

# Géza Alföldy and the study of Roman religion

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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### ABSTRACT

Géza Alföldy (1935–2011) is considered as one of the most important epigraphists and historians of the Roman civilization of the late 20th century, known also as “Mommsen of our ages”. His contribution is indispensable not only for the discipline of Roman epigraphy and social history, but also for the study of Roman religion. His intellectual roots in Hungary and the influence of the Hungarian scholarly tradition of the 1950’s marked his interest in the study of Roman religion for a long period. In this study, the authors discuss the formation of Géza Alföldy and his contribution to the discipline through a wider academic and socio-historical context.

### KEYWORDS

Géza Alföldy, Roman religion, Religionswissenschaft, Roman history, Roman epigraphy, historiography

Géza Alföldy (1935–2011) is considered as a leading epigraphist and historian of Roman civilization in the late 20th century. His monumental work (almost 600 titles) marked deeply the historiographic evolution of some disciplines, such as Latin Epigraphy and Roman social history.

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His academic heritage is already a source for historiographic research and publications.<sup>1</sup> Following the evolution of the very notion of Roman religion in his work,<sup>2</sup> this article will focus only on a small segment of his monumental opus (less, than 6% of his work<sup>3</sup>), namely on those articles, studies and chapters which deal exclusively or in large part with Roman religion. Considered by his contemporaries as an epigraphist and social historian *par excellence*, his early works are dealing predominantly with some of the most important topics of Roman religion. As a first step to understand his personal and academic roots and his background, a review of the Hungarian academic environment of the 1950's needs to be analyzed shortly.

## THE HUNGARIAN ROOTS (1935–1965)

Géza Alföldy was born in an intellectual family as a son of id. Jenő Alföldy (1904–1981) and Kornélia Halmi, both well known intellectuals of the Hungarian society at that time.<sup>4</sup> His father was a well-known otolaryngologist with an international reputation, who later (1975–1981) became the scientific advisor of the Semmelweis Medical History Museum

<sup>1</sup>Till now, there is no synthesis about the life and academic heritage of Géza Alföldy. The most detailed list of his publications is published on the website of the Seminar für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik, however, it does not contain all of his posthumous and popularizing works. Numerous articles, obituaries and conference volumes were dedicated to his memory in the years after his death: BORHY, L.: Géza, László, Tarragona. Recuerdos de mi primer encuentro con Géza Alföldy en Tarragona, 11 de octubre de 1986. In LÓPEZ I VILAR, J. (ed.): *Tarraco Biennal: Actes: 1er Congrès Internacional d'Arqueologia i Món Antic: Govern i Societat a la Hispània Romana: Novetats epigràfiques: Homenatge a Géza Alföldy*, Tarragona, 29-30 de novembre i 1 de desembre de 2012. Tarragona 2013, 85–97; ECK, W. – KOVÁCS, P. – FEHÉR, B. (eds): *Studia epigraphica in memoriam Géza Alföldy*. Bonn 2013; KIRBIHLER, FR.: Le testament d'un historien: Géza Alföldy et l'histoire sociale de Rome. *Revue des études anciennes* 117 (2015) 639–651; VIVAS GARCÍA, G. A.: La visión de la historia y el método de Sir Ronald Syme en la obra de Géza Alföldy: algunas consideraciones. *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie II, Historia antigua* 25 (2012) 19–38; VIVAS GARCÍA, G. A.: Géza Alföldy and Ronald Syme: a case study. *Studia Europaea Gnesnensia* 16 (2017) 529–551; ALVAREZ-MELERO, A.: Géza Alföldy et l'histoire des femmes dans la Rome antique. *Studia Europaea Gnesnensia* 16 (2017) 553–566; BORHY, L.: Meine Erinnerungen an Géza Alföldy. *Studia Europaea Gnesnensia* 16 (2017) 23–291; CHANIOTIS, A. – WITSCHER, CHR.: Vorwort der Herausgeber. In ALFÖLDY, G.: *Die epigraphische Kultur der Römer: Studien zu ihrer Bedeutung, Entwicklung und Erforschung*. Edited by A. CHANIOTIS and CHR. WITSCHER. Stuttgart 2018, 9–19; KOVÁCS, P.: Megemlékezés Alföldy Gézáról. *Studia Epigraphica Pannonica* 11 (2020) 158–159. See also: <https://uni-heidelberg.academia.edu/GézaAlföldy/Works-about-Géza-Alföldy>. Last accessed: 22.06.2020.

<sup>2</sup>There are few historiographic articles focusing on the study of Roman religion in the academic endeavour of a scholar: SCHEID, J.: Ronald Syme et la religion des Romains. In MILLAR, F. (ed.): *La révolution romaine après Ronald Syme: bilans et perspectives: sept exposés suivis de discussions, Vandœuvres-Genève, 6-10 septembre 1999*. Genève, Fondation Hardt 2000, 39–72; SANTANGELO, F.: Saturnia Regna revisited. In RICHARDSON, H. J. – SANTANGELO, F. (eds): *Andreas Alföldi in the twenty-first century*. Stuttgart 2015, 131–153. On the contemporary discourse of Roman religion, see PHILLIPS, R.: *Approaching Roman religion: the case for Wissenschaftsgeschichte*. In RÜPKE, J. (ed.): *A Companion to Roman Religion*. Boston 2007, 10–29; RIVES, J.: Graeco-Roman Religion in the Roman Empire: Old Assumptions and New Approaches. *Currents in Biblical Research* 8 (2010) 240–299; RÜPKE, J.: Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning 'Cults' and 'Polis Religion'. *Mythos* n.s. 5 (2011) 2012, 191–204; RÜPKE, J.: *Pantheon. A new history of Roman religion*. Princeton, 2018.

<sup>3</sup>Alföldy published 34 studies, articles, and reviews between 1954 and 2011 which are focusing exclusively on Roman religion or the epigraphic evidence of a cult.

<sup>4</sup>His grandfather, Dénes Alföldy was a high school professor, who's intellectual background marked also his family. See also SZEKELY, M.: A human tudományok feladata erkölcsi alapot adni a társadalomnak. Beszélgetés Alföldy Géza ókortörténésszel [Discussion with historian of antiquity, Géza Alföldy]. *Aetas* 19.2 (2004) 155.



(*Semmelweis Orvostörténeti Múzeum*). His interest for Hungarian and world literature influenced the formation of the young Géza Alföldy too, however, only after he attended an illegal, religious association.<sup>5</sup> His interest for ancient history and later, Latin Epigraphy was influenced by his remarkable professors and colleagues at the Eötvös Loránd University. During his studies (1953–1958), he was part of a very influential academic generation of archaeologists and classical scholars.<sup>6</sup> Professors, such as the archaeologists Zoltán Oroszlán, János Banner or Gyula László, classicists as Károly Marót, János György Szilágyi, István Hahn and his colleagues, László Kákósy and András Mócsy influenced his work and formation.<sup>7</sup> This generation represented the last direct link to the most famous group of Hungarian classicists, formed around Károly Kerényi and András Alföldi in the 1930's and 1940's.<sup>8</sup> Although Kerényi and Alföldi had some ideological differences about the fate and future of Hungarian classical studies, their interdisciplinary and global approach – incorporating philology, archaeology, epigraphy, history, papyriology and numismatics – marked the first and second generation of their students.<sup>9</sup> Some of them – especially Károly Marót, the dean of the Department of Ancient History in this period (1947–1962) and István Hahn – was highly involved in the study of Roman religion.<sup>10</sup>

Both were influenced by the new tendencies appeared in the study of Roman religion after the death of Georg Wissowa, marked especially by the phenomenological and psychological approaches.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup>As a first attempt, he was more interested to chemistry, probably due to his father's formation. His brother, Jenő Alföldy became a well-known poet and writer: NÉMETH, GY.: Beszélgetés Alföldy Gézával [In dialogue with Géza Alföldy]. *Ókortudományi Értesítő* 15 (2011) 6–12; RICCI, C. – CALDELLI, M. L. – ORLANDI, S. (eds): *Eredità di un maestro. Géza Alföldy, storico del mondo romano – Riflessioni*. Roma, 7 giugno 2012. Roma 2013, 30, n. 5.

<sup>6</sup>On this period, see also SZILÁGYI, J. GY.: Egzisztenciális tudomány – Interjú Szilágyi János Györggyel (I. rész) [Interview with György János Szilágyi]. Litván György and Molnár Adrienne. *Enigma* 87 (2016) 45–46 and 55.

<sup>7</sup>With many of his colleagues, Alföldy kept a very close friendship till their death.

<sup>8</sup>RITÓOK, ZS.: Az ókortudomány fogalmának változásai [Changes in the notion of ancient studies]. In HAVAS, L. (ed.): *Bevezetés az ókortudományba I*. Debrecen 1998, 7–36; SZILÁGYI J. GY.: *Szírénzene. Ókortudományi tanulmányok* [Music of sirenes. Studies on antiquity]. Budapest 2005; TÖRÖK L.: Magyar ókortörténet a XXI. század elején [History of Hungarian Altertumwissenschaft in the beginning of the 21st century]. *Antik Tanulmányok* 52 (2008) 127–136; SZILÁGYI J. GY.: András Alföldi and Classical Studies in Hungary. In RICHARDSON–SANTANGELO (n. 2) 23–37; ALFÖLDY, G.: The Crisis of the Third Century from Michael Rostovtzeff and Andrew Alföldi to Recent Discussions. In RICHARDSON, J. H. (ed.): *Acta of the Colloquium "Andreas Alföldi in the Twenty-First-Century"*. University of Wales Trinity Saint David [Lampeter] 31 August – 2 September 2011 [HABES 56]. Stuttgart 2015, 201–217.

<sup>9</sup>SZILÁGYI: András Alföldi (n. 8).

<sup>10</sup>About the work and activity of Hahn, see RITÓOK, ZS.: István Hahn and the Study of Ancient History in Hungary. *Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debreceniensis* 49 (2013) 133–144. Alföldy dedicates the last edition of his *Social History* to the memory of István Hahn, F. Vittinghoff and K. Christ.

<sup>11</sup>Notable the correspondence of Marót with Angelo Brelich, student of Kerényi who already moved to Rome and became a student of Pettazzoni. However, the Hungarian scholarship was always Germanophile (following Wissowa, and later Altheim or Latte with some critics), after the emigration of Kerényi and exclusion of many of his students after 1948 and especially, 1956, the Hungarian scholars were “forced” to open their interests to other tendencies and models such as the school of Pettazzoni and Brelich. On the historiography of Roman religious studies in this time, see PHILLIPS (n. 2) 12; RIVES (n. 2) 240–299, SZABÓ CS.: Urbs et cultus deorum. Római vallás a Kr.u. II – III. századi városokban [Urbs et cultus deorum. Roman religion in the cities in the 2nd–3rd centuries AD]. *Vallástudományi Szemle* 10.1–2 (2014) 42–44. On the correspondence of Brelich and Kerényi, see SZILÁGYI J. GY.: Elváló utak. Brelich Angelo és Kerényi Károly levélváltásához [Separating roads. Notes on the correspondence of Angelo Brelich and Kerényi Károly]. In SZILÁGYI J. GY.: *A tenger fölött. Írások az ókori görög és itáliai kultúrákról*. Budapest 2011, 305–313; ALESSANDRI, A. (ed.): *Tra gli asfodeli dell'Elisio: carteggio 1935-1959 / Károly Kerényi-Angelo Brelich*. Roma 2011; SZILÁGYI: Egzisztenciális tudomány (n. 6) 56–67.



The approach of Hahn and Marót on Roman religion was highly influenced also by the school of Kerényi, who represents a new wave in the religious studies of the second half of the 20th century.<sup>12</sup> Although the impact of Kerényi in Hungary created a long-lasting current in the local *Alturtumswissenschaft*, his intellectual decapitation and emigration after 1948 ended also the activity of the Stemma Group and Kerényi's school on ancient religion.<sup>13</sup> His school was continued by Angelo Brelich in Italy and indirectly, by István Tóth in Hungary.<sup>14</sup> A more technical view on religion and its role in ancient societies was represented by András Alföldi and his pupils, which seems to dominate the Hungarian community of classical archaeologists and historians even today.<sup>15</sup>

Alföldy became closer to István Hahn, then a young assistant at the university. A fascinating polyglot, remarkable orator and professor, Hahn continued not only the interdisciplinary approach of Kerényi and his generation, but also became the link between the old, "Germanophile" generation and the new one of Communist Hungary.<sup>16</sup> His studies focusing on social history, slavery and epigraphy highly influenced the formation of Géza Alföldy too. His first studies published between 1956 and 1958, the last two years as a student show the influence of Hahn and his school, but also the new tendencies in Hungarian archaeology, marked by Gyula László.<sup>17</sup> His first studies show exactly those three disciplines, which marked his studies in Budapest: Latin epigraphy, Roman religion and classical archaeology.<sup>18</sup>

His first articles are the results of his inspiring work carried on in the museums of Budapest and Szombathely during his stay in Hungary as a student and from 1960 as an assistant of Hahn at the Department of Ancient History.<sup>19</sup> In his early articles, he emphasized his interest in the social aspects of the Roman civilization and religion (*collegia*, *augustales*, urban religion).<sup>20</sup> In his article on an altar dedicated to IOM Culminaris from Intercisa, the bibliography used by him is predominantly German and Central-European, following the fashionable tendency of that

<sup>12</sup>SZILÁGYI J. GY.: Kerényi Károly emlékezete [The memory of Károly Kerényi]. *Antik Tanulmányok* 20.2 (1973) 200–210; SZILÁGYI J. GY.: Kerényi és Magyarország, 1943–1948 [Károly Kerényi and Hungary 1943–1948]. In SZILÁGYI J. GY.: *Mitológia és humanitás. Tanulmányok Kerényi Károly 100. születésnapjára*. Budapest 1999, 88–103.

<sup>13</sup>SZILÁGYI: Egzisztenciális tudomány (n. 6).

<sup>14</sup>B. TÓTH M.: Részlet az opponensi véleményből [Details from the opponent's review]. In TÓTH I.: *Pannoniai vallástörténet*. Pécs–Budapest 2015, 11–12.

<sup>15</sup>SZILÁGYI: András Alföldi (n. 8), KOVÁCS (n. 1). On Alföldi's method on Roman religion, see SANTANGELO (n. 2).

<sup>16</sup>On the new wave and the generational and ideological shift after Kerényi – marked by the activity of György Lukács and Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel –, see SZILÁGYI: Egzisztenciális tudomány (n. 6) 116–117.

<sup>17</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: "Strukturakutatás" a régészetben ["Strukturforschung" in der Archäologie]. In "Tiszta szívvel". Az Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kara irodalmi és tudományos diákköreinek folyóirata ["Mit reinem Herzen". Zeitschrift der literarischen und wissenschaftlichen Studentenzirkel der Philosophischen Fakultäten der Eötvös Loránd Universität] 1.1 (1956) 34–43.

<sup>18</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: Rez. von A. Bruhl, Liber pater. Origine et expansion du culte dionysiaque à Rome et dans le monde romain (1953). *Antik Tanulmányok* 4 (1957) 146–149. See also his publications from 1958. From 1957, he became to work as an assistant of the Historical Museum of Budapest (Budapest Történeti Múzeum) focusing especially on the epigraphic material of Aquincum.

<sup>19</sup>From this period he established most of his academic relationships with the most relevant Hungarian scholars, such as Lajos Nagy, László Barkóczi or Tibor Nagy.

<sup>20</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: Collegium-Organisationen in Intercisa. *Acta Antiqua Hung.* 6 (1958) 177–198.



period regarding the *interpretatio romana* or *graeca* in the provincial religion.<sup>21</sup> In his early works, he used a very eclectic and interdisciplinary methodology in the interpretation of the epigraphic sources, a clear result of his formation as the student of Hahn and Marót. His article about the religious *collegia* in Intercisa is remarkable by its extremely rich analogies, using not only the Pannonian, but a holistic knowledge on *collegia* and professional and religious communities.<sup>22</sup> He also recognized the importance of the Mithraic studies, which was under a change of paradigm due to the contemporary works of Marteen J. Vermaseren.<sup>23</sup> His article about the cult of Mithras in Aquincum ahead only with some years the famous contribution of István Tóth, later the doyen of the Mithraic studies in Pannonia.<sup>24</sup>

His works on Roman religion published between 1956 and 1965, during his Hungarian activity as a student, university assistant and museologist show a very clear progress and evolution. From the publishing of individual inscriptions of Savaria, Aquincum or Intercisa, in his later articles he will focus on macro-topics of provincial religion, presenting it not only as a premiere in the Hungarian scholarship, but using always a rich international bibliography and interdisciplinary methods. These articles on provincial topics can be interpreted as small steps for a larger, social history of the province through the religious life of it.<sup>25</sup> His works on *augustales*, *augures* or the religious life of Aquincum should not be considered studies on Roman religion exclusively, but a detailed segment of a social history of the province, where Roman religious communication is part of the process of the so-called “Romanisation” and it represents a social aspect of provincial life.<sup>26</sup> In this context again, Roman religion appears as a tool and agency of a much broader context of analyzing a provincial case study in the perspective of a global view of the Roman Empire. Alföldy published in 1960 a short study on the so-called healing divinities in Pannonia, which deals for the first time in the Hungarian literature with this topic, later developed by Z. Kádár in a detailed study.<sup>27</sup> In this article, Alföldy follows again the highly influential theory of *interpretatio romana*, arguing, that the local, indigenous Celtic healing gods were “united” with the Roman healing divinities.<sup>28</sup> In the same year, Alföldy

<sup>21</sup>NEMETI, S.: *Le Syncrétisme religieux en Dacie Romaine*. Cluj-Napoca 2019, 43–84.

<sup>22</sup>In this article, written in German as a 23 years old student, Alföldy not only presents the recent state of research – but for the first time – republish some of the most well known inscriptions of Intercisa, criticysing among many great names, Lajos Nagy and Ferenc Fülep, doyen of classical archaeology in Hungary at that moment: ALFÖLDY: Collegium-Organisationen (n. 20) 183–184.

<sup>23</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: Mithras aquincumi kultuszához [Zum Mithraskult in Aquincum]. *Antik Tanulmányok* 5 (1958) 73–74. Alföldy, however, didn't cite the recently appeared corpus of the Dutch scholar. Discussing shortly some religious aspects of the Mithraic communities – arguing for example, that the sanctuaries of Mithras could be often rebuilt because the worshippers' used torches in the ritual – he cites only the already classical Cumontian ideas.

<sup>24</sup>TÓTH, I.: Megjegyzések Mithra pannoniai kultuszának történetéhez [Anmerkungen zum pannonischen Kult von Mithra]. *Antik Tanulmányok* 12 (1965) 86–90.

<sup>25</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: Pannoniciani augures. *Acta Antiqua Hung.* 8 (1960) 145–164. In this article he uses not only the epigraphic material, but also the philological sources.

<sup>26</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: Aquincum vallási életének története [The history of the religious life in Aquincum]. *Budapest Régiségei* 20 (1963) 47–69. After the religious synthesis of Angelo Brelich and the historical-archaeological summary of Tibor Nagy, Alföldy's article is the first one which presents the religious life of Aquincum as part of a universal, social history of the province and the Empire. See SZABÓ (n. 11) 46–47.

<sup>27</sup>KÁDÁR, Z.: Der Kult der Heilgötter in Pannonien und den übrigen Donauprovinzen. *ANRW II.18.2* (1989) 1038–1061.

<sup>28</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: Kelta gyógyító istenek tisztelete a római Pannoniában [Die Verehrung keltischer Heilgötter in römischen Pannonien]. *Az Országos Orvostörténeti Könyvtár Közleményei* 7 (1960) 107.



published two detailed review-articles on major monographs on Roman religion, which reflects his interest in this topic.<sup>29</sup> He emphasizes the importance of Roman religion and its social aspects, arguing, that the book of Bömer represents an important milestone in the research of Roman religion, where social historical approaches were missing.<sup>30</sup> Notions, such as “lived religion”, “small and big gods” are used by Alföldy in this unique text, which seems to reflect the influence of Bömer’s work on his later vision on Roman religion too.<sup>31</sup> A year before his final departure and self-exile in Germany, Alföldy published two reviews on the influential works of C. Koch and K. Latte.<sup>32</sup>

## THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF ROME AND THE STUDY OF ROMAN RELIGION

In the period of 1965 and 1968, Géza Alföldy worked at the *Rheinisches Landesmuseum* in Bonn, finishing his thesis of habilitation at the University of Bonn, where he was teaching between 1968 and 1970. In this period, his work was focusing mostly on military history and prosopography.<sup>33</sup> After he moved to the Universität Bochum, Alföldy published his first book on a topic strictly related to Roman religious communication, focusing on the *flamines* of Hispania Citerior.<sup>34</sup> As one of the most cited books of Alföldy from his early career, the monograph is not only the first comprehensive catalogue of the epigraphic sources on the *flamines* from the province, but also the first detailed analysis of this sacerdotal college from a Roman province. The book analyses in details the origins of the priests, their social and political career, temporarily mobility and their urban and sometimes even extra-provincial networks. Alföldy contextualised the *flamines* as a mobile and dynamic social group within the provincial society and local elite, however their role in local religious communication and as agents of religion are not emphasised. Despite of these details, this work remained a reference for numerous provincial monographs on priests even today.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup>KERÉNYI, K.: *Die Herkunft der Dionysosreligion nach dem heutigen Stand der Forschung*. New York 1956; BÖMER, FR.: *Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom*. Wiesbaden 1958. See also ALFÖLDY, G.: Rez. von K. Kerényi, *Die Herkunft der Dionysosreligion nach dem heutigen Stand der Forschung* (1956). *Antik Tanulmányok* 7 (1960) 100–102; ALFÖLDY, G.: Rez. von V. Wessetzky, *Die ägyptischen Kulte zur Römerzeit in Ungarn* (1961). *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 90 (1963) 146–148; ALFÖLDY, G.: Rez. von Z. Kádár, *Die kleinasiatisch-syrischen Kulte zur Römerzeit in Ungarn* (1962). *Archeológiai Értesítő* 90 (1963) 317–319.

<sup>30</sup>ALFÖLDY: *Kelta* (n. 28) 108.

<sup>31</sup>Alföldy evokes the work of Bömer, especially his surprising theory which questioned the “democratic” nature of the Mithras cult, arguing that this small group religion was much more elitist as it was presented by Cumont and Vermaseren. See also: ALFÖLDY: *Mithras* (n. 23); GORDON, R. L.: Institutionalised religious options: Mithraism. In RÜPKE: *A Companion* (n. 2) 392–405.

<sup>32</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: Rez. von C. Koch, *Religio. Studien zu Kult und Glauben der Römer* (1960). *Eirene* 3 (1964) 177–178; ALFÖLDY, G.: Rez. von K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (1960). *Eirene* 3 (1964) 181–183.

<sup>33</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: *Die Legionslegaten der Römischen Rheinarmeen* [Epigraphische Studien 3]. Graz–Köln 1967.

<sup>34</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: *Flamines provinciae Hispaniae Citerioris* [Anejos de “Archivo Español de Arqueología” VI]. Madrid 1973.

<sup>35</sup>See SZABÓ, Á.: *Pannoniciani Sacerdotes. A szervezett vallási élet principatuskori vezetői* [Pannoniciani Sacerdotes. The leaders of the organised priestly life during the Principate]. Pécs 2006; SZABÓ, Á.: *Daciai papság* [Priesthood in Roman Dacia]. Budapest 2007. For the latest currents on *flamines*, see RICHARDSON, J. H. – SANTANGELO, F. (eds): *Priests and State in the Roman World* [Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge, Bd. 33]. Stuttgart 2011; RÜPKE: *Lived Ancient Religion* (n. 2) 191–204.





While the local elite and the dynamic agent of religious communication appears as a propographic case study in Alföldy's work, the case of pre-Roman divinities and religious transformations in provincial context can be illustrated through his popular synthesis on the province of Noricum.<sup>36</sup> In this book, Roman religion appears as part of the process of "Romanisation": pre-Roman divinities and their material evidence (exceptionally, Alföldy presents numerous case studies of small finds, figurative representations, and sanctuaries too) are interpreted in the context of Romanisation, as a transformative and integrational, social force of the Empire.<sup>37</sup> In his provincial monograph, religion appears twice: first as an auxiliary element or consequence of the problematic and recently contested notion of Romanisation and in the chapter dealing with the crisis of the third century, Alföldy compress the topic of religion in the general notion of "spirituality" and "intellectual changes".<sup>38</sup> Religious communication in provincial context appears as a sensible marker of an age, which resonates with the major macro-political changes: in the work of Alföldy on Noricum, religious changes and local appropriations in Noricum are presented as the consequences of the crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD mostly through epigraphic sources of the new, Roman elite.

In 1975, when Géza Alföldy was only 40 years old two important moments marked his life: he became professor of epigraphy and ancient history at the University of Heidelberg – where he worked more than three decades – and in the same year, he published his most cited and celebrated book on social history of Rome translated in numerous languages.<sup>39</sup> The book is considered as a reference work in Roman studies where Alföldy presented his famous social-pyramid and the complex interaction of social groups and layers of Roman society. It is not a classical "social history"<sup>40</sup> of the Roman world, as it appears in the early works of R. McMullen and F. Millar,<sup>41</sup> or a social history where economy plays the major role as one can identify in the work of Rostovtzeff and Finley.<sup>42</sup> Alföldy's social history of Rome is a chronological history of social classes and their complex interaction in various historical periods of Rome. While the book is considered as a basic read in German classical tradition and Central-East European

<sup>36</sup> ALFÖLDY, G.: *Noricum*. London – New York, 1974.

<sup>37</sup> ALFÖLDY: *Noricum* (n. 36) 132–142. See also ALFÖLDY, G.: Romanisation – Grundbegriff oder Fehlgriff? Überlegungen zum gegenwärtigen Stand der Erforschung von Integrationsprozessen im Römischen Weltreich. In VISY, Zs. (ed.): *Limes XIX. Proceedings of the XIXth Congress of Roman Frontier Studies held in Pécs, Hungary, September 2003*. Pécs 2005, 25–56. For a much more critical voice, see WOOLF, G.: *Becoming Roman: The origins of provincial civilization in Gaul*. Cambridge 1998, 7–8; VERSLUYS, M. J.: Understanding objects in motion: an archaeological dialogue on Romanization. *Archaeological Dialogues* 21.1 (2014) 1–20; WOOLF, G.: Romanization 2.0 and its alternatives. *Archaeological Dialogues* 21.1 (2014) 45–50.

<sup>38</sup> ALFÖLDY: *Noricum* (n. 36) 193–198.

<sup>39</sup> ALFÖLDY, G.: *Römische Sozialgeschichte*. Wiesbaden 1975. See also ALFÖLDY, G.: *The Social History of Rome*. Revised edition, London 1988; ALFÖLDY, G.: *Römische Sozialgeschichte*. 4., völlig überarbeitete und aktualisierte Auflage. Stuttgart 2011.

<sup>40</sup> CONRAD, CHR.: Social History. In WRIGHT, J. D. (ed.): *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2nd edition. Amsterdam 2015, 307–312.

<sup>41</sup> MACMULLEN, R.: *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284*. Yale University Press 1974; MILLAR, F.: *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC-AD 337)*. Ithaca, NY 1977. See also the structure and major topics in POTTER, S. D. (ed.): *A Companion to the Roman Empire*. Leiden – New York 2010.

<sup>42</sup> ROSTOVITZ, M.: *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. 2nd edition by P. Fraser. Oxford 1957; FINLEY, M. (ed.): *Studies in Ancient Society*. London–Boston 1974.



universities, the work of Alföldy received a critical voice in the Anglo-Saxon tradition.<sup>43</sup> As T. W. Arnheim highlighted in his humiliating review, the book of Alföldy doesn't discuss education, daily life, arts and religion as social factors. In his book, social history is about the constantly changing legal state of social classes in historical perspectives. Despite of this severe, but highly influential limitation of social history of the Roman people, Alföldy shortly mentions Roman religion 65 times in the last version of his paradigmatic book.<sup>44</sup> In the introduction Alföldy mentions Roman religion as a fundamental element of Roman society, citing his study on Roman religion and the crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>45</sup> Discussing Roman republican society, Alföldy mentions the role of religion and religious actors as essential factors in the functionality and legal balance of the state and its people.<sup>46</sup> Roman religion appears also as a guarantee of *mos maiorum*, the cult of the predecessors and public life. Actors of Roman religious communication appears mostly in chapters dealing with the *honestiores*, the elite of the society, describing an elitist façade of Roman religion (State religion – *Reichsreligion*, *Staatsreligion*). Priests, gods, and spaces of Roman religion are emphasized mostly as part of the elite and rarely discussed in the chapters dealing with the *humiliores*.<sup>47</sup> Religion, as a topic was completely missing from Alföldy's original 1975 monograph. After numerous critical voices, Alföldy changed few details of the book especially on chapters of Roman Republics and Late Roman period. The short passages on Roman religion in his major book are supported with few footnotes citing some general works on Roman religious pluralism<sup>48</sup> and the religious life of the Senatorial elite.<sup>49</sup> Published in 2011, the last edition of his social history omits to cite the major works on Roman religion neither from the classical political-historical or social approach of J. Scheid, nor the recent cultural anthropological and cultural-historical approaches of J. Rüpke.<sup>50</sup>

## ROMAN RELIGION AND THE CRISIS OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY AD

Following the harsh critics on his influential social history of Rome, Alföldy published several works which are focusing on the missing or less emphasised topics of his book. Among these also the religious changes and the role of Roman religion within the macro-social history of the Roman Empire.

The origin of this article by Géza Alföldy dates to a seminar given in 1960 on the religious development that took place in the Roman province of Pannonia during the Crisis of the

<sup>43</sup> ARNHEIM, M. T. W.: Review of: Geza Alföldy: Römische Sozialgeschichte. *The Classical Review* 28.1 (1978) 118–119; SPURR, M.: Review of: Géza Alföldy, Römische Sozialgeschichte. *The Classical Review* 36.2 (1986) 331–332.

<sup>44</sup> Statistics from the last edition of his book: ALFÖLDY: Römische Sozialgeschichte (n. 39).

<sup>45</sup> ALFÖLDY, G.: Die Krise des Imperium Romanum und die Religion Roms. In ECK, W. (ed.): *Religion und Gesellschaft in der römischen Kaiserzeit. Kolloquium zu Ehren von Friedrich Vittinghoff*. Köln–Wien 1989, 53–102.

<sup>46</sup> ALFÖLDY: Römische Sozialgeschichte (n. 39) 53.

<sup>47</sup> Mentioned in a single line: ALFÖLDY: Römische Sozialgeschichte (n. 39) 213.

<sup>48</sup> MACMULLEN, R.: *Paganism in the Roman Empire*. Yale University Press 1981.

<sup>49</sup> VÁRHELYI, Zs.: *The religion of senators in the Roman Empire: power and the beyond*. Cambridge – New York 2010.

<sup>50</sup> SCHEID, J.: *An introduction to Roman religion*. Edinburgh 2003; RÜPKE: *A Companion* (n. 2).





Third Century. It was updated and delivered under another title for an inaugural lecture in Bonn six years later, in 1966, and was published for the first time in 1988.<sup>51</sup>

A year later, in 1989, the article was published twice: on the first occasion with appendices for his anthology published in Stuttgart as part of the HABES series;<sup>52</sup> as well as that same year when the Colloquium for the 75th Birthday of Friedrich Vittinghoff which took place in 1985 and was published under the editorial supervision of Werner Eck.<sup>53</sup>

This is one of the most important articles written by the German-naturalised Hungarian historian on the phenomenon of the “Third Century Crisis”,<sup>54</sup> specifically on the relationship between the crisis and religious policy. It is well known that during the third century, Roman society experienced profound changes in its spiritual and moral orientation. The value system that had applied until that time stopped being the universal behavioural guideline. Devotion to the ancient religious traditions of Rome, and the imperial cult as an ideological instrument to ensure cohesion among different social groups, stopped being recognisable factors when moral and above all spiritual orientation was needed for a society – why not describe it thus? – tormented and threatened by a backdrop of constant internal and external conflicts and by widespread and increasingly rampant poverty. What is certain, however, is that the ancient Roman religion and the cults that went hand in hand with it were a very long way from disappearing completely in this century of crisis.<sup>55</sup>

It is true that fewer literary works from the third century have been left to us than from earlier and later centuries. Perhaps that is merely a matter of luck, a random circumstance, although it is visible that the literacy itself becomes more restricted in various provinces. With Neoplatonism a new philosophy was born, which also tried to offer an orientation for life that considered the difficult circumstances of the time. The effect of this philosophical movement was limited, however, to small groups of intellectuals among the elite. The ancient cults of

<sup>51</sup> ALFÖLDY: Die Krise (n. 45) 94–102.

<sup>52</sup> ALFÖLDY, G.: *Die Krise des Römischen Reiches. Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbetrachtung*. Stuttgart 1989, 349–387, with appendices.

<sup>53</sup> ECK (n. 45).

<sup>54</sup> The bibliography on the Crisis of the Third Century is enormous. To cite a few important contributions: DE BLOIS, L.: *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*. Leiden, 1976; WALSER, G. – PEKÁRY, T.: *Die Krise des römischen Reiches. Bericht über die Forschungen zur Geschichte des 3. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin 1962; LORiot, X. – NONY, D.: *La crise de l'Empire Romain 235–285*. Paris 1997; HEKSTER, O.: *Rome and its Empire, AD 193–284*. Edinburgh 2008; BLECKMANN, B.: *Die Reichskrise des III. Jh. in der spätantiken und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung. Untersuchungen zu den nachdionischen Quellen der Chronik des Johannes Zonaras*, Munich 1982; COOK, S. A. – ADCOCK, F. E. – CHARLESWORTH, M. P. – BAYNES, N. H. (eds): *The Cambridge Ancient History XII: The Imperial Crisis and Recovery, A.D. 193–324*. Cambridge 1939, in which A. ALFÖLDI wrote his masterly article on the subject (165–231), and the second edition of the volume: BOWMAN, A. – CAMERON, A. – GARNSEY, P. (eds): *The Cambridge Ancient History XII: The Crisis of the Empire AD 193–337*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge 2005, the volume in which, despite the title, the article by J. DRINKWATER dismantled the very concept of a “crisis” (28–66); CHRISTOL, M.: *L'Empire romain du III<sup>e</sup> siècle. Histoire Politique 192–325 après J.-C.* Paris 1997; POTTER, D. S.: *The Roman Empire at Bay. AD 180–395*. London – New York 2004; JOHNE, K. P. – HARTMANN, U. – GERHARDT, T. (eds): *Deleto paene imperio Romano. Transformationsprozesse des Römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhunderts und ihre Rezeption in der Neuzeit*, Stuttgart, 2006; C. WITSCHEL, *Krise-Rezession-Stagnation? Der Westen des Römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* Frankfurt 1999 and HEKSTER, O. – DE KLEIJN, G. – SLOOTJES, D. (eds): *Crises and the Roman Empire: Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop on International Network Impact of Empire. Nijmegen, June 20–24, 2006*. Leiden 2007.

<sup>55</sup> This is the central thesis of Alföldy's article, as we will see in the following pages.



traditional Roman religion found a significant rival in the cult of Mithras, *Deus Sol Invictus*, because this religion, which had spread better from the time of the Severi, proved enormously attractive to many individuals thanks to its high moral imperatives, its theology that included the concept of victory over the forces of darkness and the sea, and the cohesion of its adherents within the Mithraic communities. With the spread of Christianity during the third century, moreover, the Roman Empire had to confront at its heart a religious expression which the Christian leaders themselves as well as the advocates of the ancient cults considered a danger to the very existence of the state – above all because the conversion of many of the inhabitants of the Roman world into followers of Jesus Christ was a consequence of the conviction that the insoluble problems of contemporary life in the Empire would only be resolved in the next life through faith in Christ. It was not for no reason that, following the more tolerant policy of the Severi towards the church, the subsequent emperors took extreme measures against this dangerous *superstitio*: the persecution of the Christians under Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian, which was systematic and brutal both globally and to a degree previously unknown in Imperial policy, was an attempt to save the Empire from enemies whose superstition was believed to provoke the anger of the gods, thereby making them responsible for all the calamities of the time. This conviction was shared by many of the Empire's inhabitants.

Mystery religions, more specifically the cult of Mithras, and Christianity, promised all kinds of consolation and redemption. In fact, this promise in many cases satisfied the religious, theological, and moral needs of a large proportion of the inhabitants of the Empire more profoundly than the offering provided by the ancient and traditional religion which had a more civic nature.

Faced with this shift, the Roman state found itself obliged to take sides and react, and it attempted to promote afresh the *mos maiorum* with its full range of religious and ethical implications.<sup>56</sup> A whole programme to this end undertaken by the soldier Emperors may be observed: for example, the mandate by the Emperor Decius to restore the ancient religious monuments that had been deteriorating over the centuries, or the proclamation of the *restitutio pietatis* by the never-very-prudent ruler Claudius Gothicus.<sup>57</sup>

The emperors of the third century prior to Diocletian did not attempt to transform the Roman world but were instead convinced that the measures that they favoured – promoting the ancient civic religious cults, the ancient religion, and in general the ancient political order – were all necessary and imperative measures which had to be implemented with the full force of the law.

In “Die Krise des Imperium Romanum und die Religions Rom”, Alföldy undertakes a detailed and meticulous analysis of the religious policy of several of the so-called “Soldaten-Kaisern”,<sup>58</sup> specifically in the Danubian provinces from which most of them hailed. He draws attention to the striking fervour retained for the cults of the state gods in Pannonia throughout the third century, in contrast to previous centuries. In this part of the Empire in this period,

<sup>56</sup> ALFÖLDY: Die Krise (n. 45) 58f.

<sup>57</sup> ALFÖLDY, G.: *Nueva Historia Social de Roma*. Sevilla 2012, 245 and n. 512.

<sup>58</sup> On this period, see, among others: JOHNE, K.-P. – HARTMANN, U. – GERHARDT, T.: *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser. Krise und Transformation des römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr. (235–284)*. Berlin 2008; and SOMMER, M.: *Die Soldatenkaiser*. Zweite Auflage. Darmstadt 2010.



ancient cults from traditional religion that had long been forgotten in the boot of Italy were revived,<sup>59</sup> as witnessed by many more documents than in previous periods. These were cults such as that of Mars Gradivus, the god who appeared at that moment in battle when the first two *gradus* – the first lines of combatants – met;<sup>60</sup> or the less-well-known cult of the goddess Salacia, a deity who symbolised the personification of the rough sea and the bubbling strength of springs.<sup>61</sup> We only know her name through records in ancient literature, such as the antiquarian work by Varro, written around the end of the Republican period – except for an inscription dedicated in this third century by a group of veterans in Vindobona (Pannonia).<sup>62</sup>

As this work by Alföldy also demonstrates, ancient Roman festivals which in other areas of the Empire were no longer documented at this time were celebrated with great intensity in Pannonia in the third century.<sup>63</sup> The ancient festival days (*dies fasti*) of the Roman deities were celebrated in this province during the third century by soldiers and the militarised society with astonishing intensity. We should therefore not be surprised that Christianity could not put down deep roots in the Danubian provinces before it left its first real footprints in Diocletian's era.<sup>64</sup>

Alföldy's work marks the start of a change of direction in scholarly research into religious life in the third century. For a long time, research was dominated by the idea that this century was a time of triumph for Eastern mystery cults, coinciding with a decline in traditional Roman civic religion. In this extensive and thoughtful work, Alföldy demonstrates that this period also saw important trends whose objective was none other than the restoration and revival of ancient Roman religion. Imperial propaganda, moreover, emphatically supported these trends. For example, the successes of Phillip the Arab as a *restitutor* of order in the Empire were owed to his *eusebeia*, to his *pietas*, to his loyalty to the traditional gods of Rome.<sup>65</sup>

Another emperor, Decius, ordered the restoration of the ancient statues of the gods.<sup>66</sup> On coins that bore the commendation of the emperors as *restitutor orbis*, the figure of the emperor offering an altar to the gods usually appears. This carries the same message as the Panegyric to Phillip, that is, that the restoration of order to the Empire must start with the demonstration of *pietas erga deos*, to cite here a phrase customary to the Romans themselves. Claudius Gothicus indeed referred to himself as *restitutor pietatis* on his coinage.<sup>67</sup> The persecutors of the Christians, such as Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian, obliged all their subjects to make sacrifices to reconcile the gods with the Romans.

This watchword of the *restitutio pietatis* was not merely an empty and inert slogan designed for Imperial propaganda. In his work, Alföldy compiles evidence of a real revival of the ancient Roman cults above all in the army in the Danubian provinces and in the society of these provinces, which became during the third century the most important mainstay in the

<sup>59</sup>ALFÖLDY: Die Krise (n. 45) 53f.

<sup>60</sup>ALFÖLDY: Die Krise (n. 45) 90 = (n. 52) 378.

<sup>61</sup>Cf. ALFÖLDY: Nueva Historia (n. 57) 259; ALFÖLDY: Die Krise (n. 45) 93 n. 115.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. n. 61.

<sup>63</sup>ALFÖLDY: Die Krise (n. 45) 91f.

<sup>64</sup>ALFÖLDY: Nueva Historia (n. 57) 260.

<sup>65</sup>ALFÖLDY: Nueva Historia (n. 57) 235 and 286.

<sup>66</sup>ALFÖLDY: Nueva Historia (n. 57) 245 and n. 512.

<sup>67</sup>On the formula on this Emperor's coins, see *RIC* V 1, 227 n° 188.



continuation of the Roman order. This was not simply proof of continuity in Roman religion from the early Imperial period until the third century, which altogether contradicts the notion of a “crisis”, but rather, is proof that the popularity of these cults, at least in the Danube region and during the period of the soldier Emperors, was also much greater than at any previous time. This is much more than a revival of civic religion.

This demonstrates the centrality of the idea that the crisis of the Empire could not be overcome any other way than with the help of the traditional and secular gods of Rome. This idea was completely consistent with the religious policy of contemporary emperors – emperors of whom a large proportion came from that very society and army of Pannonia and the neighbouring Danubian provinces.

This restorative disposition started with the reign of Septimius Severus, a ruler from Mediterranean Africa whom the Romans mocked for his strange accent and lasted until the reign of Diocletian. It has important pivot points with the abovementioned emperors from the Danube region, many of whom had reached the top from truly humble origins, and all of whom were deeply imbued with the military values that were shared by individuals such as Decius, Claudius Gothicus, and Diocletian, who are discussed above.

In conclusion, this important work by Alföldy delivers the *coup de grâce* to the mistaken concept of the supremacy of Eastern cults and Christianity in Rome during the poorly named “Century of Crisis”, the third century. F. Cumont should be heavily qualified. It was precisely during this long century that Juvenal’s pithy and famous<sup>68</sup> phrase from his *Satires* was never further from the truth – a phrase with which the Hungarian scholar opens his article.<sup>69</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Géza Alföldy is well known for his monumental heritage on Roman epigraphy and social history of the early Principate. His work needs a much careful analysis in the future in the larger, historiographic context of the globalised discourse on Romanisation, Roman epigraphy and the history of classics in the 20th century in Europe and beyond. This study aimed to understand how Roman religion – a topic, which created in the last one hundred years since the paradigmatic works of G. Wissowa and F. V. Cumont an entire subdiscipline<sup>70</sup> – appears in the major works of Géza Alföldy and the social history of the German tradition of the 20th century. Similarly to Ronald Syme and Arnaldo Momigliano, two of the greatest historians of Rome in the 20th century, Roman religion was mostly a “quarry for prosopographical hunt” for Géza Alföldy too.<sup>71</sup> In the work of Alföldy Roman religion is presented in a similar manner as Syme

<sup>68</sup>ALFÖLDY: Die Krise (n. 45) 53 and 54.

<sup>69</sup>Juv. Sat. 3. 62: *Iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes*.

<sup>70</sup>PHILLIPS (n. 2) 10–29; RIVES (n. 2). See also SZABÓ, CS.: Gods and cities: Roman religion in urban context in the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. A methodological overview. In FARKAS, G. I. – NEMÉNYI, R. – SZABÓ, M. (eds): *Visy 75. Artificem commendat opus*. Pécs 2019, 512–513; ADRYCH, PH. – DALGLISH, D.: Writing the Art. Archaeology and Religion of the Roman Mediterranean. In ELSNER, I. (ed.): *Empires of Faith in Late Antiquity Histories of Art and Religion from India to Ireland*. Cambridge 2020, 51–80.

<sup>71</sup>SCHEID: Syme (n. 2) 39.



mentioned in one of his works: “formal rather than spiritual”.<sup>72</sup> Religion appears as one of the facets of Romanisation, notion redefined by Alföldy in one of his late studies.<sup>73</sup> His extremely detailed and pedantic studies on social history and prosopography are focused around the notion of social transformations and appropriations. Religion appears also as one of the mirrors and sensible indicators of major social and political changes of the Roman world, such as the crisis of the Republic, the Augustan revolution, the military crisis of the 3rd century AD or the Christianisation of the Empire. Roman religion in the work of Alföldy is mainly a religion through epigraphy and prosopography:<sup>74</sup> the Mithraic altars of Aquincum, the votive inscriptions and *formulae* of Tarraco, the priests of Hispania, the beginnings of the monumental imperial inscriptions in the Augustan period and the Celtic religious transformations of Noricum are part of a much larger picture, where the human actors – the worshippers – are in the focus point and the materiality, space and experience of religious communication are secondary.<sup>75</sup> This view on Roman religion comes from the Wissowian traditions and mostly, from the heritage of Theodor Mommsen and the German epigraphic school, which dominated the Central-East European historiography in the 20th century. This heritage appears also in the influential work of Franz Altheim, who had an impact on the view of Syme and Alföldy on Roman religion too.<sup>76</sup> Altheim affirmed in his influential book on Roman religion that “...a history of Roman religion, as a special subject of study, can only be orientated by a history of Rome in general. It can only be understood as a part of a coherent whole, which, regarded from another standpoint, presents itself to us as the history of Roman literature, of Roman art, of Roman law, and which, like every history, has its focus in the history of the state.”<sup>77</sup> This approach on Roman religion was very influential till the end of the 20th century in Roman studies. Few voices made the exception. Still, by his extremely pedantic description and analysis of each altar, instrumenta inscription, their archaeological context, research history, physical aspects, decorations votive objects and spaces are interpreted in a new way in the works of Alföldy: epigraphy reached a new level in his work (similarly to what S. Panciera did in Italy) and the material agents (especially inscribed objects) of religious communication had a new type of analysis.<sup>78</sup>

The paradigmatic work of S. Price and J. North, M. Beard and later, J. Rüpke opened a new perspective in the study of Roman religion within Roman studies.<sup>79</sup> Their approach distanced

<sup>72</sup>SYME, R.: *The Roman revolution*. Oxford 1939, 454. Cf. n. 71.

<sup>73</sup>ALFÖLDY, G.: Die Romanisierung in den Donauprovinzen Roms. In KNEISSL, P. – LOSEMAN, V. (eds): *Alte Geschichte und Wissenschaftsgeschichte. Festschrift für Karl Christ zum 65. Geburtstag*. Darmstadt 1988, 1–21; ALFÖLDY, G.: Romanisation (n. 37) 25–56. See also HAYNES, I.: *Blood of the provinces: the Roman auxilia and the making of provincial society from Augustus to the Severans*. Oxford 2013, 21.

<sup>74</sup>SCHEID, J.: Epigraphy and Roman Religion. In WILKES, J. – DAVIES, J. (eds): *Epigraphy and the historical sciences*. Oxford – New York 2012, 31–44.

<sup>75</sup>On the major facets of Roman religious communication, see RÜPKE: *Pantheon* (n. 2).

<sup>76</sup>See also SCHEID: Syme (n. 2) 41 and n. 8.

<sup>77</sup>ALTHEIM, FR.: *A history of Roman religion*. London 1938, 3. See also ADRYCH–DALGLISH (n. 70) 61.

<sup>78</sup>BUSCH, A. – SCHÄFER, A. (eds.): *Römische Weihealtäre im Kontext: internationale Tagung in Köln vom 3. bis 5. Dezember 2009 Weihealtäre in Tempeln und Heiligtümern*, Friedberg, 2014.

<sup>79</sup>BEARD, M. – NORTH, J. – PRICE, S.: *Religions of Rome*. Cambridge 1998. RÜPKE, *Pantheon* (n. 2)



from the polis-religion and Reichsreligion approach, emphasizing the role of the individual, the relativity of religiosity in ancient societies and the role of religious appropriations, embodiment and the rich human and material agency in religious communication. Alföldy's view on Roman religion however lives further in the works of J. Scheid and many others from Central-East Europe, Italy and Spain,<sup>80</sup> where polis-religion and the role of the Roman state and the social history of the elites plays a significant role in the interpretation of the material evidence of Roman religion, looking for a balance between ancient and modern, primary sources and contemporary questions rising from social theories.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>SCHEID, J.: *The Gods, the State, and the Individual: Reflections on Civic Religion in Rome. Reflections on civic religion in Rome*. Translated and foreword by Clifford Ando. Philadelphia 2015.

<sup>81</sup>See also WOOLF, G.: Only connect? Network analysis and religious change in the Roman World. *Hélade* 2.2 (2016) 43–58; SZABÓ, CS.: *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. Materiality and religious experience* [Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 49]. Oxford 2018; SZABÓ, CS.: *Roman Religion in the Danubian Provinces: Space Sacralisation and Religious Communication During the Principate (1st–3rd Century AD)*, Oxford 2022.

