. A man who specified that he was Nabataean commissioned an inscription in the Palmyrene language only because he happened to be working in the area of Palmyra. Nabataeans who were out in the desert, east of the Hauran, wrote graffiti in Safaitic. Therefore Macdonald points out that we should not assume that whoever wrote or commissioned a Nabataean inscription considered themselves as ethnically or politically Nabataean. It is the same for whoever writes in English – he/she is not necessarily English by nationality or ethnicity.[146] The choice of the script may be related to different external factors. They can be: the socio-political background where the inscription was placed, the socio-political background of its commissioner or scribe, and the socio-political background of the addressees of inscriptions. The location where inscriptions were placed, and therefore their recipients, seem to be key factors, as the following case can elucidate. Although Greek was the main official language in the Near East,[147] many other scripts were used, for instance at Palmyra there is a high number of bilingual inscriptions.[148] This interplay of languages in inscriptions in the Near East[149] must be triggered by the presence of different cultures. As in the wide use of English today or Greek in the Near East, the choice to use one script instead of another may also be due to the necessity of communicating to a wider audience. The choice to use Greek in the Near East may be an expression of elite wealth and propaganda, as inscriptions were everlasting monuments of glory and power(§ Ch.4.1). Therefore, the script of inscriptions is a supplemental element that I will integrate into my research, especially when discussing other aspects of rural cult centres, such as their deities, benefactors and dedicators(§ Ch.4.1).

Scholars have already compared the architectural and sculptural styles in the Hauran with those from other cultures in the Near East and have seen certain resemblances. However, they did not fully explore the influence on the architectural and sculptural style in the Hauran from neighbouring and more distant cultures (§ Ch.5). In addition to previous research, I take the results from this comparative study a stage further to delineate the connections between the Hauran and the cultures that shared common features with it. Additionally, I consider the diffusion of an architectural or statuary style, or a god, in the Hauran. This enables us to distinguish the geographical concentration of a type of architecture, statue or god, and to discuss implications as to why a particular concentration occurs in one area instead of another. It further allows us to seek out the relationships between cultures that shared similar architectural styles, or the worship of the same gods.

This monograph will start by comparing rural cult centres and sanctuaries in the territory ruled by the same political authority (the Nabataean and the Herodian kingdoms, the Roman Empire, in particularly the Roman provinces in the Near East) (§ Ch.3). The use of similar sculptural and religious architectural styles and the worship of the same gods in rural cult centres and in the territory ruled by the same political authority imply that the architecture and the beliefs of rural centres were deeply influenced by their political government. Therefore, the rural cult centres were more a reflection of the historical situation that they lived in. A variation in architectural structures or the changing of gods during the Roman period might imply that social dynamics were due to political changes, as maintained by the French team.[150] The presence of honorific statues of any members of the different political authorities mentioned above will also be examined, as they will give an insight into the political power.

The third term of comparison is the religious architecture, the sculptural style, and the gods of cultures that did not border with the Hauran. I have taken Palmyra and Parthia as a sample from the various cultures in the Near East that might have some similarities with the cult centres in the Hauran, because they appear amongst the most frequently mentioned by previous scholars when looking for architectural and sculptural resemblances (§ Ch.4). This does not mean

146 Macdonald 2003c: 39.
147 Parca 2001: 71; Isaac 2009: 43.
148 For instance, see Millar 1993: 232–3; Kaizer 2002.
149 This term is used by Millar (1993: 233).

150 Dentzer 1986: 308.

that the rural cult centres of the Hauran did not share common patterns with other sanctuaries or cultures elsewhere in the Near East.

Recurrent similarities between two territories can suggest direct or indirect connections between communities that were not under the same political control. This needs to be verified by further evidence of contacts, when it is possible.

When discussing benefactors in the analysis of rural cult centres, it is necessary to differentiate between those who commissioned a temple (patrons) and those who dedicated an inscription, an altar or a statue to the god of a cult centre (dedicators). Their different financial contribution towards a cult centre can mirror their different levels of significance within the elite of the Hauran.

The identification of patrons and dedicators is also achieved by examining inscriptions and statues. However, we need to bear in mind the difficulty of identifying the subject of statues when there is no pedestal associated with them.

The role of benefactors in a sanctuary and their importance in the society of the Hauran can also be understood by looking at the location of their inscriptions within the architectural framework[151] and their visibility.[152] For instance, an inscription on an altar or a statue's pedestal is different from one on a lintel on the façade of a temple, as the latter is part of the temple's structure, and everyone could see it, which is unlikely in the case of pedestals. In the former case, the benefactor would have played a significant role in the cult centre. Inscriptions should be considered as monuments of glory and power because the visual impact of the inscriptions is more significant than the actual text. The basis for such reasoning is that inscriptions at a higher elevation would not have been legible from below. Although literacy was not widespread,[153] it is most likely that the local attendants of the cult centres were already aware of the meaning of these inscriptions and what they represented, and who the benefactors were. The names of the patrons might have been declared during the opening of the sanctuary or during religious festivals; for instance, in some cases decrees were displayed and read aloud for the illiterate worshippers.[154] Alternatively, the name of the patron might have been transmitted by word of mouth. Taking into account the location of the inscriptions is also valuable in terms of discerning the role of the benefactor, especially when the text is fragmentary or does not explicitly mention the erection of the structure the inscription commemorates.

The identity of benefactors and dedicators is not a straightforward process. In some cases, inscriptions explicitly mention members of local villages, or of a local community, as dedicators or major benefactors. It is more difficult when only the names of individuals are mentioned. We can suggest that individuals with striking and distinctive names found in other parts of the Hauran, or in specific places or cultures, might have shared the same origin or might have had a strong connection or influence, as names were traditionally derived from the family, as well as partially affected by fashion and beliefs.[155]

In short, through the analysis of statues and inscriptions, patrons or dedicators of rural cult centres are fully discussed in this monograph, as this matter has not been previously fully interrogated by scholars. The roles of the following types of individuals or groups that can be approximately identified in rural cult centres will be investigated: Nabataean individuals or kings, Herodian kings and soldiers (§ Ch.3), individuals associated with people who made Safaitic graffiti (§ Ch.2 for a description of these groups) (§ Ch.4.1), Roman soldiers (§ Ch.5.1) and individuals bearing a 'Roman' name (§ Ch.5.3). Adopting a Roman name suggests a strong connection between the population in the Hauran and the individuals with non-local cultures, and it indicates integration of a non-local or non-pre-existing custom into the culture of the population in the Hauran (§ Ch.5.4 for a better explanation of the matter). Identifying the role of these individuals from different cultures and influenced by non-local cultures leads to the core of my argument. Namely, it will indicate the complexity of the rural society of the Hauran and emphasise its potential connection and integration with the broader network of the Near East in the pre-provincial and provincial periods.

With regards to identification of cult activities, starting with a detailed analysis by Steinsapir of rituals, I will, then, examine archaeological evidence in rural cult centres across the Hauran that can determine what kind of ritual practices and on what scale they were undertaken (this analysis will be mostly concentrated on their layout) (§ Ch.6). The identification of the scale of rituals can lead us to perceive to what extent sanctuaries were complex entities that transcended religious purposes. Rituals involved the gathering of a large number of people for religious festivals; thus, they became key interactions not only between the gods and the individuals, but also between the individuals

[151] Février 1989: 75.
[152] Newby 2007: 6.
[153] Petrucci 1986; Corbier 2006: 12–3.
[154] Corbier 2006: 47.
[155] Sartre 2007a: 200.

themselves.[156] These were perfect occasions to hold periodic markets. Merchants would have profited from the large numbers of people attending the event and in some cases would have benefited from a tax reduction on their sales, as markets were associated with sanctuaries according to written sources.[157] This is the case in the cult centre at Baetocaece, in northern Syria, on the basis of inscriptions.[158] Therefore, because of the connection between religious festivals and markets, the identification of major ritual practices for religious festivals becomes a key factor to investigate not only commerce but also other types of economic activities (e.g. pottery production). Goods produced by the sanctuary itself could have been sold during religious festivals. Periodic markets and other economic activities associated with rural cult centres in the Hauran are investigated at this stage. Occasionally the personnel who managed the sanctuary finances and economic matters are mentioned in inscriptions: identifying them means an accumulation of information towards the reconstruction of the life of rural cult centres as well as deciphering the complexity of cult centres in terms of internal organisation, including the economic activities of sanctuaries.

Throughout the monograph, in combination with the comparative study of archaeological and epigraphic data, landscape analysis is undertaken in order to explain the presence of shared patterns (e.g. same god, same benefactors) across sites in the Hauran and across the Near East, to evaluate the importance of a sanctuary for its ritual activities and to identify the presence of any economic activities, especially periodic markets. By 'landscape analysis'[159] I mean the contextualisation of cult centres of the Hauran and distribution patterns of similar types of data, within their natural and socio-cultural, political and economic landscapes.

For instance, the linking of sites by roads would have facilitated the dispersal of similar cultural traits. Moreover, the concentration of sites with similar data patterns would enable us to circumscribe either the same community or communities that shared the same religious traits, and questions the reasons for this distribution by looking at the surrounding natural and socio-political landscape. Additionally, for example, the location of a sanctuary on a road might suggest that it stood at a crossroads in terms of the movement of people, and thus indicate whether or not the sanctuary was a main religious centre and whether or not commercial activities took place.[160] For instance, markets associated with religious festivals occurred in the sanctuary at Mamre, on the road linking Hebron and Jerusalem.[161] Additionally, on the one hand, markets in sanctuaries that did not produce their own goods and were isolated from other settlements would have found it necessary to provide for pilgrims' primary needs such as food; on the other hand, periodic markets associated with religious festivals would have provided a great opportunity to sell the sanctuary's products.

The following chapters will gradually define the life of rural cult centres in the Hauran and of the people who used them, by reconstructing the activities of these centres, and, especially, by unravelling the relationships and influences between rural cult centres in the Hauran and therefore the elite and those associated with them, and the religious centres and cultures in the Near East that bordered or did not border with the Hauran over time.

Chapter 2 provides a brief description of the geography of the Hauran and its historical and socio-economic background from the pre-provincial to the provincial period to emphasise the connection and integration of the people who inhabited the Hauran with those other cultures that neighboured or did not border with the Hauran.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 reassess the scholarly argument of the local character of rural cult centres of the Hauran. They will re-evaluate the nature of the centres and place them and the Hauran as part of broader networks in the Near East in the pre-provincial (§ Ch.3–4) and provincial periods (§ Ch.5). In Chapter 3, I firstly re-examine the Nabataean presence and influence in rural cult centres of the Hauran, which has been the topic most discussed over the centuries, and, then, the Herodian impact, as these were the two main political authorities that controlled the region in the pre-provincial period. In Chapter 4, the actual identification of the benefactors and main dedicators of rural cult centres in the Hauran in the pre-provincial period will be investigated through the analysis of inscriptions and the main gods worshipped in these centres. When considering the main benefactors and

[156] North 2000: 44.
[157] MacMullen 1970: 335 ff.
[158] *IGLS* VII no.4028 A–E.
[159] 'Landscape archaeology is concerned with the analysis of the cultural landscape through time. This entails the recording and dating of cultural factors that remain as well as their interpretation in terms of social, economic and environmental factors. It is assumed that the natural landscape has been reorganised either consciously or subconsciously for a variety of religious, economic, social, political, environmental or symbolic purposes. Evidence includes traces of earth-moving activities, patterns or sequences of vegetation, traces of fields or gardens, settlements and various types of land-use practices' (Wilkinson 2003: 3–4 adapted from Metheny 1996, 384). Some references on landscape studies, although this list is far from being exhaustive, include: Cosgrove 1984; Cherry 1983; Aston 1985; Tilley 1994; Metheny 1996; Fisher and Thurston 1999; Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Rossignol 1992; Feinman 1999: 685; Stoddart and Zubrow 1999; Thomas 2001; Wilkinson 2003; Chapman 2006.
[160] MacMullen 1970: 333.
[161] Magen 1993: 939.

dedicators, the presence and influence of the people who made Safaitic graffiti will be discussed. Chapter 4 concludes by discussing influences on architecture and statues from rural cult centres in the Hauran in the pre-provincial period from distant cultures (Palmyra and Parthia), and highlights significant connections between these areas. Chapter 5 discusses who shaped the rural religious cultural identity of the Hauran in the provincial period and how it was defined by influences and connections with other cultures in the Near East in the provincial period. This will be accomplished by discussing the main benefactors and dedicators of rural temples in the provincial period (Roman soldiers and individuals who used 'Roman' names), by looking at the cult of 'new' gods (e.g. Mithras, Apollo and Nemesis) and by assessing the development of the architectural style of rural cult centres in the provincial period (through a comparative study with examples across the Near East).

Chapter 6 attempts to reconstruct the life of these centres, by considering their religious and non-religious activities and their personnel.

This study of rural cult centres in the Hauran will put religious buildings, rural areas and this region into a new perspective: reappraising them as an integral part of the broader network of the Near East. The conclusion (§ Ch.7) will bring together the findings of the five chapters of analysis outlined above (§ Ch.3–6).