

# STUDIA

Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu  
Departamentul de Istorie, Patrimoniu și  
Teologie Protestantă  
Centrul de Cercetare a Patrimoniului și  
Istoriei Socio-Culturale

**VOLUME XVII / 2020**

**STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS  
CIBINIENSIS**  
Series Historica

Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu  
2020

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The journal was classified category B by the National Council for Scientific Research (History and Cultural Studies) and indexed in BDI: SCOPUS-Elsevier, ERIH Plus, EBSCO, Index Copernicus and CEEOL. <http://ccpisc.ulbsibiu.ro/language/en/studia-en/>

**ISSN 1584-3165**

## Address for correspondence

Department of History and Patrimony 550024 SIBIU, Victoriei Street, no. 5-7, tel.: + 40269 214468; fax: + 40269 214468; E-mail: [ioan.albu@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:ioan.albu@ulbsibiu.ro);  
[sorin.radu@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:sorin.radu@ulbsibiu.ro)

## Cuprins / Contents

### Arheologie / Archaeology

Anamaria TUDORIE

*Forme de vase ceramice Starčevo-Criș identificate la Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș (jud. Sibiu), Săliște (jud. Alba), Cristian I (jud. Sibiu) și Cristian III (jud. Sibiu)*  
*Starcevo-Cris Ceramic Vessels Shapes Identified at Miercurea Sibiului-Petriș (Sibiu County), Salistea (Alba County), Cristian I (Sibiu County) and Cristian III (Sibiu County) .....11*

Sabin Adrian LUCA

*Prehistoric carved stones, discovered on lot 1 (Alba Iulia), site 2, of the A10 Sebeș Alba – Turda highway.....23*

Silviu I. PURECE, Claudiu MUNTEANU

*Argint pentru războinici. Un tezaur de tetradrahme „de tip thasian” din colecția Muzeului Național Brukenthal*  
*Silver for Warriors. A Hoard with “Thasian Type” Tetradrachms from Brukenthal National Museum’s Collection.....41*

Ion Marian ȚIPLIC

*Biserica fortificată din Șaroș pe Târnăvă / jud. Sibiu. Cercetări arheologice. I*  
*Fortified Church in Șaroș pe Târnăvă / Sibiu County. Archaeological Researches. I.....61*

### Istorie / History

Csaba SZABÓ

*Pilgrimage and Healing Sanctuaries in the Danubian Provinces.....83*

Ioan ALBU

*The Fragmentary Inscription on the Hungarian Raid of the Year 943 – New Epigraphic Analysis and Interpretations .....99*

Alexandru SIMON

*Despre speranțele bizantine și transilvane ale Casei de Jagiello: de la începutul anilor 1470 la sfârșitul anilor 1490*  
*On the Byzantine and Transylvanian Hopes of the House of Jagiello: From the Early 1470s to the Late 1490s.....105*

Paul Victor LANGA

*Chivotul – sursă în cercetarea evoluției istorice a aspectului lăcașurilor de cult. Studiu de caz – Bisericile din Turnu Roșu, Ocna Sibiului, Teiuș*  
*The Ark – a Source for Research into the Historical Evolution of Church Architecture. Case Study – Churches from Turnu Roșu, Ocna Sibiului and Teiuș*.....115

Daniela DÂMBOIU

*Identificarea comanditarului frescelor din interiorul casei de pe str. Mitropoliei, nr. 17, Sibiu*  
*Identification of the Commissioner of the Frescoes Painted Inside the House on Mitropoliei Street, no. 17, Sibiu*.....125

Sebastian CORNEANU

*De la Doamna cu coasa la “Punks not Dead”. Atribute iconice ale reprezentărilor Morții din Evul Mediu până în epoca muzicii rock*  
*From the Grim Reaper to “Punks not Dead”. The Iconic Attributes of Death’s Representations from the Middle Ages to the Age of Rock Music*.....141

Alin BURLEC

*Schimbări sociale într-un stat nou. Conștiința de clasă și muncitorii din România la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea*  
*Social Changes in a New State. Class Consciousness and the Romanian Workers at the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*.....161

Radu RACOVÎȚAN, Daniel CREȚU

*Din istoricul relațiilor româno-elene. Incidentul de la Pireu (30 mai/12 iunie 1910)*  
*The History of Romanian-Greek Relations. The Piraeus Incident (May 30 / June 12, 1910)*.....177

Sorin RADU

*Un episod din chestiunea unificării Basarabiei cu România: activitatea Comisiei Regionale de Unificare (1921)*  
*An Episode from the Question of the Unification of Bessarabia with Romania: the Activity of the Regional Unification Commission (1921)*.....185

Ana-Maria UNGUREANU-ILINCA

*Alegeri comunale din anul 1930. Studiu de caz: comuna Ocna Sibiului, Județul Sibiu*  
*The Communal Elections from 1930. Case study – Ocna Sibiului Commune, Sibiu County*.....211

Marian PĂTRU

„Restaurarea Românismlui în Destinul său Istoric”. *Imaginea Legiunii „Arhanghelul Mihail” în Presa Bisericii Ortodoxe Române între 1936-1941. Studiu de Caz: Ziarele Oficiale ale Mitropoliei Ardealului*  
*Restoration of Romanianism in its Historical Destiny”. The Image of the Legion „Archangel Michael” in the Press of the Romanian Orthodox Church between 1936-1941. Case Study: Official Newspapers of the Metropolitanate of Transylvania* .....**243**

Liliya TSYGANENKO

*The Hidden Tragedy (June 13, 1941 in the Fate of the Inhabitants of the Danube Region)*.....**259**

Ramona BESOIU

*Bleiben oder gehen? Abbild der Auswanderungsgünde Rumäniendeutscher in der Erinnerungsliteratur (1939-1947)*  
*Bleiben oder gehen? The Reasoning behind the Emigration of Ethnic Germans from Romania as Reflected in their 1939-1947 Memoirs*.....**275**

Paul-Florin MARICA

*Norme și practici în recrutarea elevilor pentru școlile județene de partid (1947-1953)*  
*Norms and Practices in Recruiting Students for County Party Schools (1947-1953)*.....**307**

## **Recenzii / Reviews**

Ana-Maria UNGUREANU-ILINCA

Bogdan Murgescu, Andrei Florin Sora, *România Mare votează – Alegerile parlamentare din 1919 „la firul ierbii”*  
(Iași: Polirom, 2019), 458 p.....**325**

Alin BURLEC

Adi Dohotaru, *Socialiștii, O moștenire (1835-1921)*  
(Chișinău: Editura Cartier, 2019), 511 p.....**329**

Paul-Florin MARICA

Cosmin Popa, *Intelectualii lui Ceaușescu și Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice (1970-1989)* (București: Litera, 2018), 352 p.....**333**

# Pilgrimage and Healing Sanctuaries in the Danubian Provinces<sup>1</sup>

Csaba SZABÓ\*

## Abstract

*This paper is focusing on ancient Roman healing sanctuaries in the Danubian provinces, interpreted here as case studies for public, sacralized spaces which played an important role in religious pilgrimage and communication between divine and human agents. The case studies from Daciae, Pannoniae and Moesia Superior emphasize the local specificities of the healing sites, the transformation and integration of the natural environment in the complex sanctuaries and the longue durée history of these sites, which played an important role in Roman religious communication and mobility in the Danubian provinces during the Principate.*

**Keywords:** *healing sanctuaries, lived religion, Danubian provinces, Asklepieia, Roman baths*

## Historiography

The material evidence of religious pilgrimages in classical antiquity was mostly neglected or presented as footnote case in many important works on the topic<sup>2</sup>. In a recent companion of archaeology of ancient religion, there was only one short contribution on ancient pilgrimage<sup>3</sup>.

The same is true if not, even worst, for the case study of the Danubian provinces, an area of the Roman Empire which was for a long time neglected as case study in the leading works on Roman religion, although its specific cultural, economic or military aspects were highlighted by Géza Alföldy and numerous other scholars<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This study was supported by the Postdoctoral Research Grant PD NKFI-8 nr. 127948 by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office of Hungary (2018-2021).

\* Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Department of History, Heritage and Protestant Theology, B-dul Victoriei 40, 550024, Sibiu, România ([csaba.szabo@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:csaba.szabo@ulbsibiu.ro)).

<sup>2</sup> *Excavating Pilgrimage. Archaeological approaches to sacred travel and movement in the ancient world*, eds. W. Friese, T. Kristensen (London, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Th. Luginbühl, "Ritual activities, processions and pilgrimages," in *A Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the ancient World*, R. Raja, J. Rüpke (eds.) (New York, 2015), 41-59, especially pages 52-57 and table 3.4. with a very usefull typology for this notion in antiquity.

<sup>4</sup> G. Alföldy „Die ‘illyrischen’ Provinzen Roms: von der Vielfalt zu der Einheit,” in *Dall’Adriatico al Danubio. L’Illirico nell’età greca e romana. Atti del convegno internazionale Cividale del Friuli, 25-27 settembre 2003 (I Convegni della Fondazione Niccolò Canussio 3)*, G. Urso (ed.) (Pisa, 2004), 207-220. On the archaeology of the Danubian provinces, see also: J. Wilkes, "The Roman Danube: an archaeological survey", *Journal of Roman Studies*, 95, (2005), 124-225. On Roman religion in the Danubian provinces see: *Culti e Religiosità nelle Province Danubiane*, L. Zerbini (ed.) (Bologna, 2015); Cs. Szabó, "Review of Zerbini, L. (ed.) 2015," *Acta Archaeologica Hungarica* 67 (2015), 480-483.

The case studies from the Danubian provinces were rarely mentioned by the Western literature especially after 1945, when the results of the local excavations were published mostly in inaccessible national languages and the academic mobility of scholars from this area of Europe was very much limited<sup>5</sup>. Most of the important sanctuaries and sacralized spaces where Roman pilgrimage can be attested however, were revealed exactly in this period. Since 1989, numerous important works were published on Roman religion in Central-East Europe and due to the internationalization and globalization of the discipline of classical archaeology, local and Western literature too gained a much intense focus on the material evidence of Roman religious communication from the Danubian provinces<sup>6</sup>.

Although contemporary studies focusing on military and economic routes, mobilities and networks in the Danubian provinces revealed the rich intra-cultural connectivity of small economic, religious and military groups especially on the main roads of the *publicum Portorii Illyrici*<sup>7</sup>, there were no studies focusing on religious pilgrimage in this area. The local historiography however produced some relevant works on ancient medicine, the archaeology of the Asklepieia<sup>8</sup>, bathing<sup>9</sup> and healthcare in this area of the Empire, which gives a good starting point to identify traces of ancient Roman pilgrimage.

### Pilgrimage – ancient and modern

Identifying ancient pilgrimage through the evidence of archaeology, however, is not easier than defining this notion for Greco-Roman realities. Despite the decade long research on ancient pilgrimage, for many scholars this notion is just an anachronism, a contemporary phenomenon forced on ancient realities<sup>10</sup>. Recent approaches and studies seems to prove that religiously inspired, long distance mobilities and visits of sanctuaries and sacralized spaces were widespread in ancient Mediterranean and produced specific architectural and material evidences

<sup>5</sup> See Wilkes 2005 for a historiographic overview. See also: Cs. Szabó, "Roman Religious Studies in Romania. Historiography and New Perspectives," *Ephemeris Napocensis*, 24, (2014), 195-208.

<sup>6</sup> L. Dészpa, *Peripherie-Denken: Transformation und Adaption des Gottes Silvanus in den Donauprovinzen (1.-4. Jahrhundert n. Chr.)* (Stuttgart, 2012); A. Collar, *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: the Spread of New Ideas* (Cambridge, 2013); Zerbini (2015). Unfortunately, the paradigmatic works focusing on Roman religious studies usually neglect the case studies from the Danubian provinces: Raja, Rüpke (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Cs. Szabó, "The Cult of Mithras in Apulum: Communities and Individuals," in Zerbini (2015), 407-422.

<sup>8</sup> For the bibliography on Asklepieia from Dacia see: I. Boda, Cs. Szabó, *The Bibliography of Roman Religion in Dacia* (Cluj-Napoca, 2014), 64-65.

<sup>9</sup> B. Burkhardt, "Reflecting on the Typological Analysis of Roman Provincial Baths and Bathhouses," *Ziridava. Studia Archaeologica* 30 (2016), 149-159.

<sup>10</sup> See I. Elsner, "Excavating Pilgrimage," in W. Friese, T. Kristensen (eds.) *Excavating Pilgrimage. Archaeological Approaches to Sacred Travel and Movement in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, 2017), 265-74, footnote nr. 7 with all a bibliography on critical approaches on ancient pilgrimage.

too, although the evidence is not always clear and hard to understand the motivation behind a “*religiously motivated voyage*”<sup>11</sup>.

Based on the definition of Luginbühl and Elsner, ancient Graeco-Roman pilgrimage can be defined as a long (extraprovincial) or short (intraprovincial) distanced and religiously motivated voyage, however the motivation and aim of the voyage can be very different: healing, consulting an oracle, participating to religious festivals and processions, sacrifices, or simply feeling the sensorial presence of a divinity<sup>12</sup>. In case of a religious pilgrimage, the displacement itself is an important agent in religious communication and the spiritual path of the voyager: this makes a difference between religious tourism, where the road itself is just a tool, and pilgrimage, where the displacement is part of the religious ritual and transformation. The archaeological evidence of the last however is extremely sporadic, especially in the Danubian provinces as the following examples will show.

The contribution of M. Grünewald showed, that this phenomenon was common not only in the Greek part of the Empire, but also in the Celtic and Germanic regions North to the Alps – a symbolic border of cultural and also historiographic limits<sup>13</sup>. His examples focused mostly on long distance mobilities of people visiting famous mineral and thermal baths, which reflect the plurality and complexity of the notion of ancient pilgrimage as Luginbühl’s typology already proved. Visiting a thermal bath is motivated mostly by medical or leisure issues and the presence of the divine agency was secondary<sup>14</sup>. In the case of oracular sanctuaries and mystery cult sites, the presence of a specific divine agent is crucial. The variety of motivations of religious voyages (pilgrimages) was reflected also by Williamson, who highlighted in his 2005 article the slight differences between religious “tourism” and pilgrimage in antiquity<sup>15</sup>.

### **Pilgrimage sites, as thirdspaces**

Thirdspace is a popular notion in modern sociology and space studies<sup>16</sup>. Based on the theory of M. Foucault on heterotopies, the concept was developed by Homi

<sup>11</sup> I found very convincing the typology and approach of Luginbühl (2015), 52 table 3.4 and the critical approach and terminology of Elsner 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Luginbühl (2015), 54, Elsner (2017), 266.

<sup>13</sup> M. Grünewald, “Roman Healing Pilgrimage North of the Alps,” in Friese, Kristensen (2017), 130-151.

<sup>14</sup> G. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (Michigan, 2002). See also: O. Țentea, *Bath and Bathing in Alburnus Maior* (Cluj-Napoca, 2015), 13-21.

<sup>15</sup> G. Williamson, “Mucianus and the Touch of the Miraculous: Pilgrimage and Tourism in Roman Asia Minor,” in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, I. Elsner, I. Rutherford (eds.) (Oxford, 2005), 219-253.

<sup>16</sup> H. Maier, “Paul, Ignatius, and Thirdspace: A Socio-Geographic Exploration,” in *The Apostolic Fathers and Paul, Pauline and Patristics Scholars in Debate*, T. D. Still, E. Wilhite (eds.) (London, 2016), 162-163.



Bhaba and used for space theory by Edward Soja<sup>17</sup>. Although a modern, post-colonial concept, thirdspace and heterotopy give a radically new view on the role of the healing sanctuaries and some of the long-distanced pilgrimage sites, especially when we analyze the spatial aspects of these sacralized places.

Thirdspaces are omnipresent in every culture, can change their role and value, use different, often contradictory spaces in the same time, has an intense effect on time perception, its open but also, close for individuals and evokes an imitation of space-harmony. Creating religious heterotopias or thirdspaces was one of the most efficient strategies of maintaining a sacralized space or a religious pilgrimage site. In Roman times, this means the combination of various types of buildings with different functionality, creating a spatial hybridity characterized by the so called complex sanctuaries, where the worshippers – during their few days spent in this artificially created world – were transformed bodily and spiritually too, through religious experiences. Due to their role of embodiment, pilgrimage sites as religious thirdspaces break the limits of the classical spatial categories of religious spaces (primary, secondary and shared/public)<sup>18</sup> uniting all these categories and the imaginary narratives in a single space (fig.1.).

### **Pilgrimage sites in the Danubian provinces**

In the Danubian provinces short (interprovincial) and long distanced pilgrimages (extraprovincial) were identified in very few places. This is mainly explained by the current state of research, which was focusing mostly on military type of mobilities, although the role of the sanctuaries in these long distanced mobilities were highlighted in some recent works<sup>19</sup>. Grünewald based his study identifying ancient pilgrimage sites mostly on epigraphic and cartographic sources, which were rarely supported also by the archaeological evidence, such as the so called “hostels” near the thermal baths. A similar approach can be done for the region discussed in this paper.

In the case of the Danubian provinces, spa vignettes on the Tabula Peutingeriana are also present, however in most of the cases, are impossible to associate with major sanctuaries in the nearby<sup>20</sup>. The great concentration of the spa vignettes in

<sup>17</sup> M. Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias”, *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* (October. Open access, 1984), after the original French text from 1967; E. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (New York, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Cs. Szabó, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. Materiality and Religious Experience*, Archaeopress, (Oxford, 2018), 1-10.

<sup>19</sup> E. Nemeth, *Politische und militärische Beziehungen zwischen Pannonien und Dakien in der Römerzeit: Relații politice și militare între Pannonia și Dacia în epoca romană* (Cluj-Napoca, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> F. Fodorean, “Tourism or Health Necessities? «Spa» Vignettes in Tabula Peutingeriana. Travelling Ad Aquas: Thermal Water Resources in Roman Dacia,” *Ephemeris Napocensis* 22 (2012), 211-221.

Dalmatia is not surprising, due to the geographic specificities of the province and the large number of aquatic Illyrian divinities – many of them being transported in other provinces, such as in Dacia after 106 A.D.<sup>21</sup>. None of the 6 spa resorts can be associated however with long distanced pilgrimages, although, with the exception of Stanecli<sup>22</sup>, all of them were situated on major imperial roads, connecting Aquileia and Rome with the Danubian provinces, which presumes long distanced mobilities<sup>23</sup>.

The population from Dalmatia, however, was participating intensively in various religious pilgrimages. The presence of the cult of Artemis Ephesia in Salona suggests a strong link with the mother sanctuary of the divinity or at least, the presence of a diaspora from Asia Minor<sup>24</sup>.

Similarly, the spa centers and bath-complexes of Moesia Superior are less researched and there are only two cases, where possible traces of religious pilgrimage are attested (**fig.2.**). An interesting case was attested at Mediana, the hoard found in a villa in 1972, containing a group of statues made of marble and porphyry<sup>25</sup>. Most of the statues show the figures of Asclepius, Hygeia, Telesphorus and Heracles<sup>26</sup>. The bronze railing decorated with Asclepius and Luna busts was yet another argument for the researchers to assume the existence of a small temple at Mediana, probably consecrated to the group of iatric deities. The connection of such deities with baths and water facilities was not unique. A similar relation was attested at Osmakovo and Krupac near Pirot in SE Serbia, although these sites were documented in a single line of an article in 1966<sup>27</sup>. The lack of the epigraphic material doesn't allow us to suppose an intra-provincial pilgrimage site here. The

<sup>21</sup> I. Piso, "Gli Illiri ad Alburnus Maior," in *Dall'Adriatico al Danubio. Illirico nell'età greca e romana (Atti del convegno internazionale Cividale del Friuli, 25-27 settembre 2003)*, G. Urso (ed.), (Pisa, 2004), 271-307; S. Nemeti, I. Nemeti, "The Barbarians within. Illyrian Colonists in Roman Dacia," *Studia Historica Antiqua* 28 (2010), 109-133.

<sup>22</sup> V. Petrovic, "Terrestrial Communications in the Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in the Western Part of the Balkan Peninsula," in *The World of the Slavs: Studies on the East, West and South Slavs: Civitas, Oppidas, Villas and Archeological Evidence (7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD)*, T. Živkovic, S. Rudic (eds.) (Belgrad, 2013), 265, especially footnote nr. 973 and 975 with further bibliography.

<sup>23</sup> C. Zaccaria, "Dall' «Aquileiense portorium» al «publicum portorii Illyrici»: revisione e aggiornamento della documentazione epigrafica," in *Roma e le province del Danubio: atti del I convegno internazionale, Ferrara, Cento, 15-17 ottobre 2009*, L. Zerbini (ed.) (Soveria Mannelli, 2010), 53-78; L. Gregoratti, "North Italic Settlers along the Amber Route," *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica* 19/1 (2013), 133-153.

<sup>24</sup> Cs. Szabó, R. Ota, M. Ciută, "Artemis Ephesia in Apulum Biography of a Roman Bronze Statuette," *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 67 (2016), 231-243.

<sup>25</sup> M. Jankovic, "The Social Role of Roman Baths in the Province of Moesia Superior," in *The Archeology of Water Supply*, M. Zuchowska (ed.), (Oxford, 2012), 34.

<sup>26</sup> G. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World*, (Leiden, 2017), 684.

<sup>27</sup> P. Petrovic, "Novi votivni natpisi iz južne Srbije," *Starinar* N.S. 15-16 (1966), 250.

studies of András Mócsy and Zoltán Kádár also highlighted the important healing sanctuary of Paracin in Moesia Superior, where a syncretism between Asclepius and the so-called Thracian Rider was attested – a great example of local religious appropriation<sup>28</sup>. Incubation was often associated with hero cults, which gives a whole new perspective also to the popularity of the so-called Thracian Rider and the Danubian Rider's cult in the Danubian provinces often discovered in the vicinity of Asclepieia<sup>29</sup>.

Much better known the situation in the provinces of Pannonia, where the presence of intra-provincial and even, extra-provincial pilgrimages can be attested.

The main religious centers of the province since the early Claudian and later, Flavian period were established along the Amber Road, which created an important economic, military and cultural connectivity between Rome and the Barbaricum. The presence of early militaria and rich military graves with specific Italic equipments suggest the intense mobilities of the military in this area.<sup>30</sup> Poetovio was one of the key points on this road. As an important centre of the *publicum Portorii Illyrici*, the city became in the Trajanic period one the most important religious centers of Pannonia. Although, the archaeological material suggests the presence of an Asklepieion, it was not excavated yet<sup>31</sup>.

Another relevant example of a pilgrimage site is the Iseum of Savaria (**fig.3**).

The sanctuary was established in the first century A.D. and had an almost four century long existence. The archaeological material – especially the recently published terra sigillata finds<sup>32</sup> – but also other vessels and the epigraphic material suggest an intense economic relationship with Aquileia and Northern Italia, but also with Scrabantia and Aquincum<sup>33</sup>. Recently it was suggested that the sanctuary functioned as a regional centre of the Isiac cults in Pannoniae and even Dacia<sup>34</sup>. The

<sup>28</sup> A. Mócsy, „*Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior*,” (Budapest, 1970), 93-94, footnote nr. 39 and il. 20. See also: Z. Kádár, “Gyógyító istenségek kultusza Pannóniában topográfiai adatok tükrében,” *Orvostörténeti Közlemények* 93-96 (1981), 78.

<sup>29</sup> Renberg (2017), 107. See also: R. Gordon, “Projects, Performance and Charisma: Managing Small Religious Groups in the Roman Empire,” in *Beyond Priesthood: Interacting with Religious Professionals and Appropriating Traditions in the Imperial Period*, R. L. Gordon, G. Petridou, J. Rüpke (eds.), (Berlin, 2017), 277-316.

<sup>30</sup> Zs. Mráv, “The Roman Army along the Amber Road between Poetovio and Carnuntum in the 1st Century AD – Archaeological Evidence,” *Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae* (2013), 49-100, with a complete bibliography on the economic and political role of the amber road in Pannonia.

<sup>31</sup> M. Jerala, “The Topography of Ritual Monuments of Poetovio,” in *Religion in Public and Private Sphere. Acts of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium. The Autonomous Towns of Noricum and Pannonia*, I. Lazar (ed.) (Koper, 2011), 75-87.

<sup>32</sup> D. Gabler, “Le questioni cronologiche del tempio di Iside a Savaria,” in *Culti e religiosità nelle province danubiane*, L. Zerbinì (ed.) (Bologna, 2015), 247-266.

<sup>33</sup> „*Iseum Savariense. A savariai Isis szentély I. Isis savariai otthona – kiállítási katalógus*,” O. Sosztarits, P. Balázs, A. Csapláros (eds.) (Szombathely, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> D. Deac, *Prezențe și influențele egiptene la Dunărea de Mijloc și Jos*, Ph.D. Thesis, Cluj-Napoca (theses of the dissertation) Open access (2013).

Iseum produced also special lamps with Isiac iconography, which also suggest the presence of religious souvenirs<sup>35</sup>. Based on the materiality of the sanctuary however, we cannot claim for sure if the sanctuary was a regional, or an extraprovincial center of pilgrimage too. Healing and incubation were also a recurrent aspect of numerous Iseia in the Roman Empire, however there are no certain evidence for medical care in the Iseum of Savaria<sup>36</sup>.

An interesting case was found in Kékkút, Hungary also on the amber road, where Iulia Martia, a woman from a Germanic province dedicated an altar to the Nymphs, although its archaeological context is not yet clarified<sup>37</sup>. The presence of small thermal springs on the crossroads and along the main commercial and military roads created short term sacralised spaces, which served as temporary thirdspaces for the visitors and travelers. The presence of such small road-aliened shrines although do not represent pilgrimage sites but had the same effect on the worshippers, who's religious and health security was granted by the presence of these during their trip.

One of the most important pilgrimage sites of Pannonia was at Varaždinske Toplice, the ancient Aquae Iasae<sup>38</sup>. The thermal springs were used already in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. as the most important healing site of the Iasi tribe (known also as the spa people) and it has a 4-century long existence till the Constantinian age. The complex follows the typical structure and topography of the thermal baths, surrounded by sacralized spaces, baths, a basilica, roads, fountains with a well-established functionality and decorative language. All the elements – the functionality of buildings, the visual language, and the power of the ex votos – served the successful maintenance of the site.

Numerous high rank officers, beneficiarii and the staff of the *publicum* visited the site, while some of the pilgrims, such as Lucius Claudius Moderatus from Savaria visited even regularly<sup>39</sup>. The architectural atmosphere of the sacralised space was shaped and transformed into a religious thirdspace by the heavy financial investments of some notable visitors<sup>40</sup>. These people, who visited the site from Savaria or Poetovio used this pilgrimage not only for their own religious experience but also for a social and economic communication.

<sup>35</sup> Sosztarits et al. (2013), 195-206.

<sup>36</sup> Renberg (2017), 344-346.

<sup>37</sup> CIL III 4133. See: Kádár (1981), 66. Mommsen mentioned in 1873, that the altar came from the hot spring and thermal bath of Kékkút, however all the previous sources between 1823 and 1873 mentioned that the altar was found in a secondary position: P. László „Nympháknak szentelt oltár Kékkútról,” *Veszprém Megyei Múzeumok Közleménye* 15 (1980), 73-76.

<sup>38</sup> Kádár (1981), 65-66 with older bibliography. See also: „*Aquae Iasae – nova otkrića iz rimskog razdoblja na području Varaždinskih /Aquae Iasae – Recent Discoveries of Roman Remains in the Region of Varaždinske Toplice*,” D. Kusan (ed.), (Zagreb, 2015), 40-49.

<sup>39</sup> AE 1978, 468.

<sup>40</sup> AE 1985, 714. In this case, Flavius Hermadion's donation represents a significant financial investment, which reflects also his and his family's attachment for the site.

At the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the 3 Nymphs of the Iasi – became associated not only with the *dii consentes* (Minerva, Juno, Apollo) – but also with Isis and Serapis. The presence of the iconography of Apollo-Sol and several inscriptions associated with Serapis and the Nymphs suggest that the sanctuary functioned also as an oracle site in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century<sup>41</sup>. This could be intensified after the so-called temple visits of emperor Caracalla from 212-217 A.D. when he visited numerous oracle sites of the Empire. The unhealthy and threatened body of the emperor as a malfunctioning thirdspace of the Empire itself, had a direct effect on the materiality of religious communication in the Danubian provinces too. Sanctuaries – especially healing sites – were decorated with *ex votos* dedicated to the health of the emperor. The popularity of Apollo Grannus in the Danubian provinces raised significantly in this period. The beautiful representation of Asclepius, Telesphorus and Hygeia from Aquae Iasae was dedicated also for the health of Caracalla. The site was visited also by emperor Constantine<sup>42</sup>. Such important pilgrims served also as agents in ancient and modern space sacralisation, creating and recreating religious traditions<sup>43</sup>. The site had a renaissance in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after another imperial visit – this time by Franz Joseph – and is still in use as a tourist attraction, used also by the local religious groups to attract pilgrims for their churches.

Aquincum and Carnuntum, two of the most important military and urban settlements of Pannonia Inferior and Pannonia Superior had several medical staff for the Roman legions (*valetudinarium*), however there were no Asklepieia attested archaeologically<sup>44</sup>.

In Roman Dacia, most of the healing sites and sanctuaries were formed in Roman times (106-271 A.D.), without any certain pre-Roman history of the sanctuaries (**fig.4**)<sup>45</sup>. From the six known healing sites, the only one with a probable use from pre-Roman period is the healing complex from Germisara (Cigmău, Romania). The pre-Roman use of the site was based exclusively on onomastic studies, no stratigraphic or other archaeological data proves this hypothesis (**fig.5**)<sup>46</sup>. In the first Roman phase of the sanctuary, the cavity with a hot

<sup>41</sup> Kusan et al. (2015), 95-96.

<sup>42</sup> CIL III 4121.

<sup>43</sup> A. Busch, M. Versluys, "Indigenous Pasts and the Roman Present," in *Reinventing the «Invention of Tradition»*. *Indigenous Pasts and the Roman Present*, A. Busch, M. Versluys (eds.) (Köln, 2015), 7-18.

<sup>44</sup> G. Van der Ploeg, *The Impact of the Roman Empire on the Cult of Asclepius* (Leiden, 2018), 184-185. See also: G. Kremer, *Götterdarstellungen, Kult- und Weihedenkmäler aus Carnuntum* (Wien, 2012), 27-28.

<sup>45</sup> On the religion of the Dacians in the province see: S. Nemeti, „La religione dei Daci in età romana,” in *Sguardi interdisciplinari sulla religiosità dei Geto-Daci*, M. Taufer (ed.) (Freiburg, 2013), 137-155. On the healing sites see also: Fodorean, "Tourism or Health Necessities?...", 211-221.

<sup>46</sup> R. Ardevan, S. Cociș, „Drei weiteren Votivplättchen aus Dakien,” in *Graecia, Roma, Barbaricum. In memoriam Vasile Lica*, V. Iliescu (ed.), (Galati, 2014), 315-327; I. Piso, "Ein Gebet für die Nymphen aus Germisara," *Acta Musei Napocensis* 52, (2017), 47-68.

lake inside was probably used as a natural bath, where religious communication with the divine agency was established by ritual purification, as one of the recently published inscriptions suggest<sup>47</sup>. More than 600 coins, a statue of Diana and at least 11 gold plaques were found as votive offerings in the lake<sup>48</sup>. The site is a great example, how the natural environment – the cavity and the springs – were systematically transformed and integrated into a complex sanctuary, serving as a religious thirdspace for the provincial visitors, some of them, such as Marcus Statius Priscus was attested three times on inscriptions<sup>49</sup>.

Another site in Roman Dacia which became a provincial pilgrimage site was formed in Aqua Herculis – Ad Mediam (Băile Herculane, Herkulesfürdő). The hot springs and cavities were transformed into an entire road of sacralised spaces dedicated to Hercules, Aesculapius, Hygeia, Genius Loci and the local spirits of the waters (Dii et Numini Aquarum). The importance of the site is well reflected by the official diplomatic delegation and dedications lead by Marcus Sedatius Severianus<sup>50</sup> and by the miraculous healing of Iunia Cyrilla<sup>51</sup>. Both case studies served as important religious agents in the long-term maintenance of the pilgrimage site and the successful existence of the sanctuaries as a religious thirdspace. The Roman site had a renaissance after the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was discovered (**fig.6.**), published and recreated as one of the most important bath and leisure attraction of the Balkans during the age of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918)<sup>52</sup>.

The Asklepieion from Sarmizegetusa is well documented archaeologically and represents one of the main healing shrines of the province<sup>53</sup>. It served not only as a local sacralized space extra muros of the capital city of Dacia, but also became a regional, provincial center of religious pilgrimage. The site was also in direct communication with the major Roman road leading outside the city and connecting with the northern part of Dacia. Its position allowed also complex processions and interactions with the Ara Augusti and the amphitheatre of colonia Sarmizegetusa (**fig.7.**)<sup>54</sup>. The statuary program and architectural features of the complex-sanctuary of Aesculapius and Hygeia reflects a strong influence from Asia Minor, especially Pergamon<sup>55</sup>. A similar healing site is presumed also in Apulum, in the NE part of

<sup>47</sup> "Ein Gebet für die Nymphen aus Germisara," 48-50.

<sup>48</sup> Szabó, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. Materiality and Religious Experience*, 148-154.

<sup>49</sup> A. Rusu, "Marcus Statius Priscus la Germisara. Marcus Statius Priscus à Germisara," *Sargetia* 21-24 (1991), 653-656.

<sup>50</sup> CIL III 1562.

<sup>51</sup> CIL III 1561.

<sup>52</sup> D. Benea, M. Lalescu, „Contribuții la istoria așezării de la Ad Mediam (Băile Herculane). (Contributions at the history of the Ad Mediam roman settlement)," *Sargetia* 27 (1998), 267-301.

<sup>53</sup> A. Schäfer, *Tempel und Kult in Sarmizegetusa. Eine Untersuchung zur Formierung religiöser Gemeinschaften in der Metropolis Dakien* (Berlin, 2007), 64-75.

<sup>54</sup> I. Boda, "The Sacred Topography of Colonia Sarmizegetusa," *Acta Archaeologica Hungarica* 66, (2015), 281-304.

<sup>55</sup> Szabó, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. Materiality and Religious Experience*, 68-70.

the Colonia Aurelia Apulensis, near the Tauşor lake. Although the site was never excavated and researched systematically, the rich epigraphic material and the numerous statuary and figurative monuments from that area show not only the existence of an important healing shrine and complex sanctuary, but also a sacralized space used for the competition of the local elite, especially members of the *ordo decurionum*<sup>56</sup>. In the case of Apulum, numerous alternative options were present on the so called religious marketplace of the conurbation: the cult of Glykon, a Dolichenum and an intensive presence of the cult of Serapis and Isis in the fort, the palace of the governor and also in civil environment. This rich variety of healing shrines and religious strategies in divine communication was a fertile atmosphere for religious thirdspaces and imaginary spaces, such as the sick human body in communication with the divine world<sup>57</sup>.

### Conclusions

Healing sanctuaries in Roman times were the success stories of space sacralization and maintaining long-term religious communication. With specific material and human agency, a well established and innovative religious narrative and discourse, local religious appropriations and special iconography and visual language, a healing sanctuary transformed the space and the entire topography of the settlement – urban or natural too. In most of the cases, a geographic or natural element, such as a thermal spring or a divinity with universal features was the key to their popularity. If their success went beyond the limits of the city or even its territorium, these sites became regional or even imperial pilgrimage sites. Their religious transformation is well reflected by the architectural evolution of the site: from a natural cavity or spring, in few decades or generations the site was transformed into a complex sanctuary, with theatre, hotels, basilica, processional roads and other types of buildings serving the maintenance of the sacralized space and the pilgrims. These regional or imperial pilgrimage sites can easily be named as religious thirdspaces of the Roman Empire.

Pilgrimage sites in the Danubian provinces are almost exclusively related to complex healing sanctuaries. The main motivation of the pilgrims visiting these sites – mostly from intraprovincial settlements and rarely, from outside too – were medical or related to their healthy, safe, and successful long trip. The exceptional case of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mithraeum from Poetovio and the Iseum of Savaria might suggest pilgrimages related to mystery cult and initiation too.

Comparing it with the Western analogies, the case studies of the Danubian provinces didn't show a very different picture about pilgrimage in Roman times, however the ethnic, cultural, geographic, economic and military specificities of the

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<sup>56</sup> Szabó, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. Materiality and Religious Experience*, 70-78.

<sup>57</sup> G. Petridou, "Healing Shrines," in *Companion to Greek Science, Medicine, and Technology*, G. Irby (ed.), (Boston, 2016), 434-449.

sites produced numerous local religious appropriations and variations especially in the strategies of maintaining a sacralized space.

A particularity of this area is the renaissance of the ancient healing sites in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially, after 1990, the fall of the Communism, where the Roman past was integrated in the official discourse and topography of these new religious sites or healing complexes.

## Abbreviations

CIL – Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften 1861 -)

AE - L'Année épigraphique (Paris, 1888 -)

## List of figures

Fig. 1. Space taxonomy of sacralized places (photo: author)

Fig. 2. Baths of Moesia Superior (after Jancovic 2012, 28, fig. 1)

Fig. 3. The Iseum of Savaria (photo: author)

Fig. 4. Healing shrines in Roman Dacia (after Szabó 2018, 154, fig. 72.)

Fig. 5. The bath and cavity of Germisara (after Szabó 2018, 148, fig. 68.)

Fig. 6. The plan of F. Gisellini on the Roman ruins of Aqua Herculis (after Benea-Lalescu 1998).

Fig. 7. The temenos of the Asklepieion of colonia Sarmizegetusa (after Pescaru-Alicu 2000)

Space typology accessibility	Natural spaces	Human built / material	Imaginary / thirdspaces
<b>Public spaces</b> Locus sacer	mountains, cavities, caves, springs, forests, crossroads	Temples on <i>ius Italicum</i> before 212 AD	Templum, pomerium, spaces of afterlife, world of Saturn
<b>Secondary spaces</b> pro sacra	Baths, springs	aedes, fanum, mithraeum, serapaeum, iseum bacchium, dolichenum, church houses	Sacred geography of sanctuaries, bodies / spaces of gods / divinatio
<b>Primary spaces</b>	Private gardens, private fields, parts of forests, human body	Domus urbana, lararium, villae, private rooms, personal shrines, funerary monument	Personal divinatio / dreams / visions
<b>Methodology:</b> forms of space sacralisation as tools in religious communication			
<b>Aim:</b> creating and maintaining sacralised spaces through a set of strategies			



Fig. 1

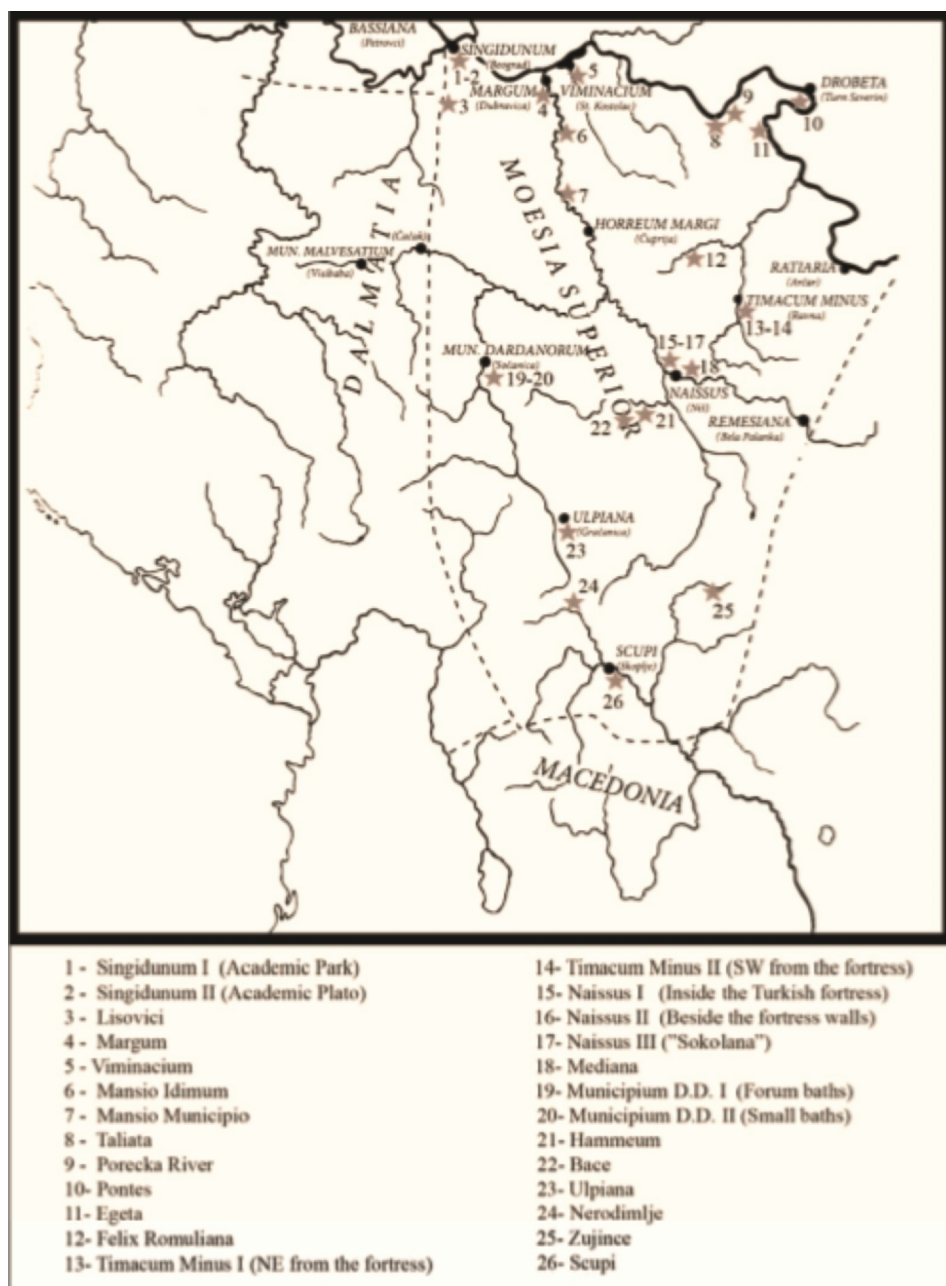


Fig.2



Fig. 3



Fig. 5

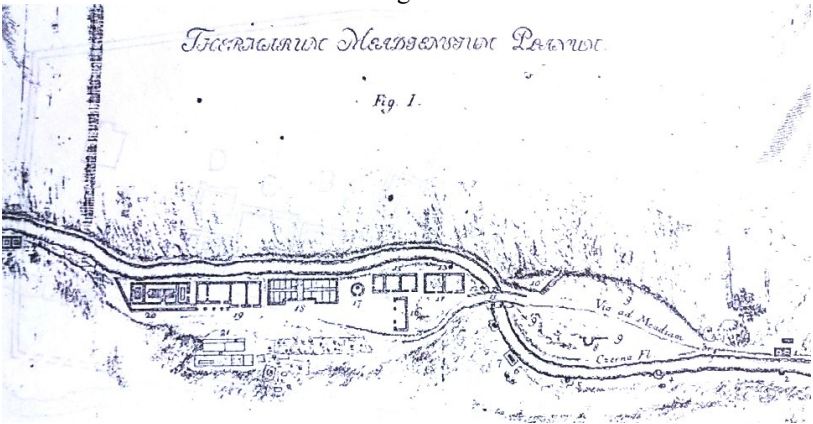


Fig. 6

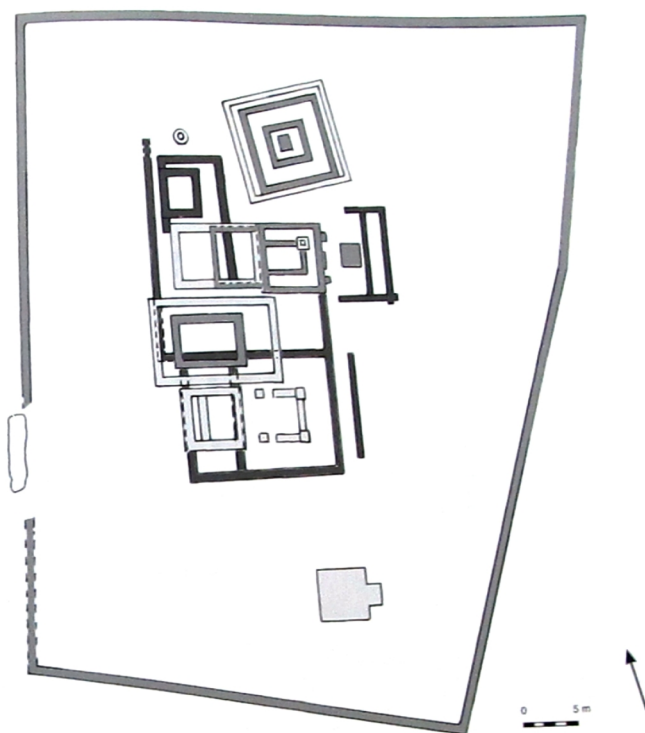


Fig. 7