

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY  
HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY FACULTY

*THE EGYPTIAN PRESENCE AND INFLUENCES IN  
THE MIDDLE AND LOWER DANUBE: THE  
PANNONIAN, DACIAN AND MOESIAN PROVINCES  
(1<sup>ST</sup>-4<sup>TH</sup> C. AD)*

ABSTRACT

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Cluj-Napoca 2013

The PhD dissertation represents the work stretched through a 3 year period of doctoral studies of the doctoral school „ Istorie. Civilizație. Cultură”, of the History and Philosophy Faculty of the Babeş-Bolyai University under the guidance of professor dr. Mihai Bărbulescu<sup>1</sup>.

The necessity of the work derives from a multitude of points of view. The subject of the PhD, namely the Egyptian presence and influences at the Middle and Lower Danube, in the provinces of Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia was researched in several occasions by different Romanian and foreign scholars. As we will further notice, these approaches were summary, being only published different artifacts or the situation of these influences of the religious manifestations for the Egyptian deities such as Isis, Sarapis, Harpocrate, Anubis, Bubastis, Apis etc. in micro-zones. Even these studies on micro-zones were published more than thirty years before (for the matter the history of the problem should be consulted).

Methodologically the endeavor of this work tried to imitate the monographic works published in the prestigious collection *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire Romain*, continued afterwards by *Religions in the Greco- Roman World*, edited by H.S. Versnel, R. Van den Broek et al. (continued after EPRO 114 in 1992), under the effigy of the Leiden University. The present manuscript has two major components, the first one being composed of two major chapters in which new problems were approached, of the chronology of the diffusion of these Egyptian cults in the danubian area and the analysis of the temple from the area, the way they functioned, the artisans of the temples and most importantly the impact of these temples. The second component was composed of a catalogue, the basis of the current manuscript.

The first phase in the construction of this work was an complete update of the discoveries through the creation of a catalogue of all the artifacts- actually the first one ever to be created on such a scale of the Roman Empire- which was to be the basis of the work. The collection of all the artifacts which in a sort betray a certain presence of the Egyptian cults in the danubian provinces presented a serious challenge. First of all, it faced a challenge because of the large number of discoveries (338) and secondly because of the diversity of languages in which they were published, some of them not necessarily

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<sup>1</sup> This work was possible with the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU/107/1.5/S/77946 with the title „Doctorate: an Attractive Research Career ”.

counted as wide spread languages<sup>2</sup>. Except the publishing of new artifact counted in the *aegyptiaca* category (for instance the monument from Potaissa shaped in the form of an Egyptian stela with an Hieroglyphic script imitation or the three *shabties* from Aquincum) another aspect difficult to realize was the attempt to include or not some artifacts in the *aegyptiaca* category (for example the bull statuettes from Dacia consider until now to be Apis bulls), of reinterpreting iconographically other artifacts (for instance the pharaoh depiction from Potaissa) or of finding , photographing and for the first time measuring monuments previously considered to be long lost (the statue basis attesting the *collegium Isidis* of Potaissa). All these endeavors consumed almost two out of the three years allocated to the PhD study.

A natural question was why was this area chosen to be analyzed? Firstly, because the information on the Egyptian cults and influences are pretty scarcely known in the international scholarly community. Pannonia for example, was approached at a monographic level only twice, both works concentrating on parts of the province (V. Wessetzky for the Hungarian part of Pannonia in 1961 and P. Selem on the Yugoslavian part in 1980). Other approaches, of scholars from other countries did not exist maybe because of the vast number of publications on the matter in Hungarian and Serbian-Croatian languages. Regarding Dacia, the situation was until now even more dramatic, because no monographic approach was ever made by now on the Egyptian cults which could pretend to be exhaustive and recent (a catalog with short commentaries was made by Al. Popa in his PhD unpublished manuscript dating from 1979, followed by other studies which bear the burden of heavy criticism as the study of 2004 by S. Sanie or the one of M. C. Budischovsky from 2007), without adding the *aegyptiaca* published generally in Romanian, not reachable for scholars of the international community. The situation in Moesia was saved by the effort of M. Tacheva-Hitova, who gathers all the *aegyptiaca* in a catalogue followed by a short commentaries published in 1983 and a brief presentation in 2007 by L. Bricault at the conference denumită „Nile into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman World. Proceedings of the IIIrd International Conference of Isis Studies, Leiden, May 11-14 2005, followed shortly by a publication two years later. The same scholar made also an atlas of the the diffusion of these cults in the Roman World in 2001

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<sup>2</sup> Another serious challenge was maintaining the pace with they speed of which these artifacts and studies are being published, without mentioning the fact that recent studies go far beyond the superficial analysis of the religious phenomena regarding the Egyptian cults.

and in 2005 he created a corpus of all the dedications for Isis, Sarapis and their *sunnaoi theoi* in the Roman World including Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia.

Practically, until now, there was not created a clear image of the phenomenon of the Egyptian cults and of their diffusion in these three provinces. Thus the purpose of this work was to create an image of the situation of the Egyptian cults in the provinces of Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia, taken all together and not separately as distinct entities.

Finally, at the epilogue of the argumentation I have to reiterate the fact that the subject of the work still needs much more time to intervene and not to leave any stone untouched, regarding the Egyptian cults and influences in the Danubian areas of Pannonia, Moesia and Dacia. Although two thirds of the time segment was needed for creating a viable basic work instrument, namely a catalogue, I sincerely hope that the result was satisfactory.