

**Space sacralisation and Roman religious communication
in the Danubian provinces.**

Project summary and research perspectives

تقديس الفضاء والتواصل الديني الروماني في مقاطعات الدانوب.

ملخص المشروع ووجهات نظر البحث

تشابا تشابو/ جامعة زيغ المجر

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الملخص:

الورقة التالية هي ملخص قصير لبحث المؤلف عن Roman Dacia (رومانيا الآن) منذ عام 2010 ومشروعه لما بعد الدكتوراه في مقاطعات الدانوب في الفترة 2018-2022. لا يُقصد منه أن يكون تحليلًا كاملاً ومنهجياً للمنطقة الكلية المشار إليها في العنوان والكمية الكبيرة من المواد الكتابية والأثرية المرتبطة بها، والتي ستكون بعيدة جدًا عن نطاق هذه الورقة والإمكانات المادية والفكرية لباحث فردي. الهدف من هذه الورقة هو تلخيص تاريخ البحث والسماوات الرئيسية لعلم آثار الدين التي تسارعت في المنطقة في السنوات الأخيرة، بالإضافة إلى النتائج الرئيسية لمشروع ما بعد الدكتوراه الذي تم إجراؤه في قسم الدراسات الدينية في جامعة Szeged بين 2018-2022، وتطرق بإيجاز إلى وجهات النظر المستقبلية ومجالات البحث غير المستغلة.

حيث ستناقش هذه المقالة مقاطعات الدانوب في الإمبراطورية الرومانية والمواد الأثرية والكتابية الغنية التي تم إنتاجها خلال القرنين الأول والثالث الميلادي من قبل وكالة بشرية تشارك في تواصل مشترك (الديني مع إلهي). تركز الدراسة على سبع مقاطعات رومانية ووكالاتها البشرية والمادية والإلهية للدين الروماني، والتي تم تحليلها من خلال الإطار المنهجي لتقديس الفضاء والتواصل الديني والتوحيد. تقدم المقالة تصنيفًا جديدًا للفضاء، مع التركيز على الدور التكويني للمساحات الكلية والمتوسطة والجزئية في التواصل الديني الروماني.

كلمات مفتاحية: رومانيا، تقديس الفضاء، التواصل الديني الروماني، مقاطعات الدانوب، المواد الأثرية والكتابية.

Abstract:

The so-called Danubian provinces were one of the largest macro-units of the Roman Empire, which produced a rich archaeological and epigraphic material during the Principate (1st-3rd century AD). Most of this material was produced by the human agency participating in religious communication with the divine. Although a large part of the archaeological evidence was published in the last century, the local and universal aspects of Roman religious communication in the Danubian provinces were not yet analysed in a synthetic way. This study will focus on seven Roman provinces (Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia Superior, Pannonia Inferior, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, Dacia) and their human, material and divine agencies of Roman religion analysed through the methodological framework of space sacralisation, religious communication and globalisation. The article presents a new space taxonomy, focusing on the formative role of macro-, meso- and micro-spaces in Roman religious communication and will present some of the research fields and interdisciplinary approaches with great perspective for Central-Eastern European research and beyond..

Keywords : Romania, space reverence, Roman religious communication, Danube provinces, Archaeological and written materials.

The following paper is a short summary of the author's research on Roman Dacia (now Romania) since 2010 and his postdoctoral project on the Danubian provinces in the period of 2018-2022¹. It is not intended to be a complete, systematic analysis of the macro-region indicated in the title and the considerable amount of epigraphic and archaeological material associated with it, which would be far beyond the scope of this paper and the physical and intellectual possibilities of an individual researcher. The aim of the paper is to summarize the research history and major features of archaeology of religion that has been accelerating in the region in recent years, as well as the main results of the postdoctoral project conducted at the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Szeged between 2018-2022, briefly touching upon the future perspectives and the untapped areas of research.

Religion in the Danube provinces: a research history perspective

The macro-region known as the Danubian provinces (in this study it includes seven Roman provinces: Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia Superior, Pannonia Inferior, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, Dacia) is an artificial historical concept that reinterpreted the northern Danubian region of the Roman Empire as an effect of the eighteenth-century Habsburg imperial identity in the Danube region, following the principle of *translatio imperii*². However, the region was also in antiquity an area of the Roman Empire connected in many

¹ The project entitled “*Római vallási kommunikáció a dunai provinciákban a Principatus korában (Roman religious communication in the Danubian provinces)*” (NKFI-PD 127948) was financed by the NKFI office of the Hungarian government in the period of 2018-2022. Website of the project. www.danubianreligion.com. Last visited: 25.02.2023.

² Alföldy 2004.

areas and intensively interwoven with trade, political, military and cultural, as well as religious networks and mobility, in which the Danube occupied a particularly important place as a natural border. The Danubian provinces were a major political and economic centre of the Danube region from the early 1st century AD. Consequently, the region's human and material mobility was greatly stimulated, and changes were also measurable at the ecological level, with the region becoming part of a single empire for the first time after the heterogeneous cultural interweaving of the Celtic and Greco-Hellenistic worlds. The surviving archaeological material from the Danubian provinces of the Principate period (1st to 3rd centuries AD) is vast: it constitutes one of the most important segments of the archaeological heritage of modern Bavaria, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, the ancient precursors of their main cities and the most popular archaeological and inscriptional material in museums of the Danube region. At the same time, a significant segment of the surviving artefactual source material from the seven provinces is represented by spaces and objects used in religious communication, which have long been approached by research as a consequence of “Romanisation”, through descriptive methods and typologies using the methods of descriptive classical archaeology.

While research on the material dimensions of Roman religion and the diverse, local and global processes of spatial centralisation has produced several significant works in the international literature³, these have not dealt with the Danubian provinces, which have usually been left out of contemporary, methodologically innovative works in the Western literature. The extraordinary amount of epigraphical and archaeological material that has been accumulated in the last century and a half of research in the religious context, together with new trends in the study of religion, focusing on living religion, religious pluralism, spatial centralisation processes and the dimensions of religious communication, have made it necessary to analyse the religious life and material remains of the Danube provinces from a new approach.

The analysis of the Danubian provinces as a macro-region of the Roman Empire, however, required a specific methodology, which opened radically new research perspectives than those offered by the traditional research on divine agents (a deity), provincial boundaries (provincial religions) or settlement histories. The project on the sources of religious life in the Danubian provinces sought to answer the following methodological questions⁴: 1) how did the history and transformation of Roman religion affect the socio-military, cultural and

³ Albrecht et al. 2018, Rüpke 2018, Rüpke-Woolf 2021.

⁴ For the detailed results, see: Szabó 2022.

ecological macro-regions such as the Danube region? 2) the space and its taxonomy in Roman religious communication 3) how did religious change take place in a comparison of pre- and post-Roman conquest conditions? 4) how did urbanisation affect religious life and vice versa, how did religion shape the city? 5) what are the macro-regions of the Danube region that influenced religious life? 6) which are the meso-spaces and small religious groups, new religious movements and networks of the newly formed provinces? 7) in what form can living religion and religious individualisation be perceived in the light of materiality of religion?

In analysing the main questions of the research, some representative case studies of the votive epigraphic material (5724 inscriptions)⁵, iconographic-figurative sources (reliefs, sculptures, small sculptures, bronze statuettes, glyptics)⁶ of the seven provinces, and the 280 archaeologically excavated and documented sacralised spaces were in the focus of the research⁷. The extent of the region analysed, its rich literature and the extraordinary number of inscriptions and archaeological material, made it possible to analyse it only in the form of case studies, as is methodologically justified in any synthesis. A systematic, positivist study of the entire religious-archaeological material of the seven provinces can only be undertaken by an international team in a multi-year research project.

The aim of the research, in addition to answering the above-mentioned methodological questions, was to leave the traditional spaces, often considered artificial in religious communication, i.e. provincial boundaries, and to examine religion as a cultural factor connecting the macro-, meso- and micro-spaces of the empire, creating complex networks within them, over a period of three centuries, from the period immediately preceding the Roman conquest till Diocletian (1st-3rd century AD)⁸. Therefore, the research has focused on the concepts of religious communication, space sacralisation, religious

⁵ More than 30% of the 18,200 Roman inscriptions known so far in the seven provinces. Source: Epigraphic Database Heidelberg: <https://edh.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/>. Last visited 22.06.2022.

⁶ In contrast to the inscriptional material, much of which (but by no means all) is digitised and available online, only a fraction of the figurative sources are available, mainly thanks to the work of Ortolof Harl over several decades on the Ubi Erat Lupa website: www.lupa.at. Last accessed 22.06.2022.

⁷ The 280 sacralised spaces assume only macro spaces (urban, public temples, large pilgrimage sites and public sanctuaries) and meso spaces (gathering places and sanctuaries of urban and non-urban small religious groups) used for religious communication. The case studies of micro-spaces (private shrines, domestic shrines, sacralised spaces of funerary contexts, individual cases of the human body) have not been included in the research due to the difficulty of the documentation and lack of archaeological contexts. The digital atlas of sanctuaries is available at: <https://danubianreligion.com/atlas-of-roman-sanctuaries-in-the-danubian-provinces/> Last accessed 6 February 2023.

⁸ The timeframe is obviously artificial and methodological, since the phenomena of polytheism and Roman religion do not stop in A.D. 285, but continued till the 4-5th century AD. In the history of reception and the history of law, the Roman Empire does not end in the 4th to 5th centuries AD. On the legal history and continuity of Roman religion, see Szabó 2017, 57-59.

glocalism and lived religion. The seven questions and themes mentioned above were examined through these methodologically innovative concepts.

The Danube region as a factor for religious communication

If religion is defined as communication between divine and human agents, in the creation and maintenance of which space, material dimension, textual and visual narratives (textuality and iconography) play an important role, then spaces and networks beyond cities and provinces also can play an indirect role in this communication process. The concept of Roman religion (and religious communication) has been defined in several important works, each with a different emphasis depending on its methodological approach. The great scholars of the late nineteenth century - Theodor Mommsen and Georg Wissowa - interpreted Roman religion primarily in terms of Roman law and *polis-vellum*, where the main emphasis was on human and divine law, the legal status of territories and the correct and regular practice of Roman rites⁹. Others have defined the notion of Roman religion in a much broader way, aligned with the concepts of religion of contemporary cultural-anthropological trends, emphasising the interaction of religion between divine and human agents and the multiplicity of dimensions of religious communication¹⁰.

Both approaches have contributed to the understanding of Roman religion with significant methodological research, therefore I have taken into account the results of both movements in my work¹¹. In the Danube region, even before the Roman conquest, there were already lively trade and mobility routes, although many of these were regional in nature. Such trade networks can be found in northern Italy and in the Alps, as well as on the Alpine routes linking regions beyond the Alps, the Amber Route linking the Po and northern Europe, or the route linking the Greek colonial cities (Pontus on the Black Sea) with the modern Serbian-Bulgarian-Romanian border region and the lower Danube. These routes, often dating back to the Bronze Age, created the regional specificities - ethnic, political and religious regionalisms - that characterised the Danube region before the Roman conquest in the first century BC. The western segment of the region, the Alpine part, existed as a triple interaction of Celtic, Germanic and Republican Rome, the middle Danube region shows the interaction of Celtic and indigenous (Pannonian, Moesia, Scordiscus) populations with the Roman and Hellenistic

⁹ Wissowa 1902. Similar approaches are emphasized also in Scheid 2015. See also: Nótári 2003, Szabó 2017.

¹⁰ Smart 1996, Rüpke 2018, 1-17.

¹¹ Hungarian research of antiquity, because of its German positivist past and its specific regional history, has primarily adopted the Wissowian tradition in the analysis of the local material. In his conclusion, Köves-Zulauf interprets Roman religion as a religion of 'discipline, anxiety, repression, not of liberated dissolution as in Greek': Köves-Zulauf 1995, 249.

world, while the lower Danube region (the area of modern Bulgaria and Dobrogea) has a centuries-old Greek urbanisation tradition and shows a Thracian-Hellenistic interaction¹². These regionalities, however, were incorporated into the economic and religious circuits of the Mediterranean world from the 3rd to the 2nd century BC onwards, due to the spread of Hellenism and the Republican Rome. While a number of important works have been published on the macro-regional impact of the Mediterranean Sea, a full mapping of the trade and mobility network of the Danube region is still to be done¹³. At the same time, there has been considerable research on the hydrological history of the region, with important paleo-ecological analysis of the region¹⁴. To analyse the local specificities of religious communication before and after the Roman conquest, I have used the concept and methodology of religious glocalism, which focuses on local variations in global phenomena and the diverse, local manifestations of universal trends¹⁵. As a method is not new: it appears in comparative iconographic analyses, in the study of epigraphic formulas and in the study of the religious life of cities in both Hungarian and other Central and Eastern European literature, although not always in the manner as we see in the paradigmatic works of Angelo Brelich, Géza Alföldy, András Bodor, István Tóth, Klára Póczy, Marjeta Šašel Kos, Péter Kovács, Zsolt Mráv, Ádám Szabó, Gabrielle Kremer, Ioan Piso, Mihai Bărbulescu, Sorin Nemeti and Nadezda Gavrilović¹⁶.

Particularly well-documented forms of pre-Roman religious glocality can be seen in the Alpine region of the future province of Raetia, where, in addition to Celtic and Germanic influences from the north, there is a centuries-long continuity of the so-called high-altitude shrines (*Brandopferplätzen*) that guarded the valleys and were built along important trade routes¹⁷. The spaces of religious communication and their artefacts in the Alpine region were strongly influenced and shaped not only by local Alpine traditions, but also by Celtic influences from the north and Greek and Roman influences from the south, even before the

¹² Rustoiu- Babeş 2018.

¹³ Horden-Purcell 2000.

¹⁴ Brilly 2010.

¹⁵ By glocalism we mean the local, local manifestation, the transformation of universal, homogenizing cultural, political, economic and religious phenomena (such as imperial religion), which results in global and universal phenomena becoming glocal. The methodology, typically based on dichotomies and pairs of opposites (global-local), can be used in the study of religion to investigate the specific, local aspects of religious mobility, the local intensity and density of religious communication, the accessibility of spaces and objects, divine agencies, and the political, sociological or religious-theological reasons for distancing oneself from universal phenomena. See Van Alten 2017, Roudometof 2018.

¹⁶ For a non-exhaustive list, see Alföldy 1963; Bărbulescu 1984; Bodor 1989; Brelich 1938; Gavrilović 2013; Kovács 1999; Kremer 2012; Nemeti 2019; Tóth 2015. For a short history of Roman religious research in Central-Eastern Europe see: Szabó 2022, 11-14.

¹⁷ Gleirscher 2002.

Roman conquest. A similar influence can be felt in the Lower Danube region, in the world of the Greek colonial towns, where - uniquely in the Danube region - almost half a millennium of urban life and religion from the pre-Roman conquest can be documented. Religious glocalisation in the area of the then province of Moesia Inferior can be measured in the influence of Greco-Hellenistic, Thracian and Roman religion, which by the first century BC was already vividly shaping the religious communication strategies and material remains of Thracian groups. These influences can also be seen in the religiousness of the Dacians before the Roman conquest, but very few literary and archaeological sources have survived¹⁸.

Many forms and spaces of pre-conquest religious diversity and glocality survived in the Roman period, with particularly rich sources from Greek colonial cities, but also in the sacralised spaces of the Alpine-mountainous regions of Raetia. However, the surviving pre-Roman religious traditions (oral, visual, figurative narratives) not only continue in the spatial continuity and use of certain sites, but also often show a specific process of re-creating (invented traditions)¹⁹. In most provinces, however, the Roman conquest radically alters the formal and material world of spatialisation, as well as the social and economic aspects of religious communication. From this point on, Roman law and its strict rules on space and on the persons involved in religious practice played a decisive role in religion, but there were also many non-formal spaces and manifestations of religious communication which provide a very broad spectrum of individual case studies in the region²⁰. Formal and non-formal religious spaces, human agents, buildings and objects involved in religious practice, can be analysed together using the concepts of macro-, meso- and micro-space, which highlight not primarily the legal status of space but its power to shape religious communication, its physical size, its economic potential and its demographic dimensions.

Roman religious communication in macro-spaces

After the Roman conquest, the strategies, formal aspects (architectural, figurative) and religious practices of pre-Roman religious communication underwent radical changes. The introduction of the Roman administration brought about a centralisation and political control of religious life, especially of the large religious practices in public spaces, never seen before in most of the Danubian regions. Another universal aspect of the Roman form of religion in

¹⁸ Nemeti 2013, Dana 2019.

¹⁹ Inspired by Eric Hobsbawm's notion of "invented tradition", we can conclude that pre-Roman traditions are not only continued and adopted unchanged but are shaped and moulded to fit the new social order. See Hobsbawm 1983, Szilárdi 2018, 123-134.

²⁰ Szabó 2017, 55-64. With line 33 of the tenth letter of Pliny the Younger, the author shows that the sacralized spaces, regardless of the legal status of their territory, were considered public buildings.

the provinces is the template-like reproduction of the material culture of religion and the accelerated spread of universal forms and religious narratives (oral, textual, visual) through common agents and networks such as the army, the merchant class, the clergy and a few individual religious charismatics (founders and central figures of small religious groups). It is a long-standing literary topos in the study of religion in the Danubian provinces that the building blocks of religious communication (objects and ideas) were transmitted and disseminated by the army²¹. However, the epigraphic sources of the minor religious movements suggest that not only the military, but also the wealthy merchant classes and the urban, civilian population of the Roman Empire played an extremely important role in the dissemination of religious ideas²².

Religious communication in macro-spaces changes radically after the Roman conquest. The urban, urban religiosity and its public spaces, known as the specificity of the Pontic region (Moesia Inferior), will now be present in all six provinces through the Roman urban model. The first urban fora, the provincial for and central provincial altars (*Ara Augusti*) and the first phase of construction of the Capitoline temples appear in many cities right after the provincial formation, although the archaeological attestation of these are problematic and documented in few, well attested case studies such as Sarmizegetusa²³. These large-scale 'dense cityscapes' of religious life, rich in objects and crowded in their material and social intensity, arrived in most of the Danubian region with the Roman conquest, the only exceptions for urban architecture and religious macro-scapes before the Roman presence were found in the Pontic countryside, in Virunum (Magdalensberg) in Noricum and in Sarmizgetusa Regia in Dacia. Almost all the features of urban religion known in contemporary religious studies as 'citification', are also present in the Danubian provinces²⁴. The process of urbanisation in the Danube provinces in the western provinces (Raetia, Noricum) took advantage of the region's trade routes and the existing structures of the local elite, but did not allow the emergence of large cities, while in the middle and lower Danube provinces the settlement of veterans and the presence of legions played a major role in the development of cities²⁵. This is one of the reasons why about a quarter of the surviving

²¹ Collar 2013.

²² Tóth 1977, Beskow 1980.

²³ Szabó 2019.

²⁴ On the notion of urban religion and citification see: Urciuoli 2020, Rüpke 2020.

²⁵ Piso 2003, Donev 2019.

votive epigraphic sources come from three cities, Carnuntum (504 inscriptions), Aquincum (459 inscriptions) and Apulum (408 inscriptions)²⁶.

The most popular of the macro-sites in the Danube region were the sanctuaries of the forts and fortresses (*aedes signorum*) in military camps, most of which, however, survive with little archaeological material. In very few cases have archaeologically identified capitolia and fora survived, but in a few towns - Cambodunum, Virunum, Teurnia, Solva, Brigantium, Savaria, Oescus, Sarmizegetusa - it has been possible to identify remains of these²⁷. It was not only the newly created cities that provided macro-spaces and 'dense spaces' for religious communication, but also the extra-provincial pilgrimage and religious routes. We also see religious mobility beyond the provinces among members and propagators of the Dolichenus groups²⁸, Mithras groups²⁹ and the so-called Danubian Rider's cult³⁰. The Danube and its tributaries were one of the most important trade routes and natural borders for the Danube region's population, which played an important role not only in navigation but also in the trade in salt, the transport of architectural elements and natural resources, but as the epigraphic material dedicated to the rivers on these sites shows, also in religious communication³¹. Exceptional spaces for religious communication are the governor's palaces, which are both the embodiment of individual, private, closed religiosity and representative spaces³². A similar concept of space prevails in the so-called healing sanctuaries dedicated to Asclepius (*Asklepieia*), which were in easily accessible, central urban settings (Apulum) or in remote, sometimes dangerous, geographically marginal areas (*Aquae Iasae*, *Germisara*, *Ad Mediam*), and became central religious macro-spaces³³. In these large-scale, multifunctional spaces, not only geographic marginality merges with centrality in religious communication, but also individual, religion (the sick visitor, the patient) with institutionalised, centralised religion (clergy, healing specialists). The rarely documented examples of lived religion in the region are largely linked to such sources and healing sanctuaries³⁴.

²⁶ The data come from the EDH (Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg) digital epigraphic database. The number of epigraphic sources for the three cities is much larger in the Clauss-Slaby (EDCS) epigraphic database, where the *tituli honorarii* (honorary inscriptions), which include the names of the deified emperors, are also included. Most of the votive inscriptions of the three cities can be found in three source publications: Kovács, Péter et al.: *Tituli Aquincenses I. Tituli operum publicorum et honorarii et sacri*, Kremer, Gabrielle: *Götterdarstellungen, Kult- und Weihedenkmäler aus Carnuntum, Piso, Ioan: Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae (IDR) III/5*.

²⁷ Szabó 2022, 106-122.

²⁸ Collar 2013.

²⁹ Beskow 1980, Tóth 2015, 163-194.

³⁰ Szabó 2017.

³¹ Mráv 2017.

³² Schäfer 2014, Havas 2019.

³³ Kádár 1981.

³⁴ Piso 2017.

Meso-spaces and the network of small religious groups in the Danube region

Network research and the interdisciplinary modelling of the spread of small religious groups are playing an increasingly important role in religious studies. Digital visualisation of social network analysis has only been introduced into Roman religious studies in the last decade, mainly used for the purpose of mapping the mobilities and networks of Mithraic and Dolichenian groups³⁵. In Raetia and Noricum, although both cults have exceptional archaeological resources known from Virunum (Mithras)³⁶ and Mauer an der Url (Dolichenus)³⁷, they have displaced small religious groups, which represented personal, soteriological religiosity, mainly in urban, merchant and military contexts, mainly through pre-Roman cults (Mercurius, local forms of Mars). The archaeology and architectural atmosphere³⁸ of these sacralised spaces, which are typically extra-urban or located on the periphery of the pomerium, has produced a number of significant results in recent years. The approx. 280 archaeologically identified sacralised spaces in macro- and meso-spaces in the Danubian provinces are largely the result of these small religious groups, mainly in urban and, rarely, non-urban (along roads near cities, near villas, in non-urban but urbanised legal areas) sites. The widespread spread of small religious groups has had a stimulating effect on the architectural and religious atmosphere of cities, on social mobility networks and has also revitalised the artistic and visual world of forms, as evidenced in a number of case studies. The region is particularly rich in glocal forms of visual narratives (local forms of reliefs of Mithras, Liber Pater, Silvanus, the “Danubian Riders”), which have emerged from the appropriation of the imperial (universal) and the local, often with pre-Roman heritage and reinvented traditions³⁹. Religious bricolage and appropriation seems to exemplify much stronger the local and glocal aspects of Roman religion⁴⁰. Although the micro-spaces of the Danubian provinces (domestic shrines, traces of individual religiosity, portable objects, the use, decoration and transformation of the human body for religious communication) constitute a rich source group in terms of material, their lack of context makes their analysis the most challenging of all the sacralised spaces and forms of religious communication in the Danubian provinces.

³⁵ Chalupa et al. 2021.

³⁶ Beck 1998.

³⁷ Noll 1980.

³⁸ On the notion see: Maschek 2016.

³⁹ On small group religious formation see: Taves 2009, Lichterman et al. 2017.

⁴⁰ On syncretism see: Nemeti 2019. On the notion of religious appropriation and bricolage: Gordon 2017, Albrecht et al. 2018.

Instead of conclusion: perspectives for research

The methodological question of "what do objects want" and the trend calling for a paradigm shift towards a "material turn" have been answered only slowly by researchers of Roman religion in the West and almost completely ignored by the Central-Eastern European scholarship⁴¹. It would not only be worthwhile to continue researching the sources of religious life in the Danube provinces using traditional, quantitative methods (the volumes of the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani* series are still lacking in many countries), but also to use contemporary digital techniques (network research, digitisation of objects, online interactive maps and the production of modern, constantly expandable digital catalogues) to maintain the digital databases that have been created and planned for the long term through international cooperation⁴². In the case of objects and sacralised spaces that are well documented in their context, it would also be possible to analyse the various forms of religious communication (lived experiences, religious pilgrimages, initiation ceremonies, activities in public and enclosed spaces), spaces (forms of spatial sacralisation) and actors (human, divine, material agents) using cognitive methods⁴³. A new direction is marked by the visualisation of religious and social network studies using digital methods, as mentioned above, where the results of the Centre for Digital Research on Religion (Brno, Czech Republic) show promise⁴⁴.

In the future, long-term inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation between researchers on Roman religion in Central and Eastern Europe will be needed to analyse the divine agencies (name-formation, epigraphic formulas) in the region⁴⁵, to explore the identity-regional and gender aspects of the human agency, to analyse the specificities of urban religion, to map rural or non-urban religion, to explore the religion of micro-spaces, to analyse the religious dimensions of spatial trialectics⁴⁶. In recent years, a detailed critical analysis of the material from the old 19th century excavations has also proved useful in several case studies, and this practice can be applied to many of the 280 known sacralised spaces⁴⁷. These aspects of analysis cannot be applied uniformly in the Danube region, of

⁴¹ Gosden-Marshall 1999, Morgan 2010, Raja-Rüpke 2015.

⁴² Bagnall-Heath 2018.

⁴³ Martin 2022.

⁴⁴ Chalupa et al. 2021.

⁴⁵ For a similar, succesful project for the Greek and Western Semitic world see: <https://map-polytheisms.humanum.fr/?lang=en>. Last accessed: 25.02.2023.

⁴⁶ Berki 2015.

⁴⁷ Zsidi 2018, Jobst 2021.

course, and not all the settlements provide adequate resources for this purpose: a significant proportion of the Roman settlements in the region are only partially excavated, and the majority of the material remains available are from unknown sites. The lack of context, which is a common feature of research on ancient religion, painfully narrows our picture of the religiousness of the Danube region, which, for the reasons mentioned above, can never be complete and comprehensive. The close interconnection of religious studies, archaeology and antiquities, transnational institutional and transdisciplinary collaborations have already shown their usefulness in many international research projects and could be the main research direction for the region presented in this study⁴⁸.

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⁴⁸ Most ERC and Marie Curie projects on ancient religions today use exclusively interdisciplinary approach. For a summary of the main projects, see <https://religioacademici.wordpress.com/2020/12/14/big-projects-on-roman-religion/>. Last visited: 06.02.2023. Roman religion in the Danubian provinces has been the subject of several international conferences in recent years in Skopje (2013), Ferrara (2013), Cluj-Napoca (2014), Tarquinia (2016), Sofia (2017), Szeged (2021) and Zagreb (2022), which have created a significant academic network of mostly young researchers. For a non-exhaustive list, see <https://danubianreligion.com/2022/10/08/materiality-of-roman-religion-in-the-danubian-provinces-a-network-of-scholars/>. Last visited 06.02.2023.

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