

EPHEMERIS NAPOCENSIS

XX
2010

ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ
INSTITUTUL DE ARHEOLOGIE ȘI ISTORIA ARTEI

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În țară revista se poate procura prin poștă, pe bază de abonament la: EDITURA ACADEMIEI ROMÂNE, Calea 13 Septembrie nr. 13, sector 5, P. O. Box 5–42, București, România, RO–76117, Tel. 021–411.90.08, 021–410.32.00; fax. 021–410.39.83; RODIPET SA, Piața Presei Libere nr. 1, Sector 1, P. O. Box 33–57, Fax 021–222.64.07. Tel. 021–618.51.03, 021–222.41.26, București, România; ORION PRESS IMPEX 2000, P. O. Box 77–19, București 3 – România, Tel. 021–301.87.86, 021–335.02.96.

EPHEMERIS NAPOCENSIS

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DTP și tipar: MEGA PRINT
Coperta: Roxana Sfârlea



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Calea 13 Septembrie nr. 13, Sector 5, București 76117
Telefon 021–410.38.46; 021–410.32.00/2107, 2119

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2010



EDITURA ACADEMIEI ROMÂNE

STUDYING ROMAN CULTS OF EASTERN ORIGIN IN DACIA

Juan Ramón Carbó García*

Keywords: *Religion, Rome, Oriental cults, scholarship, Dacia*

Until not long ago, scholarship devoted to the study of Roman era cults usually called “oriental” was seriously lacking, as no studies had been done with a view to synthesizing all the cults that could fit into this controversial category in the three Roman provinces of Dacia, Transdanubian territories where their dissemination and establishment was enormously important compared to other provinces of the Roman empire. In this study we first analyze the controversy surrounding the use of the terms “cult” and “oriental” to refer to the case posed, and then provide an exhaustive panorama of the scholarship concerning the Roman Empire and especially Dacia, with attention to the possible reasons why this had not been done earlier and to the problems arising from several issues relating to the study of these cults.

1. Introduction

More than a century ago, Franz Cumont systematically developed the concept of “oriental religions” in several lectures given at the *Collège de France* in 1905 and in Oxford in 1906. These gave rise to a book entitled *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*.¹ The concept became established as a specific area in the history of religion in the Roman Empire, particularly since Maarten J. Vermaseren took it up in the title of a large collection that sought to foster research in this field.² It is, however, an imprecise concept that has given rise to much controversy and confusion because of the indiscriminate use that many authors have made of the terms, on the one hand using “cult” or “religion” without differentiating them, and on the other hand, “oriental” or “mystery” to refer to the same phenomenon, as if all these terms had the same meaning.³ Matters need to be clarified in this respect, first as to the term “oriental” and then to the terms “cult” and “religion”.

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¹ CUMONT 1906.

² *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain (EPRO)*, which began in 1961 and accumulated more than a hundred works before the collection took on more recently the new title of *Religions of the Graeco-Roman World (RGRW)*.

³ For example, see BONNET/RÜPKE/SCARPI 2006.

The concept of the Orient refers to a direction applied to a defined area in the representation of the world. Among the Romans, the term “oriental” was never applied to the religious context of the peoples or cultures located in Asia or in Egypt, since both *oriens* and *orientalis* only appear in a geopolitical or astronomical context.⁴ When otherness was rejected in times of crisis, or when certain forms of foreign religious manifestations were seen as scandalous regardless of the geographical location characterizing them, some classical authors such as Livy, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger and Cicero used either the term *externae religiones*⁵ or *peregrinae superstitiones*⁶. In Rome, the concept of *religio*, which implied that it was national and authentic, contrasted with *superstitio*, which was characterized as being suspicious or exotic. Anything that did not follow the standard ritual marked out for this purpose by the *mos maiorum*, that is, the teachings of the ancestors and the legitimization that comes from tradition, was branded as *superstitio*.⁷ As Beard, North and Price put it so well, “several of the cults did certainly proclaim an eastern «origin» for their wisdom, but it is often clear that a Roman version of the cult differed substantially from its (notional) eastern ancestor. Above all, the «Orient» itself was hardly the homogeneous category that we (like the Romans, no doubt) often try to make it”.⁸ The key, then, seems to be that these religious manifestations centered around divinities coming from the different areas of the Orient would have spread to the Greco-Roman world after having been the object of a process of reinterpretation; they may have characteristics in common but are different in each particular case, just as their geographical and temporal origins could be different within the general conception of the Orient, which was not at all homogeneous.

As its use was conceived, the term “oriental,” when applied to certain religious manifestations, entailed ambiguity, since it gave the idea that they had come to the Greco-Roman world just as they were before and that they had maintained a purely oriental character in an occidental context. Furthermore, it tended to situate them in a rather homogeneous category and consider them to be of the same type: that of religions with mysteries that offered salvation after death to initiates.⁹ To circumvent this problem, some authors, such as Robert Turcan, have opted for explaining that “rather than «Oriental religions» one should speak of religions of eastern origin, or of *Graeco-Oriental* religions”.¹⁰ Others have preferred to characterize this option and its meaning with some simple quotation marks at the beginning and end of the epithet in question.¹¹ All of them seem to accept the conclusion reached in the period between the world wars that they were only oriental to a certain degree, since they had undergone essential changes during the process of dissemination in the Hellenistic period and later in the Roman Empire. Precisely so that they could be adapted to the new social milieu, the gods of eastern origin were acclimatized to the expectations of their new followers, such that “in this sense, they were no longer purely oriental and became a cultural recreation that justified the use of quotation marks... .” For Jaime Alvar, the use of quotation marks could also be justified by the scant usefulness of the information deriving from the study of the religious manifestations of those gods before they had spread – considering the above – for the analysis and understanding of their religious significance in the Roman era.¹² Richard Gordon shows us how individual private cults to some of these gods of eastern origin, such as Isis or Magna Mater, were absorbed by

⁴ BELAYCHE 2000, 567.

⁵ LIVY, 4.30.9; 25.1.6; 39.15.3; 39.16.6 y 8–9. SUET, *Tib.* 36.1.

⁶ PLINY, *Pan.* 49.8. CIC. *Leg.* 2.10; *Nat. D.* 2.28.72.

⁷ TURCAN 1996, 10.

⁸ BEARD/NORTH/PRICE 1998, 246.

⁹ TURCAN 1996, 7.

¹⁰ TURCAN 1996, 7.

¹¹ GORDON 1990, 235–255; see also BELAYCHE 2000; ALVAR 2001.

¹² ALVAR 2001, 20–21; ALVAR 2008.

the cities and how their priesthoods were put on the list of civic priesthoods.¹³ Some of the important ceremonies of these religious manifestations, such as the processions in the two cults mentioned, or in those of several Syrian divinities, could be easily absorbed into the norms of municipal religious life. And as the era of the Principate advanced, these cults were gradually institutionalized in the local contexts, such that they offered a compromise between the oriental model of religious services (an expression that Gordon considers is better than “priesthood”) and the Greco-Roman model of public sacrificial evergetism. In this way they became Roman.

The other clarification posed earlier referred to the use of the terms “cult” and “religion,” used indistinctly together with “oriental” to refer to the same phenomenon, as if they had the same meaning in practice. But from a formal point of view, they refer to two different things.

Cult could be defined as a specific avocation that would include its own rites, thus conducive to a restricted sense of the word, as opposed to a broader reality that corresponds to the religious system or religion.¹⁴ Walter Burkert, as an example of the dominant trend in current research, considers that the mysteries were simply cults and not religions, as they formed part of the large whole of ancient paganism.¹⁵ In opposition to this position, both Ugo Bianchi and Jaime Alvar are of the opinion that they are something more than mere cults, possessing full religious potentiality and functioning as more or less accepted autonomous realities, despite the fact that they came to act as cults – or as sects, in any case – within the broader cultural system that was the imperial religious system, by means of personal piety and participation in the public sacrificial evergetism.¹⁶

But it is quite clear that most religious manifestations of eastern origin that spread throughout the Greco-Roman world and in Dacia did not in themselves constitute such a religious system, so it is more appropriate to call them cults, although I agree that the mystery cults possessed full religious potentiality.

Now then, which cults can we include in this generic naming of Roman cults of eastern origin, whose only link, given their clearly heterogeneous character, would be precisely that initial origin before becoming Romanized?

Cumont included the cults of Isis and Serapis, Cybele and Atis, Adonis and Atargatis, the Baals of Doliche, Heliopolis and Damascus, Dionysius (in his Thracio-Phrygian variant) and Mithras under the subsequently controversial name of “oriental religions,” also adding a chapter on magic and astrology. But today it is difficult to find anyone, with the exception of Turcan, who maintains this list of “oriental religions.” In fact, he augments his list to include the rest of the Syrian cults, the Thracian and Danubian horseman gods, and others such as Glycon and Sabazius. Although in the original edition he used the name “oriental cults,”¹⁷ he seems to follow Cumont’s proposition that oriental religions were mystery cults, and he is one of the authors who throughout his work has used the terms “cult” and “religion” indiscriminately. But, like his predecessor, he includes several Syrian cults, which, even if understood in the broad sense, can not be considered “mystery religions.”¹⁸ This may have occurred because Cumont was impressed by the sort of typology made by Firmicus Maternus (*Err. prof. rel.*), the 4th century Christian polemicist, who accused the Egyptians of worshipping water, the Phrygians of worshipping the earth, the Syrians and some Africans (Carthaginians) of worshipping the air, and the Persians of worshipping fire. If the inclusion of the Syrian cults is not appropriate when approaching a study

¹³ GORDON 1990, 246.

¹⁴ ALVAR 2001, 22–23; see also SPIRO 1966; IDINOPULOS/WILSON 1998.

¹⁵ BURKERT 1987, 9–11.

¹⁶ BIANCHI 1997, 605–611; ALVAR 2001, 31–32.

¹⁷ TURCAN 1989.

¹⁸ See the interesting comparison made by BIANCHI 1997, 606–611, in order to differentiate a mystery cult (or religion), such as Mithraism, from a cosmic Syrian cult, such as that of Iuppiter Dolichenus.

about the cults with mysteries as “oriental religions”, it is appropriate, as in the case here, when one wishes to analyze the Roman cults of eastern origin, understood as described above.

Hence, in the case of Dacia, we should deal with the cults of Egyptian origin, those originating in Asia Minor (and not only the Phrygian cults, with the mysteries of Cybele and Atis), the cults of Syrian origin and Mithraism, besides expediently analyzing the problem existing in these provinces concerning whether or not to apply the adjective “eastern” to certain inscriptions dedicated to the Sol Invictus divinity, with no more specification. The cults to the so-called Thracian Horseman and Danubian Horsemen would be excluded, as well as the one to that Dionysius that Cumont and Turcan dealt with, as none of these divinities can be considered as having an eastern origin.

Both Judaism and Christianity would also be excluded. Cumont had already decided against including them, since the objective of his book was established as the study of *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*. This separation has also been followed by most scholars and Turcan still maintains it, so studies about cults of eastern origin – especially those with mysteries – do not go beyond the moment when Christianity arrived. The real reason for this separation is the idea, held by Cumont and preserved by Turcan,¹⁹ that the mysteries would have been preparation for the arrival of Christianity, acting as a necessary precedent for its triumph, a view that I do not hold and that should not be held, since from the historical non-denominational point of view it would have been one more option among others available at the time and which coincided with certain traits. And the use of the name “paganism” or “pagan religion” for the imperial religious system is incorrect, since it implies a Christian perspective of referring to prior religions, with the exception of Judaism, with the strict meaning of the term “pagan”: gentile, infidel, worshipper of idols, etc.

Thus, we see that there must be other reasons for not including Christianity and Judaism among the Roman cults of eastern origin. In the first place, neither Judaism nor above all Christianity were integrated into the Roman religious system characterized by public sacrificial evergetism. Judaism, despite its distinguishing characteristics, was respected by the Romans for its antiquity and long tradition, much older than their own. As for Christianity, its rejection of sacrifice made it stand apart from all the other organized sects in the Empire, since it was the only one that adopted this stance.²⁰ We can not speak of either Christianity or Judaism as Roman cults at that time, although their eastern origin is evident.

These same considerations, as well as the fact that in the case of Roman Dacia we are talking about the 2nd century and the first two-thirds of the 3rd century C.E., before Christianity became official and supreme in the next century, seem to have had an influence – together with Cumont’s postulates – on the fact that the scholarship devoted to these matters has treated Christianity as separate from the rest of the cults forming part of the imperial Roman religious system, which the former incorrectly called “Roman paganism” and which included many cults of eastern origin.

2. General studies on “Oriental” cults in the Empire

In any case, it is mandatory to begin any study of the scholarly state of the art of “oriental” cults with mention of Franz Cumont, in recognition of his establishment of this concept –or rather that of “oriental religions”– as a specific area in the history of religion in the Roman Empire. This was possible thanks to a radical change in perspective with respect to these religious manifestations around divinities of the Hellenized Orient, formerly seen as corrupting

¹⁹ TURCAN 1996, 341.

²⁰ GORDON 1990, 252.

elements that led to the decadence of traditional Roman religion,²¹ and which Cumont was to interpret as superior forms of religion. His book, already mentioned,²² was a resounding success both for this reason and for the use of Epigraphy and Archeology, the new technical disciplines at the time, and also for implicitly showing that the study of the historical religious contexts of Antiquity was the formula that should be used for understanding Christianity.

Nevertheless, despite the success of his book and his conception of “oriental religions,” in some European countries they were given other names, which some time later led to a situation of confusion and controversy as to the specific contents included in that conceptualization. In Italy, following the influence of Raffaele Pettazzoni,²³ the name chosen was “mysteries;” in Germany, however, they were known as “Greco-Oriental cults,” following Richard Reitzenstein;²⁴ in other countries, such as Romania, the general term proposed by Cumont was used, beginning with Octavian Floca;²⁵ and in others, such as Spain, the concept itself had practically no effect on scholarship until decades later.²⁶

In the same way as Cumont’s reference work, the work of Jules Toutain on pagan cults in the Roman Empire²⁷ – in three volumes, the second of which bears the title *Les cultes orientaux* – also approaches the geographical distribution of cult places, thus dealing with the presence of these eastern cults in Roman Dacia, albeit quite superficially. He generally maintains Cumont’s structure: Egyptian cults, Syrian cults, cults of Asia Minor (Cybele and Atis) and the cult of Mithras, also including a chapter on astrology and oriental magic, understanding the latter as cults with mysteries, the same as Cumont. Nonetheless, Toutain’s work has a fairly positivist tinge, as it tends to be based exclusively on the appearance of preserved data, when the real situation must actually have been much more complex, and anything we can try to reconstruct from the preserved data gives us nothing more than a rather distorted picture.²⁸

The appearance in 1961 of the EPRO series, directed by Vermaseren,²⁹ stimulated research in this field, generally abandoning the comparison in Cumont’s model of synthesis for specialized study of each of the cults, in what were precisely meant to be preliminary studies for a future synthesis. Most of the works making up this series contain a corpus or repertory of monuments, evidently the “preliminary” factor *par excellence* for any serious study. Some of these works are studies of a particular divinity and his or her cult in the Empire, or more directly, corpora of monuments to these gods; others are studies of a group of divinities and their cults in a province, an area or even an important city of the Empire; others are books grouping several independent essays. In any case, all of them are important for any study of Roman eastern cults, and as regards Dacia, especially important are the corpora of monuments,³⁰ the essays dealing directly with this territory and the books focusing specifically on a god or group of gods in Roman Dacia.³¹

Outside the *EPRO-RGRW* series, but just as or even more important for the study of certain oriental cults, are the works of Merlat, Vidman and Bricault. The first wrote two

²¹ A perspective that comes from the Enlightenment and that was represented especially by RENAN 1883, at the end of the 19th century in France.

²² CUMONT 1906.

²³ PETTAZZONI 1924.

²⁴ REITZENSTEIN 1920.

²⁵ FLOCA 1935.

²⁶ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1967.

²⁷ TOUTAIN 1911.

²⁸ It is enough to mention that Toutain enthusiastically affirmed at the beginning of the 20th century (TOUTAIN 1909, 229) that the inscriptions had permitted the history of the cult of Mithras to be written.

²⁹ Before it took on the new acronym RGRW in the last decade of the 20th century.

³⁰ For example, VERMASEREN 1956–1960; VERMASEREN 1977–1989; LANE 1971–1978; LANE/VERMASEREN 1983–1989; HÖRIG/SCHWERTHEIM 1987.

³¹ BERCIU/PETOLESCU 1976; POPA/BERCIU 1978.

magnificent works on the cult to Iuppiter Dolichenus in the Roman Empire,³² which have only been surpassed by the publication in the EPRO series of the work already mentioned by Hörig and Schwertheim. As regards Ladislav Vidman, his *Sylloge Inscriptionum Religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae (SIRIS)*³³ had been the reference work for the Isiac inscriptions until the recent publication of the monumental work by Laurent Bricault, to which we must add his earlier work on the spread of Isiac cults in the Roman Empire.³⁴

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, we again find several syntheses of great importance in relation to mystery cults. To begin with, there is the influential work of Burkert,³⁵ mentioned above. Continuing to a large extent with Cumont's postulates, the work of Turcan,³⁶ cited earlier as well, also maintains the former's outline of oriental cults. Also outstanding owing to their great importance for any study of eastern cults and specifically the mysteries are the works of Alvar.³⁷ His modern synthesis is of great consequence to the comparative study of the mysteries among themselves and in relation to Christianity.

As to general studies on the main cults, for Mithraism the works of Cumont and Vermaseren stand out as documentary *corpora*, although the latter, the more modern one, is already fifty years old.³⁸ The book by Campbell focuses on the connection between the Mithras cult and Persia,³⁹ following Cumont's postulates,⁴⁰ whereas most scholars in the area agree that, on the contrary, it underwent an adaptation in the imperial age.⁴¹ Some authors, such as Reinhold Merkelbach, Vermaseren and Manfred Clauss have even proposed that the Mithraism of the imperial age might have been a Roman creation in which the name of the god would have been the only remnant of Persian origin.⁴² Other outstanding works that must be mentioned here are those by Turcan,⁴³ and, in relation to the different theories concerning the astral perspective of Mithraism, those by Inslar, Beck, Speidel, Ulansey and Jacobs.⁴⁴ For a social study of Mithraism, there is evidently the work by Clauss.⁴⁵

For cults of Egyptian or Greco-Egyptian origin in relation to the Roman Empire, the already cited works by Vidman and Bricault stand out as general documentary *corpora*.⁴⁶ Among the many studies devoted to these cults, I will mention here only some of them, for example the useful bibliographical inventory of Leclant,⁴⁷ or the preliminary catalogue of monuments to Serapis, by Katter-Sibbes.⁴⁸ Also outstanding is the work of Merkelbach about Isis Regina and Zeus Serapis,⁴⁹ and the numerous studies by Malaise, Vidman, Dunand, Takács and Budischovsky concerning the spread of Egyptian cults in the Roman world and the Danube

³² MERLAT 1951; MERLAT 1960.

³³ VIDMAN 1969; VIDMAN 1970.

³⁴ BRICAULT 2001; BRICAULT 2005.

³⁵ BURKERT 1987.

³⁶ TURCAN 1989.

³⁷ ALVAR 2001; ALVAR 2008.

³⁸ CUMONT 1896; CUMONT 1898; VERMASEREN 1956; VERMASEREN 1960.

³⁹ CAMPBELL 1968.

⁴⁰ CUMONT 1902.

⁴¹ GORDON 1996; see also BECK 1998, 115–128: in this work one could already appreciate the emergence of a new stance reviving the connection between the Persian origin and the process of Roman refounding in the imperial age.

⁴² MERKELBACH 1984; VERMASEREN 1981; CLAUSS 1990; CLAUSS 2000.

⁴³ TURCAN 1975; 1981; TURCAN 2000.

⁴⁴ INSLER 1978; BECK 1988; BECK 2004; BECK 2006; SPEIDEL 1980; ULANSEY 1989; JACOBS 1999.

⁴⁵ CLAUSS 1992.

⁴⁶ VIDMAN 1969; BRICAULT 2005.

⁴⁷ LECLANT 1972–1974.

⁴⁸ KATTER-SIBBES 1973.

⁴⁹ MERKELBACH 1995; MERKELBACH 2001.

area.⁵⁰ As important references we must also include the different proceedings of the International Colloquies on Isiac Studies, since they include the leading works by the most outstanding world specialists in these cults.⁵¹ For a study of the iconography of the cults of Isis and Serapis, Tran Tam Tinh presents a good state of the art, as well as an analysis of the iconographic types and the syncretisms in the iconography.⁵² Apart from those already mentioned, for the cult of Isis, we could add the recent book by Donaldson.⁵³ As regards Serapis, the work by Stambaugh serves as a general introduction to its origins,⁵⁴ whereas that of Hornsostel is a monograph written from the iconographic perspective.⁵⁵ For Osiris, I will cite only the work by Griffiths,⁵⁶ and for Apis, the *corpus* of Kater-Sibbes and Vermaseren.⁵⁷ And to end this very brief selection, I would point out the work of Fabio Mora for a social study of the cult of Isis, or the previous work by Heyob, for the study of the role of women in the cult of Isis.⁵⁸

As to the cults originating in Asia Minor, most of the bibliography is devoted to the cult of Cybele and Atis, although there are also some works that have focused on Men, Sabazius and Glycon, which will also be dealt with here. Thus, with respect to Cybele and Atis, the corpus of monuments for the Roman Empire is included in the work by Vermaseren in seven volumes,⁵⁹ the sixth of which deals with the monuments coming from Dacia.⁶⁰ The sources concerning their cult were compiled at the beginning of the 20th century by Hepding⁶¹ and were later the object of a critical review in two more recent important books about the cult of Cybele by Borgeaud and Roller.⁶² The bibliography is very extensive, just as in the previous cases, so I will only mention some of the works, beginning with the one by Cumont about the cults of Asia Minor in Roman paganism⁶³ and that by Graillet on the cult of Cybele in Rome and in the Empire,⁶⁴ followed by others progressively more recent such as those by Vermaseren, Sanders, Garth Thomas, that of Drew-Bear and Naour, the volume edited by Lane or the most recent one by Lancellotti concerning Atis, these last two included in the *RGRW* series, the continuation of *EPRO*.⁶⁵ Vermaseren also studied the representation of the different scenes of the Atis myth in art.⁶⁶ As regards the different particularities of his cult, the works of Lambrechts and Cosi stand out,⁶⁷ as do those of Sfameni Gasparro about soteriology in the cult of Atis.⁶⁸ The taurobolium, for its part, has been the object of several studies, especially in the important work of Duthoy, but also in some more recent ones such as those by Turcan and Borgeaud.⁶⁹ As to the introduction

⁵⁰ The most outstanding examples are MALAISE 1984; MALAISE 2007; VIDMAN 1986; DUNAND 1980; DUNAND 1983; DUNAND 2000; TAKÁCS 1995; BUDISCHOVSKY 2004.

⁵¹ BRICAULT 2000; BRICAULT 2004; BRICAULT ET ALII 2006.

⁵² TRAN TRAM TINH 1984.

⁵³ DONALDSON 2003.

⁵⁴ STAMBAUGH 1972.

⁵⁵ HORNSOSTEL 1973.

⁵⁶ GRIFFITHS 1980.

⁵⁷ KATER-SIBBES/VERMASEREN 1975–1977.

⁵⁸ MORA 1990; HEYOB 1975.

⁵⁹ VERMASEREN 1977–1989.

⁶⁰ VERMASEREN 1989.

⁶¹ HEPDING 1967.

⁶² BORGEAUD 1996; BORGEAUD 2004; ROLLER 1999.

⁶³ CUMONT 1906b.

⁶⁴ GRAILLOT 1912.

⁶⁵ VERMASEREN 1977; SANDERS 1981; GARTH THOMAS 1984; DREW-BEAR/NAOUR 1990; LANE 1996; LANCELLOTTI 2002.

⁶⁶ VERMASEREN 1966.

⁶⁷ LAMBRECHTS 1952; COSI 1976.

⁶⁸ SFAMENI GASPARRO 1985.

⁶⁹ DUTHOY 1969; TURCAN 1996b; BORGEAUD 1998.

of the cult of Cybele in Rome, I will mention the works of Bremmer, Cosi and the most recent one by Alvar.⁷⁰ The priesthood in the cults of Cybele and Atis was studied by Carcopino,⁷¹ who linked the creation of the *archigalli* to a restructuring of the cult that he attributed to Claudius, when devotion to Atis would have been incorporated – as opposed to Graillot,⁷² who spoke of the *archigalli* as if they existed from the beginning of the cult in Rome – but this was disputed by Lambrechts, who already attributed this reform to Antoninus Pius.⁷³ These issues have also been subsequently dealt with by Baslez and Alvar,⁷⁴ whereas the brotherhoods of the *cannophori* and the *dendrophori* have been analyzed in the works of Fishwick and Rubio.⁷⁵ As regards the social study of the cult, the fundamental reference would be the dissertation by Schillinger.⁷⁶

For the Asia Minor cults in general we would mention the book edited by Sahin, Schwertheim and Wagner, a collection of many essays.⁷⁷ And as for the other Asia Minor cults mentioned above – apart from Cybele and Atis – for the cult of Men, I would highlight the four volume corpus by Lane,⁷⁸ as well as the more recent study of the cult by Labarre and Taslialan, with a catalogue of the monuments along the holy road leading from Pisidian Antioch to the sanctuary of Men.⁷⁹ Also very recent are the works by Moga on the characteristics of the cult of this divinity in Asia Minor.⁸⁰ For the cult of Sabazius, the three volume corpus of the literary sources and monuments of this god was put together by Lane and Vermaseren⁸¹ and the state of the art, as well as the different aspects of the cult and its dissemination were studied by Picard, Fellmann and Johnson.⁸² For the cult of Zeus Sarnendenos and the problem concerning the own name of this divinity, Sorin Nemeti recently wrote a brief but indispensable work⁸³. With respect to the cult of Glycon, the specific reference studies are the two by Sfameni Gasparro about Alexander of Abonuticus, which attempt to reconstruct the figure of this god from the work of Lucian of Samosata (*Alex.*) and to analyze the mystery and oracular aspect of the cult, as well as how it spread.⁸⁴ The social, political and ideological function of the divine man, from *servus dei* to legitimizer of the monarchy, and the role of the cult of Glykon in the quest for cohesion and ideological control within the framework of citizen relations has also been analyzed by Hidalgo de la Vega.⁸⁵ Finally, I should also perhaps mention the work of Chiş.⁸⁶

In regard to the general studies about Syrian cults or cults from the Syrian geographical context in the Roman Empire, the most important works including documentary corpora are those mentioned above by Merlat and that by Hörig and Schwertheim, for the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus,⁸⁷ and also those by Hajjar for the cult of the Heliopolis-Baalbek triad.⁸⁸ I must also mention the different works by Drijvers, of great importance in the study of Syrian cults

⁷⁰ BREMMER 1979; COSI 1980–1981; ALVAR 1994.

⁷¹ CARCOPINO 1942.

⁷² GRAILLOT 1912.

⁷³ LAMBRECHTS 1952.

⁷⁴ BASLEZ 2004; ALVAR 2004.

⁷⁵ FISHWICK 1966; RUBIO 1993.

⁷⁶ SCHILLINGER 1979.

⁷⁷ SAHIN/SCHWERTHEIM/WAGNER 1978.

⁷⁸ LANE 1971–1978.

⁷⁹ LABARRE/TASLIALAN 2002.

⁸⁰ MOGA 2003; MOGA 2003b.

⁸¹ LANE/VERMASEREN 1983–1989.

⁸² PICARD 1961; FELLMANN 1981; JOHNSON 1984.

⁸³ NEMETI 2008.

⁸⁴ SFAMENI GASPARRO 1996; SFAMENI GASPARRO 1999.

⁸⁵ HIDALGO DE LA VEGA 2001.

⁸⁶ CHIŞ 1995.

⁸⁷ MERLAT 1951; MERLAT 1960; HÖRIG/SCHWERTHEIM 1987.

⁸⁸ HAJJAR 1977; HAJJAR 1985.

and their propagation,⁸⁹ as well as a short article by Lajos Balla on their dissemination in the Danubian provinces.⁹⁰ There are also abundant references to Palmyra and the cults that originated there, although the most outstanding works are, from different times, those by Février, Drijvers, Teixidor, Gawlikowski and Kaizer, the last one analyzing the social norms of the cult in the Roman era.⁹¹ More recent, and of general interest for these cults, is the volume edited by Kaizer, which is a collection of articles about local religious life in the Near East in the Hellenistic and Roman eras.⁹²

For the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus – apart from the works already mentioned – the basic references are the works by Kahn, Speidel, Schwertheim and Hörig, although the much older work by Hettner could also be mentioned.⁹³ Sanzi did a social and organizational study,⁹⁴ and Balla carried out a social study of the cult in relation to its dissemination in the Danubian area,⁹⁵ whereas Toth analyzed the important role of the priests of this god in the spreading of the cult.⁹⁶ As regards the controversial name of this god as *Deus Commagenus*, Angyal and Balla are of the opinion that they were actually different, although similar, deities,⁹⁷ whereas Bianchi defends the idea that they were one and the same, although this name would correspond to his eastern and more ancient aspect.⁹⁸ In this respect, the work of Waldman on the forms of the cult of Commagene in the 1st century B.C.E. is interesting.⁹⁹

The literary sources for the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus and also those referring to the cult of Iuppiter Heliopolitanus were collected in a study done by Cellini,¹⁰⁰ whereas the prosopography of the Severian epoch for both cults has been approached by Sanzi.¹⁰¹ Apart from the general works on Syrian cults already mentioned, for Iuppiter Heliopolitanus the starting point created by the work of Ronzevalle should be emphasized, although it has now been surpassed by the more modern studies of Hajjar and Calzini Gysens.¹⁰² Moreover, just as he did for the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus, Sanzi again makes a complete social and organizational study of this second divinity.¹⁰³ Among the Syrians, the cult of Dea Syria is one of those receiving the most attention by scholars. Of the studies devoted to her, the initial point of reference at the beginning of the 20th century is the one by Strong and Garstang.¹⁰⁴ The study of Greek and Latin sources for her cult was done by Van Berg, in the first place, and subsequently Oden and Robert, focused on the *De Dea Syria* by Lucian of Samosata.¹⁰⁵ As more or less general works on her cult, mention must be made of the studies by Drijvers and Hörig, or the more recent ones by Chirassi Colombo and Kaizer, whereas for the analysis of its dissemination, the article by Baslez on Dea Syria and her expansion in the Hellenistic world and that by Belayche, already mentioned above, must be pointed out.¹⁰⁶

⁸⁹ DRIJVERS 1980; DRIJVERS 1981.

⁹⁰ BALLA 1989.

⁹¹ FÉVRIER 1931; DRIJVERS 1976; TEIXIDOR 1979; GAWLIKOWSKI 1990; KAIZER 2002.

⁹² KAIZER 2008.

⁹³ KAHN 1943; SPEIDEL 1978; SCHWERTHEIM 1981; HÖRIG 1984; HETTNER 1877.

⁹⁴ SANZI 1997.

⁹⁵ BALLA 1976.

⁹⁶ TOTH 1971.

⁹⁷ ANGYAL/BALLA 1972.

⁹⁸ BIANCHI 1997b.

⁹⁹ WALDMAN 1973.

¹⁰⁰ CELLINI 1997.

¹⁰¹ SANZI 1999.

¹⁰² RONZEVALLE 1937; HAJJAR 1981; CALZINI GYSENS 1997.

¹⁰³ SANZI 1997b.

¹⁰⁴ STRONG/GARSTANG 1913.

¹⁰⁵ VAN BERG 1972; ODEN/ROBERT 1977.

¹⁰⁶ DRIJVERS 1981; HÖRIG 1984b; CHIRASSI COLOMBO 1996; KAIZER 1997; KAIZER 1998; BASLEZ 1999; BELAYCHE 2000.

As to the origin of the cult of Azizos, Drijvers is again the main reference,¹⁰⁷ whereas for that of Turmasgades it is the study by William.¹⁰⁸ Concerning the cults of the divinities known as Deus Aeternus or Theos Hypsistos, several works have analyzed them in relation to their supposed Judean-pagan character or with henotheistic trends, such as those by Smith, Ustinova, Stein and Sfameni Gasparro.¹⁰⁹

To finalize this sample of general works on the different Roman cults of eastern origin in the Roman Empire, there remain those dealing with the solar cults. For the cult of Sol Invictus, understood as the Syrian god *Elagabal*, the book by Halsberghe should be mentioned, although it is not the best of the *EPRO* collection, since different aspects of the information, analyses, debates and conclusions are not very solid or pertinent, and have been criticized by Beaujeu and other authors.¹¹⁰ The same occurs with his study published in the *ANRW* collection.¹¹¹ Some works have focused on the cult of the Sun in the Roman era and its popularity during the Severian dynasty, such as those by Seyrig, Turcan and Di Palma.¹¹² The study by Cid López, for example, makes a new approach to the important role played by the empresses of this dynasty in the dissemination of the solar cult and other Syrian cults.¹¹³ Others, such as those of Halsberghe himself, have attempted to establish the conditions for attributing certain inscriptions to the cult of Sol Invictus or that of Mithras, something which in general might appear simple in theory, but which is a complicated issue: in this respect, we would have to highlight the articles by Vanderlip and Chirassi Colombo.¹¹⁴ And finally, mention must be made of the ground-breaking study by Hijmans, who argues that the cult of Sol Invictus could have been created based on the traditional Roman cult of the sun, owing to imperial interest in finding a symbol of a single government that could represent the institution of the Principality. Thus, the cult of Sol Invictus, in his opinion, would not have been an oriental cult and therefore not Syrian either,¹¹⁵ something that had been generally supposed almost as dogma since Cumont, as can be seen in the work of Halsberghe and many other subsequent ones.

3. General studies by provinces and territories

Before moving on to the scholarly overview of the direct studies about Roman cults of eastern origin in Roman Dacia, which will submerge us almost exclusively in Romanian scholarship, I would like to give a concise account of the results of similar studies concerning other

¹⁰⁷ DRIJVERS 1972.

¹⁰⁸ WILLIAM 1974.

¹⁰⁹ SMITH 1996; USTINOVA 1999; STEIN 2001; SFAMENI GASPARRO 2003. By henotheism we should understand the greater or lesser pre-eminence of one god over the rest in the religious sentiment of the faithful, a process which on the other hand must not be understood as a prelude to monotheism or a tendency toward it. The idea that there is a process of monotheistic syncretism that “inexorably” culminates in Christianity has been accepted and is still quite often accepted today, although it is not an idea that I share, since ancient Christianity itself had to integrate the polytheism predominant in the religious sentiment of most of the population. It provided inferior beings with a sacred character which gave rise to an authentic Christian pantheon, structured hierarchically, including saints, angels and the Virgin Mary as lesser gods, which would replace the many deities of the polytheistic system. ALVAR 2001, 38–39. See also VERSNEL 1990, 35 and more; WEST 1999, 21–40. This last one tells us that “where we see a god emerging as plenipotentiary, the existence of other gods is not denied, but they are reduced in importance or status, and he is praised as the greatest among them. This is sometimes called «henotheism»” (24).

¹¹⁰ HALSBERGHE 1972. For the critique, BEAUJEU 1978; in an electronic debate of the *Electronic Journal of Mithraic Studies*, Richard Gordon briefly and brilliantly states the problem and makes a critique of the work and approach of Halsberghe. GORDON 2004, <http://www.uhu.es/ejms/faq.htm>.

¹¹¹ HALSBERGHE 1984.

¹¹² SEYRIG 1971; TURCAN 1985; DI PALMA 1999.

¹¹³ CID LÓPEZ 1993.

¹¹⁴ VANDERLIP 1978; CHIRASSI COLOMBO 1979.

¹¹⁵ HIJMANS 1996.

provinces and western territories of the Roman Empire. Beginning from the west, the “oriental” cults in Hispania and Britain were the focus of two of the first monographs included in the *EPRO* series, written by García y Bellido and Harris, respectively.¹¹⁶ For Gaul, the studies have centered on the area of the Rhône valley and Narbonne to analyze the penetration of the cults towards the interior, and in this respect I would highlight the studies of Turcan,¹¹⁷ as well as the PhD dissertation of Sierra del Molino, the latter being part of a research project directed at the time by Alvar and entitled *Los cultos místéricos en la parte occidental del Imperio (Mystery Cults in the Western Part of the Empire)*.¹¹⁸ In the Italian territory, from north to south, another two disciples of Alvar on the same project, Martín-Artajo and Rubio, focused their respective PhD dissertations on the mystery cults in Transalpine Gaul, Etruria, and Umbria.¹¹⁹ The significant work on oriental cults in the city and port of Ostia, one of the most important communication hubs in the Empire and thus one of the main centers for disseminating religious and cult ideas, occupied one of the first volumes of the *EPRO* series and was headed by Squarciapino.¹²⁰ More to the south, Tran Tam Tinh studied the cults of oriental divinities in Campania and in the cities affected by the violent eruption of Vesuvius in 79 C.E.,¹²¹ while Sfameni Gasparro located his work on the oriental cults on the island of Sicily.¹²² Malaise focused on the Egyptian cults and their dissemination in Italy.¹²³ Budischovsky analyzed the spread of Isis cults around the Adriatic,¹²⁴ and further east, in the Greek world, Baslez studied how the oriental cults spread to the island of Delos,¹²⁵ while Bruneau focused on the Egyptian cults on Eretria.¹²⁶ For Asia Minor, the work of Drexler, concerning the cult of Isis and Serapis, was outstanding in its time,¹²⁷ and Hölbl and Dunand, in respective *EPRO* volumes, analyzed the Egyptian cults in Ephesus and the eastern Mediterranean, respectively.¹²⁸

Leaving the Mediterranean and turning towards the northern provinces, along the limes of the Rhine and the Danube, Vermaseren devoted a short study to the penetration of these cults in the territory that today corresponds to the Netherlands,¹²⁹ while Schwertheim did the same with the Germanic provinces,¹³⁰ after Grimm had already dealt with the Egyptian cults.¹³¹ Following the Danubian limes towards the east, Schön focused his study on the territories of Rhaetia and Noricum, which now form part of Austria,¹³² while Wessetzky, Kadar and Selem separately studied the eastern cults in the two provinces of Pannonia, first in separate works about the Egyptian cults, the Syrian cults and the Asia Minor cults, and then in a general work.¹³³ Zotovic carried out the same work regarding the province of Upper Moesia and Tatscheva-Hitova did so for Lower Moesia and in Thrace, followed by a recent work by Bricault

¹¹⁶ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1967; HARRIS 1965.

¹¹⁷ TURCAN 1972; TURCAN 1981b; TURCAN 1986.

¹¹⁸ SIERRA DEL MOLINO 1993.

¹¹⁹ MARTÍN-ARTAJO 1995; RUBIO 1991.

¹²⁰ SQUARCIAPINO 1962.

¹²¹ TRAN TAM TINH 1971; TRAN TAM TINH 1972.

¹²² SFAMENI GASPARRO 1973.

¹²³ MALAISE 1972; MALAISE 1972b.

¹²⁴ BUDISCHOVSKY 1977. Her work compiling inscriptions and monuments was conceived as a first volume of a longer work, but a second volume of interpretation never appeared.

¹²⁵ BASLEZ 1977.

¹²⁶ BRUNEAU 1975.

¹²⁷ DREXLER 1889.

¹²⁸ HÖLBL 1978; DUNAND 1973.

¹²⁹ VERMASEREN 1954.

¹³⁰ SCHWERTHEIM 1974; SCHWERTHEIM 1986.

¹³¹ GRIMM 1969.

¹³² SCHÖN 1988.

¹³³ WESSETZKY 1961; KADAR 1962; SELEM 1980.

about the Isiac cults.¹³⁴ Also recently, Covacef devoted an article to the study of the “oriental” cults in Romanian Dobrudja, a territory that in Roman times corresponded to the coastal area of Lower Moesia.¹³⁵ And finally, Kobylina and Neverov made a study of these divinities on the northern coast of the Black Sea, although the area does not correspond to the territory of any Roman province.¹³⁶

This, then, is the scholarly panorama that must be taken into account when we focus our attention on the situation in Dacia. As can be seen, most of the studies devoted to the Roman cults of eastern origin in the different provinces of the Roman Empire formed part of the *EPRO* series, and it seems that for the case of the Transdanubian territory they “did the bare minimum” by including a small volume on the “oriental” cults of Lower Dacia, written by Berciu and Petolescu. This work includes a catalogue of the monuments found in the southern part of the province,¹³⁷ but the great majority of monuments of these cults in Roman Dacia are found or have been discovered in the territories of Upper Dacia and Dacia Porolissensis, areas that surprisingly had not been dealt with in a similar monograph until quite recently, in spite of the wealth and abundance of epigraphic and archeological materials relating to Roman cults of eastern origin.

4. Studies on Roman cults of Eastern origin in Dacia

Now that the situation of this series of international studies about “oriental” cults has been described, it is finally time to go on to the state of the art of studies concerning these cults specifically in the context of Roman Dacia. The first study that must be mentioned is that of Dorin O. Popescu, although it deals only with Egyptian cults.¹³⁸ And in contrast to the almost total predominance of Romanian scholarship that becomes immediately evident when the different studies are analyzed, the first monograph on the cults of Roman Dacia was written by Leslie Webber Jones –to be precise, in the *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* (Berkeley) – and it includes a section devoted to the gods of eastern origin, but does not include a corpus of monuments, being thus reduced to a mere statistical study. The classification contained therein had some errors, such as the inclusion of Zeus Sardendenus among the Greek divinities, and Baltis among those of Celtic origin, but although this work has clearly been surpassed in value and scope after almost eighty years, its great initial merit must in any case be recognized.¹³⁹

A short time later, Octavian Floca published in Italian what up until now has been the only monograph on cults of eastern origin that covers the entire territory of Roman Dacia.¹⁴⁰ Although it is rather short and does not include a corpus of monuments either, it does contain a section devoted exclusively to temples and another to the spread of the cults, as well as eleven pages of analytical tables of inscriptions devoted to the different “oriental” gods. It is therefore always useful as a point of departure, even though much time has passed since its publication.

The first scholarly synthesis concerning Roman Dacia, specifically the region of Transylvania in Antiquity, was rendered by the hand of the great Romanian scholar Constantin Daicoviciu,¹⁴¹ who in the section corresponding to religion also approached the “oriental” cults,

¹³⁴ ZOTOVIC 1966; TATSCHIEVA-HITOVA 1983; BRICAULT 2007.

¹³⁵ COVACEF 2000–2001.

¹³⁶ KOBYLINA/NEVEROV 1976.

¹³⁷ BERCIU/PETOLESCU 1976. This study delves deeper into the basic lines posed in a previous article by the second of these Romanian authors (PETOLESCU 1971).

¹³⁸ POPESCU 1927.

¹³⁹ WEBBER JONES 1929.

¹⁴⁰ FLOCA 1935.

¹⁴¹ DAICOVICIU 1945.

relating them to the syncretic manifestations that he had analyzed in a previous study on the province's religious capital, Colonia Ulpia Traiana Dacica Sarmizegetusa.¹⁴² Subsequent works on Roman Dacia, such as those by Tudor and Macrea, respectively, about the Oltenia region and about the different aspects of provincial life, also include sections devoted to the study of the religious aspects which deal with the cults of oriental origin.¹⁴³

Dumitru N. Raduna wrote a brief article on the oriental cults in Upper Dacia, but did not really contribute anything new and only offers a very synthetic collection of some data on the different cults, not very systematic and referring to the inscriptions of the CIL, so it is entirely dispensable.¹⁴⁴ Three years later, Ioan I. Russu published an interesting study on the presence of Syrians in the province of Dacia,¹⁴⁵ which includes the religious aspect among many others and served as a point of departure for the important subsequent monograph by Sanie on Syrian and Palmyrian cults, which I shall soon come back to.¹⁴⁶

That same year, Dumitru Tudor published in *EPRO* the first of his two volume work¹⁴⁷ on the divinities that he himself had called “Danubian Horsemen” in previous studies,¹⁴⁸ and completed it with the second volume, devoted to the interpretation of the monuments.¹⁴⁹ Although these divinities are today considered to have an autochthonous Danubian-Balkan origin, a great influence of certain Roman cults of eastern origin, such as that of Cybele or Mithraism, can be seen in the iconography of their characteristic relief plaques. This author did not feel, however, that these Danubian deities could be called “oriental,” as Turcan did, for example.¹⁵⁰

Alexandru Popa wrote an important but still unpublished PhD dissertation on the Egyptian and Asia Minor cults in Roman Dacia.¹⁵¹ It includes a repertory of inscriptions and figurative monuments and therefore consultation of this dissertation at the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca is indispensable for a study of synthesis of the cults of eastern origin in the territory in question. Shortly afterward, the author published a highly summarized version of the work, without including the documents.¹⁵²

Even more important than the work of Popa was the previously mentioned monograph by Sanie concerning Syrian and Palmyrian cults in Roman Dacia,¹⁵³ which forms part of the series “Bibliotheca Orientalis” of the Association of Oriental Studies of the former Socialist Republic of Romania, because it was published and because it also spread internationally in a subsequent summarized version in German published in 1989.¹⁵⁴ Sanie, a renowned Orientalist in Romania, carried out a task that was absolutely essential for any subsequent study, supported by his knowledge of Semitic languages and eastern names. His book includes several maps showing the dissemination of the different cults, a repertory of inscriptions and diverse analytic tables of great usefulness. As regards one of the most important debates concerning the cults of eastern origin, that of the character of the Sol Invictus deity, Sanie follows Halsberghe's interpretation, in turn inherited from Cumont, according to which it would have been a divinity of Syrian origin and therefore, “oriental.”

¹⁴² DAICOVICIU 1928–1932.

¹⁴³ TUDOR 1942; TUDOR 1958; TUDOR 1968; TUDOR 1981; MACREA 1969; MACREA 2008.

¹⁴⁴ RADUNA 1966.

¹⁴⁵ RUSSU 1969.

¹⁴⁶ SANIE 1981.

¹⁴⁷ TUDOR 1969.

¹⁴⁸ TUDOR 1937.

¹⁴⁹ TUDOR 1976.

¹⁵⁰ TURCAN 1996.

¹⁵¹ POPA 1979.

¹⁵² POPA 1983.

¹⁵³ SANIE 1981.

¹⁵⁴ SANIE 1989. This is a German version, which is shorter and lacks the maps, figures and analytical tables.

The work of Mihai Bărbulescu on spiritual influences in Roman Dacia has been and continues to be one of the essential referents in the study and understanding of spiritual life north of the Danube, including different aspects of the relation between art and religion, scatological beliefs, day to day religion, and so on. Within the study of the cults and beliefs, it likewise includes a short statistical review of the cults of eastern origin.¹⁵⁵

In his Romanian translation of Turcan's book about eastern cults in the Roman world,¹⁵⁶ Constantin C. Petolescu made an introductory study of the "oriental" phenomenon in Dacia.¹⁵⁷ In 2000, this same author published a monographic synthesis of pre-Roman and Roman Dacia, with a chapter on Roman life in the province in which he deals with the religious aspects and devotes some pages to the Roman cults of eastern origin, making some observations with up to date information on them in comparison to the rest of the attested cults.¹⁵⁸ The same year, Rusu-Pescaru and Alicu brought to light a monograph on the temples of Roman Dacia, which furthermore includes a repertory of inscriptions with references to religious-type constructions.¹⁵⁹ This work was continued in another study by Alicu.¹⁶⁰

More recently, I would highlight the study by Schäfer about the dissemination of religious beliefs in Roman Dacia in relation to the Asia Minor cults, which includes interesting criticism and proposals for research priorities regarding the study of religion in the province.¹⁶¹ Likewise, Mihai F. Popescu has done a brilliant and highly useful study of religion in the Roman army in Dacia, which approaches aspects such as the dissemination "by" and "in" the army and ideological control, besides being an exhaustive socio-religious study of the army, ranging from the high command to the soldiers and veterans, all related to the provincial context. Maps, diagrams and analytical tables add to the value of this work for the study of any religious aspect in Dacia.¹⁶²

Equally or even more valuable for understanding religion in this province is the monograph by Sorin Nemeti concerning religious syncretism.¹⁶³ One of the problems that might have arisen from a detailed study of religious syncretism would have been confusion with the study of the cults and religions of the province of Dacia as whole, but Nemeti has managed to concentrate on the study of the syncretic processes and not the divinities resulting from them. The work not only fills the almost total vacuum regarding studies of this type on Roman Dacia, but above all, it is a work of great general importance for religious syncretism, how it has been dealt with by historians and its study methodology, with a decidedly modern focus on issues involved in the history of the religions of Antiquity. Of course, the references to several Roman cults of eastern origin are of enormous importance, above all regarding deities of Syrian origin and some of those of Asia Minor, assimilated to Iuppiter Capitolinus, but its treatment of the solar cults stands out especially, with a critical view of prior historiographical stances revolving around the view of Halsberghe or Sanie of Sol Invictus as a cult of Syrian origin and thus "oriental."¹⁶⁴ Nemeti is thus closer to the stance defended by Hijmans.¹⁶⁵ The book also includes

¹⁵⁵ BĂRBULESCU 1984; BĂRBULESCU 2003.

¹⁵⁶ TURCAN 1989.

¹⁵⁷ PETOLESCU 1998

¹⁵⁸ PETOLESCU 2000

¹⁵⁹ RUSU-PESCARU/ALICU 2000.

¹⁶⁰ ALICU 2002.

¹⁶¹ SCHÄFER 2004.

¹⁶² POPESCU 2004.

¹⁶³ NEMETI 2005.

¹⁶⁴ HALSBERGHE 1972; SANIE 1981.

¹⁶⁵ HIJMANS 1996.

a catalogue of inscriptions relating to the syncretic-type manifestations analyzed, thus doubling the value of the work as a fundamental reference.

Sorin Pribac has also recently published his interesting work about the social aspects of the spiritual life of Roman Dacia, and although it focuses particularly on the Greco-Roman cults, it also deals with those of eastern origin in relation to different aspects of provincial society, such as ethnic and social diversity, schools as elements of social cohesion, women's status in the provincial religion and the eastern cults in the legions of Roman Dacia. It also includes an epigraphic repertory with references to many deities who – according to the approach set out in our introduction – could be considered as having an eastern origin.¹⁶⁶

Likewise, I would like to briefly review the principal specific studies about the different Roman cults of eastern origin evidenced in Dacia. Obviously, I can not mention each and every one of the books and articles useful for our purposes, since many of them are epigraphic studies dealing with different inscriptions, some of which may refer to a god of eastern origin. I will therefore only comment on the most important scholarly contributions, apart from those mentioned up until now, which were of a general nature or had a broader framework covering the study of different cults at the same time. Among the latter, still to mention are certain works that have focused on the study of these cults in several cities of Dacia.¹⁶⁷

Paradoxically, Mithraism, the main Roman cult of eastern origin in Dacia –taking into account the amount of epigraphic and figurative monuments found to date– until very recently had still not been the subject of any monograph, like those mentioned earlier in relation to the cults originating in Asia Minor, Egypt or Syria. The different scholars of Mithraism in Dacia have limited themselves to accepting the references to the corpus of Vermaseren,¹⁶⁸ and for precisely this reason, any isolated article that approaches an aspect of the Mithraic cult in the province is doubly important as a reference for its study. In this respect, the works of Cloșca L. Băluță, both relating to the epigraphy as a way to study the dissemination of Mithraism in Dacia, are probably some of the most outstanding ones, taking into account the situation mentioned.¹⁶⁹ Two very general and synthetic studies of the cult in the province were made at different times by Cernaianu and by Mitru, who based themselves, respectively, on the data contained in the corpora of Cumont and Vermaseren to analyze its dissemination and organization.¹⁷⁰ Istvan Toth and Marcel Le Glay focused on the analysis of the epithet *deus genitor* and its possible origin, for it to be able to be assigned to Mithras.¹⁷¹ Alexandru Popa studied the Mithraic iconography in Apulum, the administrative capital of the province, and Șerban and Băluță analyzed the role of the army in the penetration and dissemination of Mithraism in Dacia.¹⁷² A more recent study of the cult of Mithras is the one by Petolescu, included as an *addendum* to the Romanian translation of Turcan's book on Mithras and Mithraism,¹⁷³ but the monograph that has finally filled the vacuum we referred to is the still unpublished PhD dissertation of Mariana Pintilie on Mithraism in Dacia.¹⁷⁴ It includes a repertory of the Mithraic monuments in Dacia, and therefore this dissertation of Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca is also indispensable for a study of synthesis about the cults of eastern origin in

¹⁶⁶ PRIBAC 2006.

¹⁶⁷ For the “oriental” cults in Micia, see MĂRGHITAN/PETOLESCU 1978; for the Egyptian cults in Potaissa, see BĂRBULESCU 2006.

¹⁶⁸ VERMASEREN 1956–1960.

¹⁶⁹ BĂLUȚĂ 1978; BĂLUȚĂ 1994.

¹⁷⁰ CERNAIANU 1930; MITRU 1971; CUMONT 1896–1898; VERMASEREN 1956–1960.

¹⁷¹ TOTH 1970; LE GLAY 1976.

¹⁷² POPA 1977; POPA 1978; ȘERBAN/BĂLUȚĂ 1979.

¹⁷³ PETOLESCU 2000b; TURCAN 1981.

¹⁷⁴ PINTILIE 2003.

the province. Nevertheless, in my view, Pintilie depends excessively on the previous work of Vermaseren¹⁷⁵ and takes his epigraphic interpretations as almost axiomatic, which leads her to repeat some of his errors when attributing quite a few of the monuments. Some last but very important contributions are the recent articles by Irina and Sorin Nemeti, studying the presence of a Mithraic genius at Potaissa, and specially the one in which they analyze certain mystic aspects of the Mithraic cult which can be detected in Roman Dacia, like those of planets, grades and soteriology.¹⁷⁶

As regards the Mithraea, the first specific study was the one by Király, published at the end of the 19th century about the one at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, a large building considered one of the largest Mithraea in the Roman Empire.¹⁷⁷ In the 20th century, Petolescu devoted two works to the Mithraeum of Slăveni, in Lower Dacia,¹⁷⁸ whereas Gudea and Bozu studied the possible existence of a Mithraic sanctuary in Pojejena de Sus, the reliefs of which were also analyzed from the iconographic point of view by Gordon.¹⁷⁹ Alicu maintained the existence of a Mithraeum in the Roman military camp of Pojejena, and he has more recently been answered and criticized by Marcu.¹⁸⁰ Matilda Takács contributed new data relating to the Mithraeum of Deva based on information found in a manuscript from the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁸¹ Pintilie made a brief synthesis of the Mithraea found to date in the province, but it must be taken into account that her conclusions as to the total number of Mithraea and the methodology used in the work were quickly answered and criticized by Gudea.¹⁸²

As far as the cults originating in Asia Minor are concerned, the work of Petolescu about the colonists of Asia Minor in Roman Dacia offers some introductory references.¹⁸³ Apart from the general works already mentioned, there exists no other study devoted specifically to the cult of Cybele and Atis. There are, however, several articles that analyze aspects of the cult of the god Men, such as those by Gostar, Alexandru Popa or more recently, one of myself, at which I jointly analyze the inscriptions that can be attributed to this deity and some characteristics of his cult in Dacia.¹⁸⁴ For the cult of Sabazius, the works by Macrea are still the principal point of reference, but also important are two subsequent studies by Tudor, which highlight the Thracian-Phrygian nature of this god.¹⁸⁵ As regards the cults of other divinities of Asia Minor assimilated to Iuppiter or to Zeus – some originating in Galatia – mention must be made of the article by Berciu and Popa about Iuppiter Cimistenus, as well as a subsequent one by the same authors,¹⁸⁶ the brief, much older study by Zeiss dealing with Iuppiter Bussumarius, and that of Mitrofan relating to a divinity called Deus Saromandus.¹⁸⁷ In fact, for the study of deities having their origins in Galatia, we must mention the works by Popa, Popa and Berciu, the mentioned one by Nemeti, and Husar.¹⁸⁸ This last one includes the deities from Galatia among those of Celtic origin, thus

¹⁷⁵ VERMASEREN 1956–1960.

¹⁷⁶ NEMETI/NEMETI 2004–2005; NEMETI/NEMETI 2007.

¹⁷⁷ KIRÁLY 1886.

¹⁷⁸ PETOLESCU 1976; PETOLESCU 1976b.

¹⁷⁹ GUDEA/BOZU 1977; GUDEA/BOZU 1977b; GUDEA/BOZU 1978; GORDON 1977.

¹⁸⁰ ALICU 1999–2000; MARCU 2007.

¹⁸¹ TAKÁCS 1987.

¹⁸² PINTILIE 1999–2000; GUDEZ 2002.

¹⁸³ PETOLESCU 1978.

¹⁸⁴ GOSTAR 1960; POPA 1965; POPA 1967; CARBÓ 2007.

¹⁸⁵ MACREA 1959; MACREA 1961; TUDOR 1977; TUDOR 1978.

¹⁸⁶ BERCIU/POPA 1963; POPA/BERCIU 1978.

¹⁸⁷ ZEISS 1933–1935; MITROFAN 1991.

¹⁸⁸ POPA 1968; POPA/BERCIU 1974; NEMETI 2008; HUSAR 1995; HUSAR 1999.

denying their oriental origin.¹⁸⁹ And finally, regarding the cult of Glykon in Dacia, the work of Culcer is the most important specific reference.¹⁹⁰

For the Egyptian cults, essentially that of Isis and Serapis, the main works of reference have already been mentioned, but we could add those by Popa regarding dedications to Isis or Serapis;¹⁹¹ the one by Isac about Iuppiter Serapis in Potaissa;¹⁹² those by Petolescu on Egyptian cults in Lower Dacia and the Egyptian triad of Isis, Serapis and Harpocrates;¹⁹³ the one by Sanie on Greco-Egyptian cults in Dacia;¹⁹⁴ that of Mitrofan about Serapis and an inscription to Isis *Myrionima*;¹⁹⁵ the one by Sorin Nemeti regarding the iconography of Isis;¹⁹⁶ that of Budischovsky, who analyzes all the Danubian limes;¹⁹⁷ and the one by Irina Nemeti which presents a statue of Isis of Potaissa, but which includes a repertory of Egyptian pieces in that Roman city.¹⁹⁸ Also interesting is the article by Sanie on the name *Dea Placida*, which appears on several inscriptions in Dacia and which he interprets as dedications to Isis.¹⁹⁹ The same author returns to this issue in an article that synthetically analyzes the presence of Egyptian cults in the province, which is of interest because it brings the state of the art up to date, but far more important seems to be the more recent one by Budischovsky, about the Isiac cults in Dacia, although neither of them include a repertory of monuments.²⁰⁰

As far as the other Egyptian divinities are concerned, for Apis mention must be made of the brief study by Gudea and that by Matei on small cult statues in the northern part of Dacia.²⁰¹ The case of Iuppiter Ammon, although often treated as if it were one more cult of Egyptian origin, has the particularity of perhaps being more related to funerary rather than cultural aspects of the small statues found in Dacia. In any case, the works of reference are those by Alexandru Popa – mentioned above also in relation to the Asia Minor cult of Men – and the works by Petolescu, Mărghită and Andritoiu, Budischovsky, Victor Popa and Băluță.²⁰² Moreover, Bărbulescu has recently presented a study on the Egyptian cults in Potaissa as a consequence of the finding of a head of Serapis.²⁰³

As to the studies of the Syrian cults in Roman Dacia, apart from those already mentioned we would cite in the first place a recent study by myself concerning the ways they spread from Syria to Dacia, with analysis of specific cases.²⁰⁴ And as regards the studies devoted to particular

¹⁸⁹ HUSAR 1999, 262: he considers the Galatan deities Bussurigijs, Bussumarius and Tavianus as Celtic, based on the fact that the Galatans were originally a Celtic population, although he recognizes that it is difficult to determine exactly to what extent these divinities maintained their original nature. However, as Popa (POPA 1968, 447–450) and myself (CARBÓ 2008, 311–313) have pointed out, it is evident that, at the time we are dealing with, the population had probably been assimilated by those they lived among. At most, we could go so far as to say that they had preserved certain traditions, in this case the name of one of the old gods of their country of origin, but in those conditions the gods in question could only be considered as being of Asia Minor.

¹⁹⁰ CULCER 1967.

¹⁹¹ POPA 1959; POPA 1962; POPA 1965b.

¹⁹² ISAC 1970.

¹⁹³ PETOLESCU 1972; PETOLESCU 1973.

¹⁹⁴ SANIE 1975.

¹⁹⁵ MITROFAN 1992.

¹⁹⁶ NEMETI 1999.

¹⁹⁷ BUDISCHOVSKY 2004.

¹⁹⁸ NEMETI 2005b.

¹⁹⁹ SANIE 1974.

²⁰⁰ SANIE 2004; BUDISCHOVSKY 2007.

²⁰¹ GUDEA 1974; MATEI 1977.

²⁰² POPA 1965; POPA 1967; PETOLESCU 1973b; MĂRGHITĂ/ANDRITOIU 1976; BUDISCHOVSKY 1986; POPA 1994; BĂLUȚĂ 1998.

²⁰³ BĂRBULESCU 2006.

²⁰⁴ CARBÓ 2007b.

deities, we have the works of reference of Popa and Berciu about the cult of Iuppiter Dolichenus in Dacia²⁰⁵ and the one by Gudea and Tamba about the important temple to this god in Porolissum,²⁰⁶ the excavation of which has brought to light abundant material related to this Syrian divinity, for whose study we must also take into account the works by Tudor, Berciu and Popa, Angyal, Sanie, Petolescu, Ștefănescu and Piso, this last one correcting the readings made by Gudea and Tamba of some inscriptions found at that temple.²⁰⁷ For Iuppiter Heliopolitanus, there is the general work by Gostar or the more specific one by Petolescu, who studied the dissemination of this deity by elements of the *legio XIII Gemina*.²⁰⁸ For the cult of Iuppiter Hierapolitanus, outstanding is the study by Floca concerning this god's presence in the Roman city of Micia, where the cult reached greater importance,²⁰⁹ just as for Iuppiter Turmasgades we must refer to the study by Tudor about his presence in Romula.²¹⁰

As references for the study of the cult of Dea Syria, we must again cite the work of Berciu and Popa and two articles by Sanie about two inscriptions, respectively, that mention the deity in different areas of Dacia.²¹¹ Of great interest for inquiry into how the cult of Azizos spread is the study by Macrea concerning an inscription from Potaissa.²¹² And finally, for the cults of Deus Aeternus, Theos Hypsistos and Iuppiter Summus Exsuperantissimus, as references we have the works of Isac, Sanie, Vasile Moga, Piso and the more recent one by Irina Nemeti and Sorin Nemeti.²¹³

As regards the cults of the Palmyrian deities in Dacia, we have the indispensable article by Gostar about the Palmyrian gods that appear in the epigraphy of the city of Tibiscum,²¹⁴ that of Sanie, regarding a famous and greatly studied inscription of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, dedicated to several Palmyrian gods;²¹⁵ those by Luca Bianchi and Doina Benea, about the study of the Palmyrians in Dacia;²¹⁶ that by Piso, devoted specifically to the god Yarhibôl or Iarhibol;²¹⁷ and the one by Sorin Nemeti about the native gods of one of the tribes of Palmyra, some of whose members seem to have been present in Dacia.²¹⁸

Finally, reference must be made to some specific studies about the presence of Sol Invictus in Dacia and about his identity in the inscriptions, in order to verify whether these can be attributed to Mithras, the Syrian deity Sol Invictus Elagabal or to a Sol Invictus that is the result of a mixture of the solar boom of the 3rd century C.E. and the previous Roman Sol, which some have called "Sol indiges" to differentiate it from the former. However, there is no proof that this name was known in Antiquity,²¹⁹ and therefore the resulting Roman divinity could not be considered of eastern origin. In this respect, we must cite the works by Toth and Sanie, apart from those already mentioned, especially the one by Sorin Nemeti, with an interpretation contrary to that of Sanie, who in turn followed Halsberghe when interpreting that all

²⁰⁵ POPA/BERCIU 1978.

²⁰⁶ GUDEA/TAMBA 2001.

²⁰⁷ TUDOR 1961; BERCIU/POPA 1964; ANGYAL 1971; SANIE 1977; PETOLESCU 1984; PETOLESCU 2006; ȘTEFĂNESCU 2004; PISO 2001.

²⁰⁸ GOSTAR 1973; PETOLESCU 1989.

²⁰⁹ FLOCA 1953.

²¹⁰ TUDOR 1945–1947.

²¹¹ BERCIU/POPA 1964; SANIE 1966; SANIE 1979.

²¹² MACREA 1971.

²¹³ ISAC 1971; SANIE 1977b; SANIE 1978; MOGA 1995; PISO 2000; NEMETI/NEMETI 2006.

²¹⁴ GOSTAR 1964.

²¹⁵ SANIE 1968.

²¹⁶ BIANCHI 1987; BENEÀ 2002.

²¹⁷ PISO 2004.

²¹⁸ NEMETI 2004.

²¹⁹ HIJMANS 1996, 115–150.

the inscriptions dedicated to Sol Invictus found outside a Mithraeum and not having a Mithraic relief could be attributed to a Syrian divinity.²²⁰ Nemeti seems to agree with this method of differentiation, but does not think that it is Sol Invictus Elagabal – not attested as such is any inscription in Dacia – but rather the Roman Sol Invictus, which would thus not have the “oriental” character that a Syrian origin would have given it.

Regarding this important problem of the attribution of the inscriptions of Sol Invictus, in recent works I try to shed quite a bit of light on the matter in Roman Dacia.²²¹ In his individual study of each epigraphic monument I suggests new elements for distinguishing them by means of a comparative approach with the situation in Rome and the rest of the Empire. These new elements indeed lead me to identify the Roman Sol Invictus in the majority of cases, although in a few others the divinity in question is most likely the Syrian Sol Invictus Elagabal, even if they lack the reference to Elagabal.

It is precisely in one of these recent studies where I finally try to synthesize all the Roman cults of eastern origin in Dacia in a study that shall fill the gaps detected in Romanian and international studies concerning the problem in question when it get soon published.²²² Indeed, in these pages the need for a study of synthesis about the Roman eastern cults in the Transdanubian provinces of Dacia has become clear. The lack of a general corpus of monuments of these cults, be they epigraphic, sculptural, temples, etc, has also been noted. Also lacking in the studies on Dacia was a certain perspective in relation to the rest of the Roman Empire in order to be able to establish analogies with the general situation concerning matters such as the mysteries and the forms of integration, and social and ideological control,²²³ issues that I have approached myself, so that we may now draw a line under this review of the scholarship.

Nevertheless, dealing with much of the scholarship mentioned for the research in question poses certain major problems. I am referring to almost all Romanian scholarship, which is the one most involved with the specific case of Roman Dacia, since Romania today comprises the old territory of the three provinces of Dacia, a common knowledge: the main problem is that scholars must have a good knowledge of Romanian if they wish to research the topic; the other problem has to do with the historiographical trends present in Romania still to this day in relation to their ancient history, there being a permanent connection between the latter and the identity of the country and its inhabitants. These trends must be taken into account when dealing with Romanian scholarship, and I shall refer to them in the following pages, by way of conclusion.

5. Main trends in Romanian historiography

The explanations of the origins of Romanians that they themselves have proposed can be grouped into three trends, each of which has had more or less influence on the modern debates concerning the ancient history of Romania. The first trend, called “Latinist,” identifies Romanians as descendents of the Roman settlers and soldiers of the provincial era, which is why in its moment of greatest influence it tended to stress ties with the West. A second trend, in clear contraposition to the first one, is that of the “Dacianists,” who identified the Romanians as descendents of the Dacians. They of course accept that the latter adopted the Latin of their conquerors, but proclaim the independence of the Romanian people with respect to foreign powers. The third trend, the one most accepted today, could be called “Dacian-Romanist,”

²²⁰ TOTH 1970; SANIE 1974–1975; NEMETI 2005; HALSBERGHE 1972.

²²¹ CARBÓ 2008a, 433–459.

²²² CARBÓ 2008.

²²³ Although this comparative perspective of the case of Dacia with the rest of the Empire has been cultivated in order to study how the different cults spread, and not only those of eastern origin, evidently.

in reference to the mixing of Roman colonists with the native Dacians to explain Romanian ancestry. The three trends uphold the existence of some type of continuity of the population in the territory from the Roman era until the present day, a postulate that has somewhat problematic implications for relations with bordering countries, especially Hungary, and also for the actual size of the Romanian state, which only attained its current borders at the end of the Second World War.²²⁴

Beginning in the 15th century, within a scenario of continuous military campaigns against Ottoman expansion, an ideological use of Latin origins can be observed to explain the ancestry of Romanians, as seen in the documents of diplomatic correspondence with the Papacy and other Western states which even then stressed the Latin origins of the Romanians and the character of the region as the last defensive bulwark of Roman Christianity faced with the Turkish threat. Later, at the time of the Austrian Empire of the Hapsburgs, and more specifically in the 18th century, the so-called Transylvanian School, formed above all by members of the recently created Greek-Catholic Church, again stressed the Latin or Roman origins of the Romanians, since many of its leaders were educated in Rome and during their time there, their appreciation of Roman civilization grew. Since then, some have emphasized the literal descent of the Romanians from Roman colonists and soldiers, and these ideas have played a fundamental role in the creation of a national identity in different periods of the formation of the Romanian state.²²⁵

The “Dacianist” trend arose as a result of the work carried out by the Transylvanian School in favor of the “Latinist” stance. During the protests against the Greek-Catholic Church it was said that the Romanians had descended from the ancient Dacians, and therefore came before the Romans, and at the same time they demanded a more extensive territory for Romania, since the pre-Roman Dacian kingdom in the first century B.C.E., at the time of King Burebista, was much larger than the province resulting from Roman conquest.²²⁶ The political utilization of this trend is even more evident than in the former trend, since it served to reaffirm the independence of Romania and to criticize its union with the European West: the Roman province was part of a foreign empire – as occurred with the Austrian / Austro-Hungarian Empire – whereas the pre-Roman Dacian kingdom was an independent power. This same stance was used to reinforce Romanian independence from foreign powers such as the Austro-Hungarians, Russians, or – in the religious aspect, which legitimized power – the Catholics. Nonetheless, throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, none of the different Dacianist factions actually used this ideological tool to the extent that it was used by the Marxist-Nationalist-Stalinist historians, close to the Communist government installed in Romania, particularly during the 1970s and 80s.

The President of Romania, Nicolae Ceaușescu, developed his notion of an “independent and centralized Dacian state” and used the Dacianist trend to legitimize it, whereas his brother, Ilie, a military man and historian, and Minister of the Army, went further and incorporated this idea to the history books and to doctrinal studies about the defense of Romania, with the idea that the Dacian model would serve to unite the army and the people against any foreign threat.²²⁷

In third place we have the latest trend, called “Dacian-Romanist,” and it is the one most accepted today in Romania, as mentioned earlier. In 1986, Nicolae Copoiu, a researcher of the Party Institute for Historical and Socio-Political Studies in Bucharest, affirmed that it was a mistake to accept the validity of the concept of Romanization in the case of Dacia, since

²²⁴ HAYNES/HANSON 2004, 11–32.

²²⁵ DELETANT 1991, 64–86; see also ARMSBRUSTER 1977.

²²⁶ BĂRBULESCU 2005.

²²⁷ CEAUȘESCU 1985. For the Romanian scholarship of this period see also DELETANT 1991; VERDERY 1991.

it implied the disappearance of the Dacians from history. However, the idea of any relationship between Dacians and Romans was quite disagreeable to historians and politicians close to Ilie Ceaușescu. They tried to quash Copoiu's proposal, but since 1989, with the revolution and the arrival of democracy to Romania, there has been a revival of interest in the idea of the co-existence and interrelations between Dacians and Romans in the provincial period and what it could mean in relation to European integration, which was finally achieved with the entry of Romania into the European Union in January, 2007.²²⁸

In relation to studies about religion in Dacia, the compilation or listing of monuments and epithets for the different deities has been fundamental. The basic positions that have been found repeatedly and that have been used to justify the listing of individual monuments are two, as described by Schäfer:²²⁹ the first revolves around the presumed evidence of syncretic trends in the province; the second aspires to identify Dacian religious beliefs or even the gods themselves in many of the cults existing in the province during the Roman period.

The first position considers that the worship of foreign gods in their Roman form --something suggested by the finding of certain local epithets accompanying the Roman gods-- is evidence of the syncretist trends that were present in the province during its 165 years of existence as such.²³⁰ This explanatory model has meant that until quite recently no research was done regarding the formation process of the new provincial religious structure. Likewise, the term "syncretism" can not be used in general for all the religious phenomena of the province.²³¹

The second stance is directly related to the "Dacianist" trend, which seeks the roots of the Romanian state in the Dacian kingdom. It thus defends the survival of Dacian religious beliefs and deities in some of the most widespread cults in the province.²³² But no names or representations of native gods during the Roman period have been preserved, and the names of Dacian natives in the onomastics of the provincial population can barely be detected --and always with difficulty. The issue of how the religion of the Dacian population was affected in the Roman period must remain open, and given the state of our knowledge of Dacia, including the religious aspect, the leading role of a huge process of colonization in provincial Romanization must be underscored.²³³

When investigating the spread of the different cults, scholars of religion in Roman Dacia have concentrated particularly on making lists of the persons belonging to each social group that worshiped the same deity, but, with some exceptions, they have not considered which deities were the preferred ones of each of these social groups. A comparison of the gods preferred by these groups should lead us to find out whether the members of the provincial and municipal administration, army officers and soldiers, shopkeepers and artisans, women or slaves adored the same gods or not. This would give us a better perspective and understanding of the followers of the cults and of the provincial religious structure. Likewise, the studies dealing with the dissemination of the cults have focused especially on immigration, understood as the decisive factor in the "religious transference" operating in the province, but this could also have taken place through propagation, imitation, direct lending, or other means.²³⁴

By way of conclusion, although any study of the Roman cults of eastern origin in Dacia should come under these broader perspectives with respect to the principal historiographical

²²⁸ As regards the "Daco-Romanist" historiographical trend in Romanian scholarship before the revolution, see ILLYÉS 1982.

²²⁹ SCHÄFER 2004, 180.

²³⁰ In this sense, CONDURACHI 1975.

²³¹ NEMETI 2005, 27–67.

²³² As an example of this stance, see BODOR 1989.

²³³ See for example OPREANU 2003.

²³⁴ As appointed by SCHÄFER 2004, 180–181.

trends of most of the previous Romanian scholarship, it is evident that the research, analyses and conclusions will be limited to the area of these cults, within the provincial religious framework as a whole. Even so, it should always be a contribution to that greater understanding of the faithful and of the provincial religious structure, in conjunction with other studies framed within the same perspectives.

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