

AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Acta Archaeologica
Academiae Scientiarum
Hungaricae

72 (2021) 1, 55–65

DOI:

[10.1556/072.2021.00004](https://doi.org/10.1556/072.2021.00004)

© 2021 Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest

ORIGINAL RESEARCH
PAPER



*Corresponding author.

E-mail: szabo.csaba.pte@gmail.com



Sacralised spaces of Mithras in Roman Dacia

Csaba Szabó*

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Department of History, Patrimony and Protestant Theology, Bd. Victoriei Nr.5–7, 550024, Sibiu, România

Received: November 19, 2020 • Accepted: January 13, 2021

ABSTRACT

The Roman cult of Mithras is one of the most well documented cults in Roman Dacia, having almost 300 archaeological finds (epigraphic and figurative sources) produced in less than 170 years during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Although the rich materiality of the cult attracted European attention already in the 18th century, sacralised spaces of Mithras in Dacia – the mithraea of the province – were rarely analysed. This paper presents a systematic overview of the archaeologically and epigraphically attested sanctuaries. Based on the rich material of the cult it will present a new catalogue of sanctuaries of Mithras in Roman Dacia for the first time contextualising them in a new space taxonomy of Roman religious communication.

KEYWORDS

Roman dacia, Roman religion, archaeology of religion, Roman cult of mithras, mithraea

The Roman cult of Mithras in the 1st century AD evolved probably in Rome or one of the major cultural and economic hubs of the Roman Empire (Ostia, Poetovio) as one of the numerous small group religions which will create a dynamic and new religious environment and competitive market during the Principate.¹ The cult offered a new and attractive visual narrative combining classical Greco-Roman iconography with exotic Persianism and Hellenistic elements as a result of a religious bricolage.² It has been suggested that the Roman version of the Mithras cult was influenced especially by the cultural interconnectivity of the Thracian and Persian (later Hellenistic) Anatolia too.³ As every small group religion, the Roman cult of Mithras had five major evolutionary phases: creation, critical phase of maintenance, expansion, crisis and disappearance.⁴ The first phase (between the period of Nero and Trajan) is the most problematic to reconstruct and it has been numerous hypotheses presented for the origins of the cult.⁵ The following phase (the critical phase of maintenance) is from the late Flavian period to that of Hadrian when the canonical version of the visual religious narrative is established and the cult has successfully grown from a local movement into an empire-scale religious group.⁶ This crucial moment in the life of a small group religion needs not only a fixed and very attractive religious visibility, a powerful religious content but also dynamic and mobile worshippers with extra-provincial interconnectivities.⁷ The formation of Roman Dacia through two major military campaigns represented a fertile opportunity for the mobility of the army and the auxiliary groups associated with them, which will create the first Mithraic groups in Dacia, attested after the Hadrian period. There are very few epigraphic sources which can be dated to the Hadrianic

¹On the notion of small group religions see: [NIELSEN 2015](#); [REBILLARD–RÜPKE 2015](#); [LICHTERMAN et al. 2017](#).

²[FARAONE 2013](#); [GORDON 2017](#).

³[DOAN 1983](#).

⁴On a similar model see: [BECK 1996](#).

⁵The latest summary on the subject: [CHALUPA 2016](#); [MASTROCINQUE 2017](#) as an alternative theory. On his book see: [SZABÓ 2018a](#).

⁶[GORDON 1978](#). See also: CIMRM 1098 from Nida Hedderheim dated around 90 AD.

⁷On religious mobility and networks see: [COLLAR 2013](#); [WOOLF 2018](#), 119–120. On the interconnectivity of Mithraic groups: [MCCARTY et al. 2020](#).

period (117–138) and they are attested especially in two major urban centres of the province, *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa* and the *pagus* of Apulum, being part of the territorium of Sarmizegetusa in the early Hadrianic period.⁸ Based on the mobility of the libertus Hermadio, I. Tóth presumed that the oldest Mithraic group of *colonia* Sarmizegetusa was established by the staff of the customs system of the Danubian provinces (*publicum Portorii Illyrici*).⁹ A similar dominant role can be observed in the provincial activity of the conductors and actors of the salt mines and major salt routes of the province.¹⁰ The impact of Publius Aelius Marius in the formation and expansion of the Mithraic groups within the province was attested on several inscriptions.¹¹ Extra-provincial networks can be identified in unique, iconographic forms (such as the representation of Cautes with *bucranium* discovered only in Dacia and Germania),¹² special epigraphic dedications (*Transitus Dei*)¹³ and the mobility of the senatorial elite who seems to be involved in Mithras-worship not only in Dacia, but in Pannonia Inferior and Numidia, too.¹⁴

The 282 archaeological pieces (figurative and epigraphic) associated with the cult of Mithras in Dacia between 106 and 271 AD¹⁵ represents almost 10% of the total materiality of Roman religious communication preserved from the territory of Dacia (1,478 votive inscriptions and at least 1,200 figurative monuments)¹⁶ which is very significant considering the large variety of divine agency attested in the province (around 150 divinities and personifications).¹⁷ Previous studies were focusing especially on the human agency of the cult and the social or economic aspects of the Mithraic groups of Dacia¹⁸ as well as on local appropriations attested in the visual narrative of the cult which produced numerous local variations and transformations of the canonical art of Mithras.¹⁹

If religious communication is interpreted as a set of successful strategies to maintain a dialogue between the human and divine agency through materiality of religion, appropriations and embodiment,²⁰ space plays also a crucial role in this.²¹ Spaces are sacralised, which means that human agency transforms natural environments (caves, cavities,

forests, rocks, springs)²² and architecturally unspecific, urban places (*domus urbana*, assembly houses)²³ through repetitive or non-repetitive, unique ritualization. These two spatial categories are the most common for small group religions of the Roman Empire, especially in the cult of Mithras.

Sacralised spaces of Mithras in Roman Dacia were formed along two major roads: the Lederata–Dierna–Tibiscum – Sarmizegetusa–Apulum–Napoca road and the Olt valley between Sucidava and Cincșor (Fig. 1). The most important road was the first one which included not only the *Via Traiana* (Sarmizegetusa–Porolissum) but also connected the province of Dacia to the Danube and Moesia Superior. Mobilities of Mithraic groups between Tibiscum, Sarmizegetusa and Apulum are attested also in epigraphic material.²⁴ The creation of these sacralised spaces reflects not only the large *territorium* of the first *colonia deducta* of the province²⁵ but also the important role of the staff of the *publicum Portorii Illyrici* and the local elite who monopolised the salt trade of Dacia.²⁶

There are only four mithraea attested archeologically: two in urban contexts (cat. nos 1 and 3) and two in military environment (cat. nos 2 and 4). The archaeological material of the sacralised spaces (sanctuaries, commonly known as mithraea) shows the dominant role of Sarmizegetusa and Apulum in the provincial diffusion of the cult, almost 60% of the archaeological material comes from these two urban settlements. This feature of the two conurbations is present also in other religious sources and the demographic aspects of the province.²⁷ From the two urban sanctuaries only the one from Apulum was systematically researched (cat. no. 1), the one from Sarmizegetusa was discovered at the end of the 19th century and was revealed only partially (cat. no. 3). The large amount of materiality of religion attested within the mithraeum of Sarmizegetusa raised numerous questions, giving birth to various hypotheses (later *spolia*, deliberate deposition, and workshop).²⁸

Both mithraea was identified in marginal topographic areas: the one in Sarmizegetusa was in the vicinity of city outside the southern walls,²⁹ while the mithraeum of Apulum was south to the legionary fortress, on the edge of the *canabae*, part of an urban and domestic neighbourhood, similarly as the well attested sanctuaries of Ostia, Nida-Heddernheim, Aquincum and Poetovio, too.³⁰ Urbanity or as it is named recently, citification played a very important

⁸PISO 1995. On the chronology of the finds see: SZABÓ 2015a.

⁹TÓTH 1992. See also: CARLSEN 1995, 83–85; SZABÓ 2015a; EGRI *et al.* 2018.

¹⁰SZABÓ 2015a; BÍRLIBA 2016.

¹¹SZABÓ 2018c, 114–116.

¹²SZABÓ 2015b.

¹³SZABÓ 2018c, 116; MCCARTY *et al.* 2019, 309, fig. 10.

¹⁴SZABÓ 2018c, 51–58.

¹⁵For the latest catalogue of the materiality of Mithras: SZABÓ 2018b.

¹⁶SZABÓ 2018c, 175.

¹⁷SZABÓ-BODA 2019.

¹⁸CARBÓ GARCIA 2010; SZABÓ 2018c, 98–120.

¹⁹SICOE 2004; SZABÓ 2012; SZABÓ 2014.

²⁰RÜPKE 2018, 1–32.

²¹On space and religion, see: KNOTT 2011.

²²SZABÓ 2020a.

²³NIELSEN 2015.

²⁴SZABÓ 2015a.

²⁵PISO 1995.

²⁶EGRI *et al.* 2018.

²⁷DONEV 2020, 203.

²⁸SICOE 2004; SICOE 2014.

²⁹BODA 2015.

³⁰On further topographic analogies see: SZABÓ 2018c, 14–20 and 108–109.



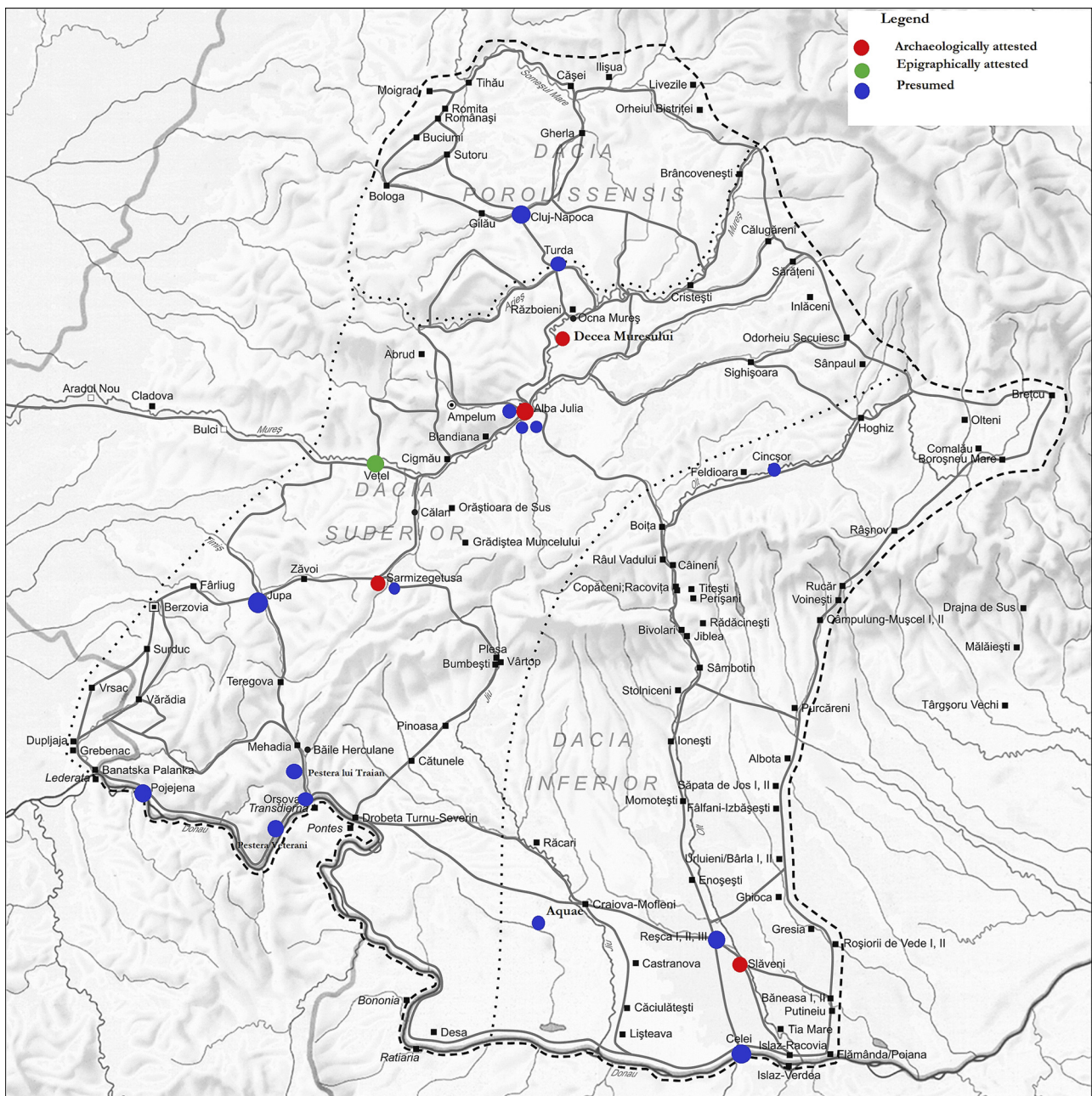


Fig. 1. Map of Roman Dacia with the archaeologically and epigraphically attested and presumed mithraea of the province (after SZABÓ 2018c, 169, fig. 76)

role in establishing and maintaining these sacralised spaces.³¹ Both groups from Apulum and Sarmizegetusa were predominantly civilians, with important local and provincial social, political and economic positions. From the 76 *cultores* of Mithras attested epigraphically in Roman Dacia 53 are coming from these two major urban settlements.³² Most of them are *liberti* with well established economic and financial status in Dacia: their donations marked the inner geography of the sanctuaries and produced the most important

figurative monuments of the mithraea in Dacia.³³ Several members of these two sanctuaries are coming from the local, urban elite (*decuriones*) or the sacerdotal elite of the province (*flamines*, *augures*). In Apulum where at least 5 or 6 mithraea was established in less than 160 years in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD we can identify also a social religious grouping: while the Mithraic group of the recently attested mithraeum (cat. no. 1) was exclusively civilian, there are epigraphic evidences for at least one predominantly military group too (cat. no. 6). The mithraeum of Apulum reflects a

³¹On urban religion and citification, see: RÜPKE 2020.

³²CARBÓ GARCIA 2010, 140–160, SZABÓ 2018b.

³³A remarkable example from Apulum: SZABÓ 2013.

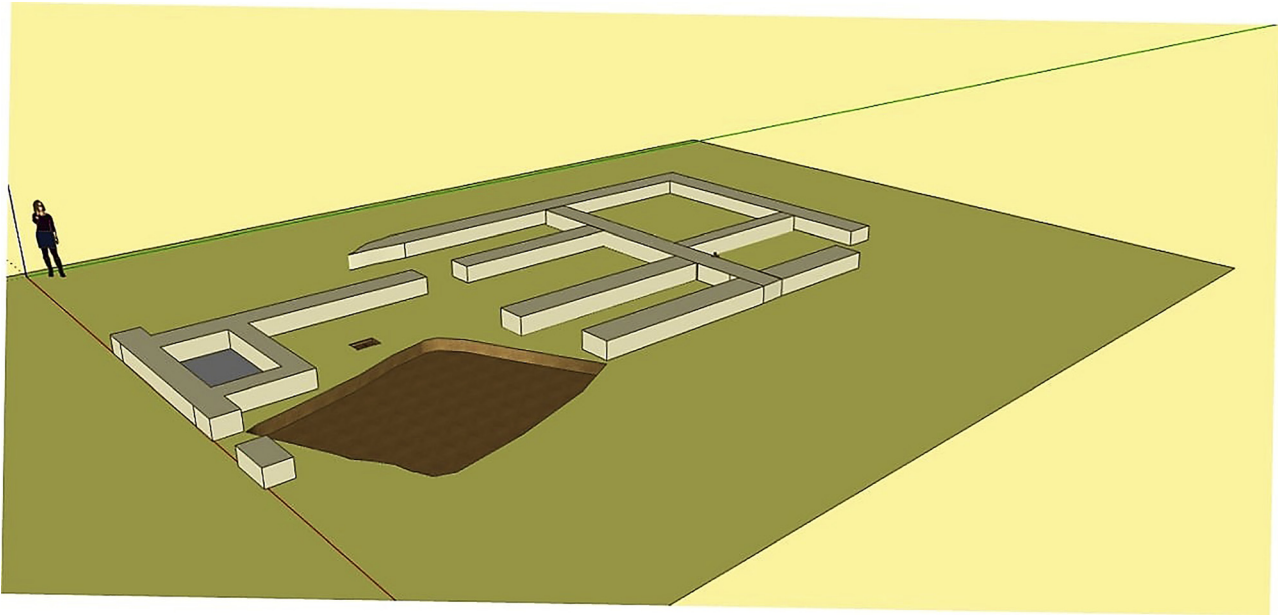


Fig. 2. Mithraeum from Apulum discovered in 2008 (architectural remains after McCARTY *et al.* 2019, 286, fig. 3)

middle sized sanctuary hosting 15–20 members at once, reproducing the major architectural features identified in numerous urban assembly houses and mithraea in the Danubian provinces especially (pronaos, naos, 2 podia, small annexed rooms).³⁴ The non-repetitive ritual foundation of the building with its material memorialisation in the naos (a sacrificial box) reflects also a broader phenomenon attested in numerous cases throughout the Empire.³⁵ The osteological and ceramic material indicates also the presence of repetitive religious banquets, where the annexed buildings and probably even the architectural neighbourhood might play a crucial role.³⁶

The mithraeum of Sarmizegetusa was preserved only partially, the north-eastern part of the naos and possibly a later established *favissae* (depositions or *spolia*) were identified with the largest amount of figurative deposition in a Mithraic context identified in the Roman Empire.³⁷ The dimension of the sanctuary was presumed to be the largest in the Danubian provinces, however the method used by Pál Király (König) proved to be wrong.³⁸ The number of *cultores* attested in Sarmizegetusa (23 individuals on epigraphic material) indicates however a large sanctuary or the existence of multiple mithraea in Sarmizegetusa, too. Király's excavation and the exact position of the mithraeum was not identified yet by current archaeological investigations.³⁹

The two small mithraea attested in the 19th century in Decea Mureşului (Dacia Superior) and Slăveni (Dacia

Inferior) reflect totally different architectural features and spatial role of the mithraea. Both sacralised spaces had one major, rectangular room and a small pronaos. Although their dimension is hard to estimate, the few epigraphic and figurative monuments suggest moderate or small mithraea. Both were formed in the vicinity of auxiliary forts. As the inscription discovered in Slăveni suggest the mithraeum in this case was used exclusively by the *ala I Hispanorum* (IDR II/510).

Besides the four archaeologically attested sanctuaries the large amount of materiality of the cult suggests at least 16 other mithraea in the province of Roman Dacia, although their exact number is impossible to establish without further archaeological investigation.⁴⁰ Based on epigraphic sources (cat. no. 5) or occasional finds mentioned in antiquarian literature or scarcely documented excavations from the 20th century we can establish the following catalogue of mithraea in Dacia.⁴¹

CATALOGUE OF MITHRAEA IN ROMAN DACIA

I. Archaeologically attested mithraea

1. Mithraeum in *Municipium Septimium Apulense* (Alba Iulia, Gyulafehérvár, Alba county, Romania)

Location: Bulevardul 1, Decembrie 1918, southwest part of the Roman fort, on the territory of the *canabae*, later *Municipium Septimium Apulense*, part of an *extra muros* area with numerous sacralised spaces (coordinates: 46.066403, 23.565013) (Fig. 2).

³⁴HENSEN 2017; McCARTY *et al.* 2020.

³⁵McCARTY *et al.* 2020, 128–129, fig. 12.9.

³⁶DRĂGAN 2020.

³⁷KIRÁLY 1886.

³⁸Király used exclusively the few analogies from Ostia, Nida-Heddernheim and Rome and his estimation was based only on the large number of monuments attested within the pit. See also: SZABÓ 2014.

³⁹Verbal communication of I. Boda.

⁴⁰For earlier lists of mithraea, see: RUSU-PESCARU–ALICU 2000; PINTILIE 2000.

⁴¹See also: SZABÓ 2020b. A digital map of sanctuaries in Roman Dacia was recently published: www.danubianreligion.com. Last accessed: 16.11.2020.

Description: known as “mithraeum III” the building actually is the first sanctuary dedicated to Mithras excavated systematically in Alba Iulia. The structure of the building follows a general architectural and spatial tendency of the Mithras sanctuaries, being divided in three main parts: a pronaos (antechamber) in the SE, a naos with two benches and an additional room in the NE part. The first campaign revealed that the building had a brick elevation. The inferior part of the building was built by small size stones. The excavation also revealed a pit under the annexed building, which predates the sanctuary and a part of a rectangular timber structure. The stratigraphy was severely damaged and modified by the medieval (12th–13th century) and modern (17th–18th century) layers and interventions. The two benches (7.5 m long) were severely damaged by an 11th century medieval house and later interventions. In the nave a small, tile-box was identified, interpreted as the hearth of the mithraeum, a memorialisation of the foundation and a non-repetitive religious act.

Archaeological repertory: the recovered inventory consists of four altars, architectural elements, pottery, objects made of glass, iron, bronze, bone, stone and a large quantity of animal bones. Palynological, archaeobotanical, archaeozoological, soil and radiocarbon samples were also collected.⁴²

Bibliography: RUSTOIU *et al.* 2014; RUSTOIU *et al.* 2015; EGRI *et al.* 2018; McCARTY *et al.* 2019; McCARTY *et al.* 2020.

2. Mithraeum in Decea Mureşului (Marosdécse, Alba county, Romania)

Location: uncertain. The description of Károly Herepei is confusing and it is hard to establish the position of the sanctuary. Approx. 300 m from the Roman road between the auxiliary fort and the modern village of Decea (Approx. coordinates: 46.3921, 23.7643) (Fig. 3).

Dimensions: partially revealed. The known structure was probably the naos itself, consisting a rectangular building of 4.15 m x 4.65 m.

Description: the sanctuary was reported shortly by K. Herepei in his journal, discovered after 1888. The mithraeum seems to be far from the military *vicus*, in the vicinity of the imperial road, the artery of economic and military communication within the province, which suggest, that it was a rural sanctuary, used irregularly. Its position suggests also the Romans integrated the natural elements (the slope of a hill) into this sacralised space, recreating the Mithraic cosmos as a *spelaeum*.

Archaeological repertory: three altars found in the sanctuary. Based on the manuscript of K. Herepei, M. Takács mentioned also ceramic material, bones and painted wall fragments. Bibliography: TAKÁCS 1987; RUSU-PESCARU-ALICU, 2000, 78; SICOE 2014, 168, cat. nos 59–61 with further bibliography.

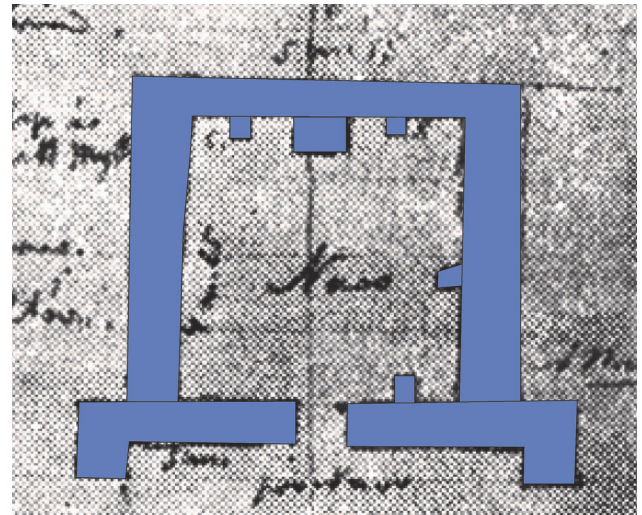


Fig. 3. Mithraeum from Decea Mureşului (based on TAKÁCS 1987)

3. Mithraeum in Colonia Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (Sarmizegetusa, Várhely, Hunedoara county, Romania).

Location: uncertain. *Extra muros*, SW to the city wall, close to the bank of the so called Apa Mică brook (approx. coordinates: 45.5080, 22.7855) (Fig. 4).

Dimensions: uncertain. The excavators revealed only the naos and a small part of the central nave of the building (3.8 m x 4.20 m). Based on the large amount of finds, the sanctuary was interpreted as one of the biggest mithraeum of the Roman Empire.

Description: the sanctuary was discovered in 1882 and 1883 in two short systematic excavations by P. Király and his team. Only a small part of the building (a part of the naos) was identified, although the largest part of the finds came from a single deposit (probably a *favissae* or a *spolia* deposition) in front of this. Although it was interpreted as one of the largest sanctuaries of its kind it is very possible that it was a middle sized building. The provenience and function of the large amount of finds are still not solved. Recently it was suggested, that the large amount of finds could prove the presence of a workshop, specialising on Mithraic reliefs or a late Roman statuary deposit.

Archaeological repertory: more than 184 relief fragments, statues, statuettes, altars and a significant amount of small finds were reported, which makes the largest Mithraic deposit ever found in the Roman Empire.

Bibliography: KIRÁLY 1886; RUSU-PESCARU-ALICU 2000, 81–84; SCHÄFER 2007, 190–236; SZABÓ 2014b; SICOE 2014, 174–230, cat. nos 72–194; BODA 2015, 287, fig. 7, 23.

4. Mithraeum in Slăveni (Olt county, Romania)

Location: uncertain. It was reported, that the sanctuary was close to the river Olt.

Dimensions: uncertain. Based on the position of the sanctuary in rural context, it had probably a modest size for a small group.

⁴²RUSTOIU *et al.* 2014, 17.

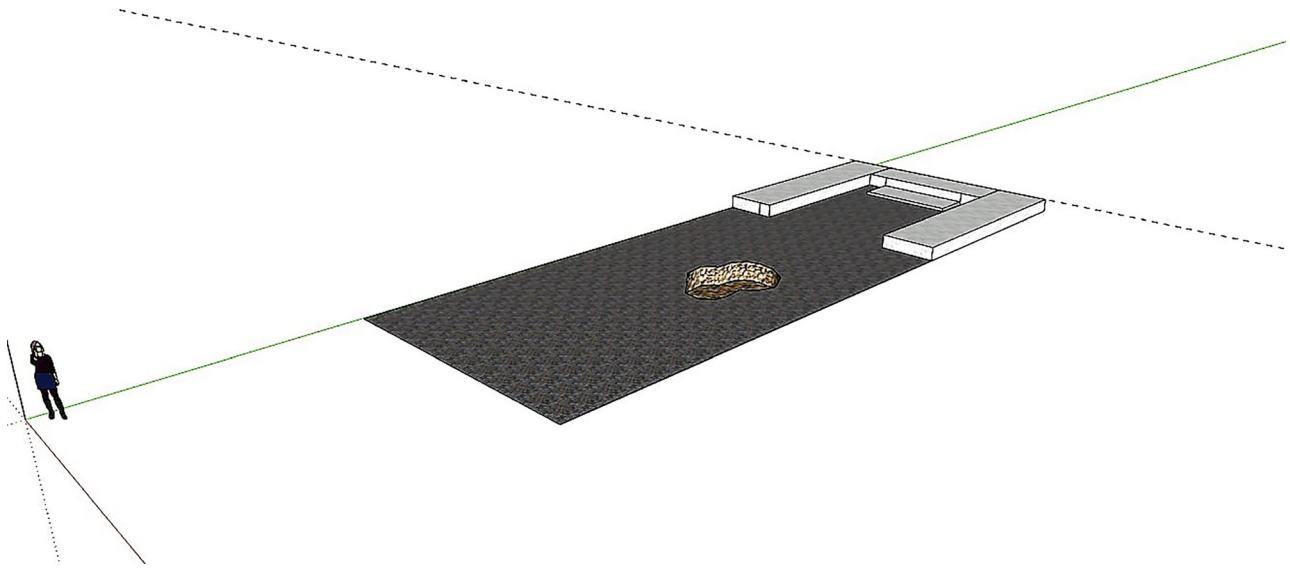


Fig. 4. Mithraeum from *colonia* Sarmizegetusa (architectural remains based on KIRÁLY 1886)

Description: the sanctuary was discovered in 1837 by M. Ghica and later published shortly by Vladimir de Blaremburg. His report mentions, that the reliefs and altars were in a long building, installed in a subterranean slope, while the brick walls were painted in different colours. Archaeological repertory: eight altars and reliefs found in the mithraeum. There are few lines about small finds too, but they were not preserved.

Bibliography: PETOLESCU 1976; RUSU-PESCARU-ALICU 2000, 81; SICOE 2014, 251–255, cat. nos 240–247.

II. Epigraphically attested mithraea

5. Mithraeum in Micia (Vețel, Vecel, Hunedoara county, Romania)

Location: unknown.

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the inscription (IDR III/3, 49) was found reused in the modern Church of Solymos (Șoimuș). The text mentions, that Publius Aelius Euphorus, one of the key members of the *publicum Portorii Illyrici* and an actor of Publius Aelius Marius, built a temple for Deus Invictus. The large number of Mithraic finds from Micia indicates the existence of a mithraeum in the settlement. The great impact of Publius Aelius Marius, as one of the charismatic persons attested in the Mithraic groups from Apulum, also supports this hypothesis (see also IDR III/4, 248) and a strong intra-provincial connectivity between the Mithraic groups.

Archaeological repertory: SICOE 2014, 230–234, cat. nos 195–202.

Bibliography: RUSU-PESCARU-ALICU 2000, 139; ALICU 2004, 112–114; EGRI *et al.* 2018.

III. Presumed or probable mithraea

6. “Mithraeum of Oancea” in *Municipium Septimium Apulense* (Alba Iulia, Gyulafehérvár, Alba county, Romania)

Location: *Extra muros* area of the *canabae*/Municipium. Found on the property, garden or field (“*Grundstück*”, “*garden*”) of Ioan (or Ștefan) Oancea⁴³ on the plateau of the Vauban fortress on the B-dul Încoronării (today 1 Decembrie 1918). Later, C. Băluță mentioned, that a sarcophagus and a Mithraic relief was discovered on the Dealul Furcilor, in the garden of Tăutu Constantin at B-dul 6 Martie, no. 3 in the vicinity of this possible mithraeum (approx. coordinates: 46.0648, 23.5651); the place is not yet located on terrain but it might be related to the discovery from 1930.

Dimensions: unknown. The number of the monuments (ten to eleven) suggest a large or at least, middle sized sanctuary.

Description: in 1930 Virgil Cucuiu attested a Roman building with numerous Mithraic monuments discovered probably by the owner of the garden or field. The context and the exact location of the discovery were never published properly. The finds and the discovery appeared in the literature as a sanctuary (mithraeum) already from the first publication and cited numerous times later. Only once was questioned the very nature of the discovery and raised a possibility of a late antique *spolia* based on a IOM altar found also in the sanctuary (IDR III/5, 141).⁴⁴ Without a systematic excavation and topographic identification of the site the existence of the sanctuary is hypothetical.

Archaeological repertory: CIMRM 1953–1967; IDR III/5, 141, 270–271, 279, 282, 288–290; see also BĂLUȚĂ 1974, 130–132; IDR III/5, 279; IDR III/5, 289; CIMRM 1957; SICOE 2014, 153, cat. no. 31; SZABÓ 2020b, 240, fig. 3.

Bibliography: CHRISTESCU 1933, 620–625; DAICOVICIU 1941, 299–336; CARBÓ GARCIA 2010, 131; OTA 2012, 106; SICOE 2014, 21.

⁴³CHRISTESCU 1933, 624; DAICOVICIU 1941, 308.

⁴⁴GORDON 2009, 413, fn. 170.

7. “Mithraeum of Károly Pap” in *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis* (Alba Iulia, Gyulafehérvár, Alba county, Romania)

Location: uncertain, on the territory of the *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis* (today Partos, Alba Iulia).

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: In 1852 K. Pap, shipmaster (“hajómester”) discovered in his garden the ruins of a Roman building and three Mithraic monuments, two altars (IDR III/5, 272–273) and a fragmentary relief which is considered disappeared today (TORMA 1861–63, 134). The exact place of his garden is not located yet, but the first publisher mentioned the “Marospartos” which is the south part of the *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis*. The function of the discoverer and the dolphin representation on the altar of Dioscorus could suggest the vicinity of the river. Recently a votive column was found on the black market, which could belong to the same context.⁴⁵

Archaeological repertory: IDR III/5, 272–273 and a relief attested only in the 19th century.

Bibliography: TORMA 1861–63, 134; SZABÓ 2015a; SZABÓ *et al.* 2016.

8. Mithraeum of “Franciscus Kastal” in *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis* (Alba Iulia, Gyulafehérvár, Alba county, Romania)

Location: unknown; on the territory of the *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis*.

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: around 1785 Franciscus Kaftal “*ponderum magistris*” found in the territory of the Marospartos (south part of the *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis*) a spectacular group of monuments dedicated to Mithras, the finest pieces of this kind from the province. The nature of the finds (statuary representation of *Mithras Tauroctonos*, a complex relief) suggests a presence of a mithraeum. It is possible that further, unepigraphic finds came from the same spot. There is no chance to localize the exact place of the discovery.

Archaeological repertory: IDR III/5, 280–281, 284; see also: CIMRM 1985, 1991, 2186, 2188.

Bibliography: SZABÓ 2013, 45–64; SZABÓ 2015a.

To establish the exact number of the Mithras sanctuaries from the conurbation of Apulum is beyond possibility. The large number of the monuments and the presence of six, large sized cult reliefs suggest at least five to six buildings dedicated to the worship of this divinity. This number wouldn't be surprising, similar density of sanctuaries were attested in Poetovio, Aquincum, Ostia or Rome.

9. Mithraeum in Cioroiu Nou (Malva?; Aquae? Cioroiași, Dolj county, Romania)

Location: in the southeast part of the Roman fortification (approx. coordinates: 44.056236, 23.434364).

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: in 1936 in this area two marble statues were found, later disappeared on the black market. The statues

described by Tudor based on the report of locals represented a figure surrounded by a snake and another holding a shield and a sword (probably two statues of *Mithras Petrogenitus*).⁴⁶ Later, a Mithraic inscription was found in this area too (IDR II, 145). The excavation of 1960–61 (section nos IV–VI) revealed several statue fragments representing Bacchus, Jupiter and Apollo also from this area. Interestingly, they found also a small fragment of a bull and a mould for terracotta bulls.

Archaeological repertory: IDR II, 145; two missing statues of *Mithras Petrogenitus*.

Bibliography: TUDOR 1962; SICOE 2014, cat. no. 230.

10. Mithraeum in Cincșor (Kissink, Kleinschink, Brașov county, Romania)

Location: uncertain; probably on the spot called Schlenkerried (approx. coordinates: 45.837648, 24.835793).

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the existence of a mithraeum is based on the 12 relief fragments found in 1906 on the field of Michael Ludwig. The location of the place was not yet confirmed on the spot, it could be part of the *vicus militaris* formed in the western part of the auxiliary fort of the *cohors II Bessorum*.

Archaeological repertory: SICOE 2014, 172–174, cat. nos 67–71.

Bibliography: SICOE 2014, 172–174.

11. Mithraeum in Dierna (Orsova, Orșova, Mehedinți county, Romania)

Location: uncertain. Probably in the vicinity of the fort (approx. coordinates: 44.712650, 22.393414).

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the existence of a mithraeum is based on two relief fragments. Although, there were excavations in the civilian settlement in the end of the 1960's, the traces of the mithraeum were not identified.

Archaeological repertory: SICOE 2014, 240–241, cat. nos 217–218.

Bibliography: SICOE 2014, 240–241.

12. Mithraeum in *Colonia Aurelia Napocensis* (Cluj-Napoca, Kolozsvár, Cluj county, Romania)

Location: uncertain. One of the finds was found in the main square of the modern city, on the territory of the Tivoli House, near the Bánffy Palace.⁴⁷ In the same area, a statuette of Hercules and Pan was found.⁴⁸ Later D. Alicu claimed that in this area could be located a sanctuary of Liber Pater.⁴⁹ It seems more plausible that this area, close to the central area of the Roman city was more a representative district, with large urban villas, decorated with rich statuary material and private baths. The statue of *Hercules Farnese* could indicate this. It is not sure if the Mithraic inscription was

⁴⁶TUDOR *et al.* 1967, 595 note 6.

⁴⁷SICOE 2014, 137 citing G. Finály.

⁴⁸BODOR 1988, 196, 199.

⁴⁹RUSU-PESCARU-ALICU 2000, 161.

⁴⁵SZABÓ *et al.* 2016.



found *in situ* or in a reused position. Opreanu presumed that the sanctuary was *extra-muros*, 5 km far from the Roman city.⁵⁰

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the existence of a sanctuary can be presumed only on the basis of the few Mithraic finds discovered in the territory of the Roman city, although some of them were recently excluded from the Mithraic repertoires, interpreted as dedications for Sol Invictus.

Archaeological repertory: [SICOE 2014](#), 137, cat. no. 1; see also: [SICOE 2014](#), 137, cat. no. 2; [AE 2010](#), 1,369.

Bibliography: [BODOR 1957](#), 103–104; [OPREANU 2009](#).

13. Spelaeum in Peștera Veterani (Peth, Peștera lui Maovaș, Mehedinți county, Romania)

Location: natural cave on the bank of the Danube identified already in the 15th century (approx. coordinates: 44.596742, 22.261915).

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the existence of a mithraeum (*spelaeum*) established in the natural cave was raised by the excavators, who carried systematic research in the cave from 1964 till 1969. They identified material evidence from various pre-historic cultures, too. The Roman presence was attested through stamped bricks and a today missing altar, with hardly visible inscription. According to the excavators it could belong to Mithras; it is very probable, that the excavators, who were not epigraphists, associated the natural cavity with Mithras, based on their vague knowledge on similar cases and analogies from the Empire. There were no systematic researches since than in the cave.

Archaeological repertory: uncertain; probably an altar dedicated to Mithras (missing).

Bibliography: [PINTILIE 2000](#), 235–236; [SICOE 2014](#), 22.

14. Spelaeum in Peștera lui Traian (Valea Cernei, Mehedinți county, Romania)

Location: uncertain; visited by F. Cumont in the 19th century, in the valley of the Cerna river.

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the existence of a mithraeum (*spelaeum*) established in the natural cave is based on a short report of F. Cumont, who visited Transylvania in the 19th century. He reported that local inhabitants shown him a rock installation with altars in a cave, but no further details are known. F. Cumont enrolled the place among the uncertain sanctuaries.

Archaeological repertory: uncertain.

Bibliography: [PINTILIE 2000](#), 236.

15. Mithraeum in Pojejena (Alsópozsgás, Caraș-Severin county, Romania)

Location: uncertain. The finds were attested in the north-eastern tower of the Roman auxiliary fort, probably from secondary position. Another one was found in south in the modern settlement (approx. coordinates: 44.779973, 21.597051).

Description: in 1922 a Mithraic relief was found south of the fort, close to the Danube (more than 1 km from the Roman fort), although this could be in secondary position, too. Later, in 1976, systematic excavations revealed a deep compartment in the northeastern tower of the fort, with four Mithraic relief fragments. It is not clear, if they were *in situ* or not. Installing a mithraeum within the fort is unusual in the whole Roman Empire, although some cases, such in the House of Laticlavus in Aquincum was attested, when the extension of the fort was probably changed.

Archaeological repertory: [SICOE 2014](#), 235–240, cat. nos 205–216.

Bibliography: [GUDEA-BOZU 1978](#); [PINTILIE 2000](#), 238; [BODA-TIMOC 2016](#).

16. Mithraeum in *Municipium Septimum Potaissense* (Turda, Torda, Thorenburg, Cluj county, Romania)

Location: uncertain. Probably in the southeast slope of the so called Dealul Cetății Hill, in the vicinity of the Roman fort (approx. coordinates: 46.570430, 23.764672).

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the existence of a mithraeum in Potaissa is based on numerous Mithraic finds from the settlement, consisted mostly of altars and reliefs. One of them was bought by I. Téglás in 1905, who mentioned that it comes from the southern part of the fort ([ILD PETOLESCU 2005](#), nr. 505 with comments). Two representations of standing statues representing Mithras or a so called Mithraic genius seems to be implausible, although it would indicate a more strict relationship with Poetovio, where a *vexillation* of the *V. Macedonica* legion from Potaissa is well attested. (The theory of S. Nemeti and I. Nemeti on the so called Mithraic genius from Potaissa was contested by A. Diaconescu.⁵¹) An altar dedicated by a certain Hermadio was found in the same area as the other Mithraic finds ([ILD PETOLESCU 2005](#), nr. 492) which could indicate the Mithraic nature of this inscription too.

Archaeological repertory: [SICOE 2014](#), 138–144, cat. nos 4–13; see also: [DIACONESCU 2014](#), 75–77, 80; [ILD PETOLESCU 2005](#), nr. 492.

Bibliography: [BĂRBULESCU 1994](#), 70; [RUSU-PESCARU-ALICU 2000](#), 156.

17. Mithraeum in Romula (Reșca, Dobrosloveni, Olt county, Romania)

Location: uncertain; it was attested on the bank of the Teslui river (approx. coordinates: 44.168757, 24.394470).

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the existence of a sanctuary is based on the significant number of votive offerings dedicated to Mithras and the short report of a priest, called Martin from 1856, later published by Alex. Popovici. He mentions a “round” sanctuary, where offerings were made. A presence of a fountain was also reported. The territory was never excavated, the topography of Romula – although it should be an

⁵⁰[OPREANU 2009](#).

⁵¹[DIACONESCU 2014](#), 75–77.



important Roman settlement in Dacia Inferior – is one of the less known from Dacia.

Archaeological repertory: [SICOE 2014](#), cat. nos 231–238; see also: CIMRM 2170.

Bibliography: [RUSU-PESCARU-ALICU 2000](#), 78–81; [SICOE 2014](#), 246–250.

18. Mithraeum in *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa* (Sarmizegetusa, Várhely, Hunedoara county, Romania)

Location: uncertain.

Dimensions: uncertain.

Description: the existence of a second or even multiple mithraea in the capital of the province was raised by D. Alicu, based on an inscription found in 1880, before the discovery of the famous sanctuary in 1882. The construction plaque mentions the name of the divinity as Invictus, which doesn't make sure the Mithraic nature of the find. It was dedicated to the health and memory of Sextus Valerius, *decurio* of the city. This habit, to keep the memory of a leading member of a religious group was attested also in Poetovio in Mithraic context. Further excavations and field research will need to confirm the existence of several mithraea in Sarmizegetusa.

Archaeological repertory: unknown; see also: IDR III/2, 226.

Bibliography: [ALICU 2002](#), 221–222.

19. Mithraeum in Sucidava (Celei, Olt county, Romania)

Location: uncertain.

Dimensions: uncertain.

Description: the existence of a mithraeum is based on the significant number of Mithraic reliefs and inscriptions attested in Sucidava.

Archaeological repertory: [SICOE 2014](#), 255–257, cat. nos 248–251; see also the comments on [ILD PETOLESCU 2005](#), nr. 106, 110.

Bibliography: [SICOE 2014](#), 255–257.

20. Mithraeum in Tibiscum (Jupa, Zsuppa/Iaz-Obreja, Obrézsza, Caraş- Severin county, Romania)

Location: unknown.

Dimensions: unknown.

Description: the possible existence of a mithraeum is based only on the presence of two Mithraic finds from the settlement. A famous altar dedicated by one of the most well known religious entrepreneurs of the cult, Hermadio actor was associated with Tibiscum (IDR III/1, 145), while a Mithraic relief was recently localised in Tibiscum. Till further researches, the presence of a mithraeum in Tibiscum is hypothetical.

Archaeological repertory: IDR III/1, 145, [SICOE 2014](#), 243, cat. nos 203–204.

Bibliography: [BODA-TIMOC 2016](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was supported by the Postdoctoral Research Grant PD NKFI-8 nr. 127948 by the National Research,

Development and Innovation Office of Hungary (2018–2021).

REFERENCES

- ALICU, D. 2002: Addenda la repertoriul templelor romane din Dacia [Addendum for the repertory of Roman temples in Dacia]. *Apulum* 39, 201–235.
- ALICU, D. 2004: Micia: Studii monografice. 1. Monumentele de spectacol și de cult [Micia. Monographic Study. 1.: Monuments of Spectacle and Cult]. Cluj-Napoca
- BĂLUȚĂ, C. 1974: Monumente sculpturale romane de la Apulum [Roman sculptural monuments from Apulum]. *Apulum* 12, 117–133.
- BĂRBULESCU, M. 1994: Potaissa. Studiu monografic [Potaissa. A Monographic Study]. Turda.
- BECK, R. 1996: The mysteries of Mithras. In: *Voluntary Associations in the Ancient World*. Eds: J. Kloppenborg–G. Wilson. London, 176–185.
- (MIHAILESCU-)BÎRLIBA, L. 2016: Les salines en Dacie romaine: remarques sur le personnel administratif. *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica* 22/1, 51–58.
- BODA, I. 2015: The sacred topography of Colonia Sarmizegetusa. *ActaArchHung* 66, 281–304.
- BODA, I.–TIMOC, C. 2016: The sacred topography of Tibiscum. In: *New Perspectives in the Study of Roman Religion in Dacia*. Eds: S. Nemeti–I. Boda. Cs. Szabó. *Studia historia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai* 61.1. Cluj-Napoca, 39–59.
- BODOR, A. 1957: Napoca a feliratok tükrében [Napoca in the light of inscriptions]. In: *Emlékkönyv Kelemen Lajos születésének nyolcvanadik évfordulójára*. Eds. A. Bodor–B. Cselényi–E. Jancsó–Zs. Jakó–T. A. Szabó. Kolozsvár, 78–111.
- BODOR, A. 1987–1988: Contribuții la istoria oraşului Napoca pe baza monumentelor sale sculpturale în piatră (II) [Contributions to the urban history of Napoca through its sculptural monuments]. *ActaMusNapoc* 24–25, 194–221.
- CARBÓ GARCIA, J. R. 2010: Los cultos orientales en la Dacia romana. Formas de difusión, integración y control social e ideológico. Salamanca.
- CARLSEN, J. 1995: Vilici and Roman Estate Managers until AD 284. *AnalDan*, Suppl. 24. Rome.
- CHALUPA, A. 2016: The origins of the Roman cult of Mithras in the light of new evidence and interpretations: The current state of affairs. *Religio* 24, 65–96.
- CHRISTESCU, V. 1933: Nouveaux monuments d'Apulum. *Dacia* 3–4, 620–625.
- COLLAR, A. 2013: *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: The Spread of New Ideas*, Cambridge.
- DAICOVICIU, C. 1941: Neue Mitteilungen aus Dazien. *Dacia* 7–8, 299–336.
- DIACONESCU, A. 2014: Simulacra Deorum. Statui votive și de cult. Statuaria Majoră în Dacia romană III. [Simulacra deorum. Cultic and votive statues. Large sized statues in roman Dacia III]. Cluj-Napoca. Open access: <http://www.alexandrudiaconescu.ro/images/stories/downloads/catalogvotive.pdf>.



- DOAN, J. E. 1983: The animal style in Celtic and Thracian art. In: Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium 3. Eds: J. T. Koch–J. Rittmueller. Cambridge, Mass, 149–167.
- DONEV, D. 2020: The top-ranking towns in the Balkan and Pannonian provinces of the Roman Empire. *AV* 71, 193–215.
- DRĂGAN, A. 2020: Pottery from Apulum mithraeum III. Preliminary results. In: The Archaeology of Mithraism. New Finds and Approaches to Mithras-Worship. Eds: M. M. McCarty–M. Egri. *BABesch Suppl.* 39. Leuven–Paris–Bristol, 135–147.
- EGRI, M.–McCARTY, M. M.–RUSTOIU, A.–INEL, C. 2018: A new Mithraic community at Apulum (Alba Iulia, Romania). *ZPE* 205, 268–276.
- FARAONE, CH. 2013: The amuletic design of the Mithraic bull-wounding scene. *JRS* 103, 96–116.
- GORDON, R. L. 1978: The date and significance of CIMRM 593. *JMS* 2/2, 150–174.
- GORDON, R. L. 2009: The Roman army and the cult of Mithras: a critical view. In: *L'armée romaine et la religion. Actes du quatrième congrès de Lyon organisé les 26–28 octobre 2006*. Dir. Éd.: Ch. Wolff–Y. Le Bohec. CEROR 33. Paris, 379–450.
- GORDON, R. L. 2017: Persae in spelaeis Solem colunt: Mithra(s) between Persia and Rome. In: *Persianism in Antiquity*, Eds: R. Strootman–M. J. Versluys. *Oriens et Occidens* 25. Stuttgart, 289–326.
- GUDEA, N.–BOZU, O. 1977–1978: New Mithraic monuments from Pojejena, Romania. *JMS* 2/1, 69–73.
- HENSEN, A. 2017: *Templa et spelaea Mithrae: Unity and diversity in the topography, architecture and design of sanctuaries in the cult of Mithras*. In: *Entangled Worlds: Religious Confluences between East and West in the Roman Empire: The Cults of Isis, Mithras, and Jupiter Dolichenus*. Eds: S. Nagel–J. F. Quack–Ch. Witchel. Tübingen, 384–412.
- ILD PETOLESCU, C.C. 2005: *Inscripții latine din Dacia (Inscriptiones Latinae Daciae)*. București.
- KIRÁLY, P. 1886: A sarmizegetusai Mithraeum [The mithraeum of Sarmizegetusa]. *ArchKözl* 15, 6–129.
- KNOTT, K. 2011: Spatial methods. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. Eds: M. Stausberg–S. Engler. London, 491–501.
- LICHTERMAN, P.–RAJA, R.–RIEGER, A. K.–RÜPKE, J. 2017: Grouping together in lived ancient religion. *Religion in the Roman Empire* 3/1, 3–10.
- McCARTY, M. M.–EGRI, M.–RUSTOIU, A. 2019: The archaeology of ancient cult: from foundation deposits to religion in Roman Mithraism. *JRA* 32, 279–312.
- McCARTY, M. M.–EGRI, M.–RUSTOIU, A. 2020: Apulum mithraeum III and the multiplicities of mihtraism. In: *The Archaeology of Mithraism. New Finds and Approaches to Mithras-Worship*. Eds: M. M. McCarty–M. Egri. *BABesch Suppl.* 39. Leuven–Paris–Bristol, 123–134.
- MASTROCINQUE, A. 2017: The Mysteries of Mithras. A Different Account. *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike* 24. Tübingen.
- NIELSEN, I. 2015: Buildings of religious communities. In: *A Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World*. Eds: R. Raja–J. Rüpke. Leiden–Boston, 279–293.
- OTA, R. 2012: De la canabele legiunii a XIII-a Gemina la Municipium Septimium Apulense [From *canabae legionis* to Municipium Septimium Apulense]. Alba Iulia.
- OPREANU, C. H. 2009: Templul lui Devs Sol Invictus de la Napoca. Contributie la topografia si istoria orasului antic [The temple of Devs Sol Invictus from Napoca. Contributions to the topography and history of the ancient town]. *Studia Historia UBB Cluj-Napoca* 54/1–2, 127–141.
- PETOLESCU, C. C. 1976: Le mithraeum de Slăveni, Dacia Malvensis. *Dacia N. S.* 20, 259–263.
- PINTILIE, M. 1999–2000: Mithraea în Dacia. *EphNapoc* 9–10, 231–243.
- PISO, I. 1995: *Le territorium* de Sarmizegetusa. *EphNapoc* 5, 63–82.
- RUSTOIU, A.–EGRI, M.–McCARTY, M. M.–INEL, C. 2014: 6. Alba Iulia, punct: cartier de cetate. Cod sit: 1026.12 [Alba Iulia: archaeological site called „cartier de cetate”]. *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România Campania 2013*. Oradea, 17.
- RUSTOIU, A.–EGRI, M.–McCARTY, M. M.–INEL, C. 2015: Apulum-Mithraeum III Project 2014. Alba Iulia, punct: cartier Cetate [Alba Iulia: archaeological site called „cartier de cetate”]. *Cronica cercetarilor arheologice din Romania*. Bucuresti, 19–21 and 260–261.
- RUSU-PESCARU, A.–ALICU, D. 2000: *Templele romane din Dacia [Roman Temples in Dacia]*. Deva.
- REBILLARD, E.–RÜPKE, J. 2015: Introduction: groups, individuals and religious identity. In: *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late Antiquity*. Eds: E. Rebillard–J. Rüpke. *CUA studies in early Christianity*. Washington, 1–13.
- RÜPKE, J. 2018: *Pantheon: A New History of Roman Religion*. Princeton.
- RÜPKE, J. 2020: *Urban Religion. A Historical Approach to Urban Growth and Religious Change*. Berlin–Boston.
- SCHÄFER, A. 2007: *Tempel und Kult in Sarmizegetusa. Eine Untersuchung zur Formierung religiöser Gemeinschaften in der Metropolis Dakiens*. Berlin.
- SICOE, G. 2004: Lokalproduktion und Importe. Der Fall der mithraischen Reliefs aus Dakien. In: *Roman Mithraism: The Evidence of the Small Finds*. Eds: M. Marteen–G. de Boer. *Archeologie in Vlaanderen, Monografie 4*. Bruxelles, 285–302.
- SICOE, G. 2014: *Die mithräischen Steindenkmäler aus Dakien*. Cluj-Napoca.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2012: Searching for the lightbearer: notes on a Mithraic relief from Dragu. *Marisia* 32, 135–145.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2013: The Mithraic statue of Secundinus from Apulum. In: *ReDIVA [The Postgraduate Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology]* 1, 45–65.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2014: Notes on the Mithraic small finds from Sarmizegetusa. *Ziridava* 28, 135–148.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2015a: The cult of Mithras in Apulum: communities and individuals. In: *Culti e religiosità nelle province danubiane. Atti del II Convegno internazionale, Ferrara 20–22 novembre 2013*. Ed.: L. Zerbini. *Pubblicazioni del LAD 2*. Città di Castello, 407–422.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2015b: Notes on a new Cautes statue from Apulum. *AKorr* 45/2, 237–247.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2018a: Reinterpreting Mithras. A very different account. *ActaArchHung* 69, 211–216.



- SZABÓ, Cs. 2018b: The material evidence of the Roman cult of Mithras in Dacia. CIMRM Supplementum of the province. ActaAntHung 58/1, 325–357.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2018c: Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia: Materiality and Religious Experience. Roman archaeology series 49. Oxford.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2020a: Nature as sacred landscape in Roman Dacia. In: Sacred Landscapes in Antiquity: Creation, Manipulation, Transformation. Eds: G. F. Chiai–R. Haeussler. Oxford, 77–87.
- SZABÓ, Cs. 2020b: Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. A catalogue of sacralised places in shared and secondary spaces. JRGZM 62 (2015) [2020], 255–340.
- SZABÓ, Cs.–BODA, I. 2019: The Gods of Roman Dacia. An Illustrated Dictionary. Riga.
- SZABÓ, Cs.–BODA, I.–TIMOC, C. 2016: Notes on a new Mithraic inscription from Dacia. In: Mensa Rotunda Epigraphica Napocensis. Eds: R. Ardevan–E. Beu-Dachin. Cluj-Napoca, 91–104.
- TAKÁCS, M. 1987: Date inedite în legătura cu mithareumul de la Decea într-un manuscris de la începutul secolului [Notes on the mithraeum from Decea in a manuscript from the 19th century]. Apulum 24, 173–174.
- TORMA, K. 1861–63: Tizenkét római felirat Daciából [Twelve Roman inscriptions from Dacia]. EMÉvk 2, 129–135.
- TÓTH, I. 1992: A Dacian “apostle” of the cult of Mithras? SpecN 8, 153–160.
- TUDOR, D. 1962: Săpăturile arheologice de la Cioroiul Nou (r. Băilești, reg. Oltenia) (Les fouilles archéologiques de Cioroiul Nou). MCA 8, 547–554.
- TUDOR, D.–DIACONESCU, GH.I. 1967: Popilian: Șantierul arheologic Cioroiu Nou [The archaeological site of Cioroiu Nou]. Apulum 6, 593–605.
- WOOLF, G. 2018: Global deities: Gods on the move in the ancient Mediterranean world. Bandue 11, 111–128.