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**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF "HISTORY. CIVILIZATION.
CULTURE"**

The Cult of Apollo in the Danubian Provinces

-Summary-

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Cluj-Napoca

2025

Contents

Acknowledgements

List of figures and tables

List of abbreviations

Chapter 1. Introduction

1. 1. Purpose and importance
1. 2. Methodology
1. 3. History of research

Chapter 2. The chronology of the cult of Apollo

2. 1. Apollo before the Roman Imperial Period
2. 2. Early Principate
2. 3. Second century CE
2. 4. Severan Period
2. 5. The decline

Chapter 3. The Impact of the Roman Empire on the Cult of Apollo

3. 1. Mobility and connectivity
3. 2. The global, official cult of Apollo
3. 3. Regional and local variants of the cult of Apollo
 3. 3. 1. Apollo Agyeus
 3. 3. 2. Apollo Grannus
 3. 3. 3. Apollo Patrius
 3. 3. 4. Apollo Pirunenus
 3. 3. 5. Thracian Apollo
 3. 3. 5. 1. Apollo Auluzelus, Aulousadenus and Aulousada
 3. 3. 5. 2. Apollo Cendrissenus (Kendrisos)
 3. 3. 5. 3. Apollo Propitius
3. 4. Religious communication strategies

- 3. 4. 1. Apollo, Asclepius and Hygia
- 3. 4. 2. Apollo and Azizos
- 3. 4. 3. Apollo and Diana
- 3. 4. 4. Apollo and the Nymphs
- 3. 4. 5. Association with other deities
- 3. 5. Analysis of the distribution of epigraphic monuments in the Danubian provinces
- 3. 6. Analysis of the ethnic origin of the worshippers
- 3. 7. Analysis of worshippers' occupations and status
- 3. 8. Mobility cases
- 3. 9. Iconographic analysis

Chapter 4. Sacralised spaces in the Danubian provinces

- 4. 1. Raetia
 - 4. 1. 1. Phoebiana
- 4. 2. Noricum
 - 4. 2. 1. Teurnia
- 4. 3. Pannonia Superior
 - 4. 3. 1. Aquae Iasae
 - 4. 3. 2. Brigetio
- 4. 4. Panonia Inferior
 - 4. 4. 1. Aquincum
- 4. 5. Moesia Superior
 - 4. 5. 1. Ratiaria
- 4. 6. Moesia Inferior
 - 4. 6. 1. Draganovets
 - 4. 6. 2. Montana
 - 4. 6. 3. Sexaginta Prista
 - 4. 6. 4. Tomis
- 4. 7. Dacia
 - 4. 7. 1. Alburnus Maior
 - 4. 7. 2. Apulum

- 4. 7. 3. Războieni-Cetate
- 4. 7. 4. Tibiscum
- 4. 7. 5. Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa
- 4. 8. Analysis of the sacralised spaces

Chapter 5. Catalogue

- 5. 1. Greek inscriptions (6th – 1st centuries BCE)
- 5. 2. Latin and Greek inscriptions (1st – 3rd centuries CE)
- 5. 3. Iconographic monuments

Chapter 6. Conclusions

Appendix

List of plates

Bibliography

List of ancient works

List of books and articles

Keywords: Roman Empire, Danubian provinces, Apollo, cult, ancient religion, epigraphy, iconography, topography, architecture.

Summary

Religious materiality and sacralised spaces dedicated to the divine agent are the main clues that allow us to analyse the story of the cult of Apollo. Although he was introduced into the Roman pantheon long before the establishment of the Empire, being venerated mainly as a healer, the annexation of new territories and the creation of new provinces led to the spread of the cult as well as to the development of new religious practices resulting from contact with the conquered populations.

This study aims to examine the impact that the Roman Empire had on the cult of Apollo and how this led to its changes. The choice of the Danubian provinces as the area of analysis is due to the desire to go beyond the old research methods in which Roman religion is analysed only at the provincial level and often within a certain chronological interval, given that the limits of the provinces were not an impediment to the circulation of religious ideas, and the selection of a chronological interval limits the knowledge of when a cult appeared, respectively when it disappeared. The lack of a study encompassing the religious materiality of the cult of Apollo represented by both epigraphic and iconographic monuments is one of the reasons for this analysis. On the other hand, the fact that in many cases, the findings were published in the authors' mother tongues discouraged interest in such a study, and we wanted to overcome this linguistic obstacle.

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the religious materiality of the cult of Apollo discovered in the Danubian provinces (Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia Superior, Pannonia Inferior, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior and Dacia), in an attempt to clarify aspects related to the chronology and different variants of the cult, the worshippers of Apollo and the sacralised spaces dedicated to him. In order to establish the chronology of the cult of Apollo, the first step will be to examine the region on the western shore of the Black Sea that was incorporated into the province of Moesia Inferior and where the cult of the divine agent had been established since the foundation of the Greek colonies, with the aim of understanding the main religious communication strategies used. Another purpose of this analysis is to observe whether this Greek variant of the cult of Apollo managed to remain unaltered after the establishment of the Roman Empire, or conversely, how it managed to adapt to the new realities. Another aspect worth clarifying is the way in which the cult of Apollo developed in the Danubian provinces, given that local variants of the cult coexisted in parallel to the global version. The analysis also addresses issues related to the religious

communication strategies used by individuals in an attempt to establish the motivation behind their manifestation in a particular way. Also, in relation to chronology, it is necessary to clarify when and why the cult fell into disuse.

As far as the worshippers of Apollo are concerned, this study set out to shed light on aspects such as their ethnic origin, social status or occupations, in order to observe whether this cult was intended only for certain social categories or whether these individuals had greater influence within the cult because of their social status.

In order to analyse the sacralised spaces of Apollo, particular importance will be given to their chronology, the cult variant they practiced, and their topography, which, together, have the potential to improve our knowledge of their local, regional or macro-regional importance, as well as whether there may have been a cultic transfer or competition between them. Interdisciplinarity plays an important role in this approach, with epigraphy, archaeology, topography and architecture intertwining to highlight certain facets of religious communication.

The cult of Apollo played a central role in the Greek colonies on the western shores of the Black Sea, and it was likely established from the time of their foundation. For the 6th-5th centuries BCE, epigraphic evidence suggests that Apollo was the main god worshiped at Istros, with the theophoric name “Ietrodoros” from the newly established Milesian colony suggesting the possibility that the epithet Ietros was in use as early as the 6th century BCE. If we disregard this, the first clear mention of Apollo Ietros seems to date from the 5th century BCE. During the 4th century BCE, the cult of the divinity is attested by discoveries from Istros suggesting that there was certainly a temple dedicated to the main god of the *polis* during this period. Towards the end of the century or the beginning of the next, the first private religious manifestation addressed to the healing god is also reported. Istros remains the only site that continues to generate information throughout the 3rd century BCE. This is when we see that the priests of Apollo become the eponymous magistrates of the city, and that the temple of the god begins to be used as a place for displaying public documents, granting public honors, or as a place for holding official banquets. At the same time, the epithet Pholeuterios appears now, which represents an individualisation or religious narrative attested only at Istros. Throughout the 2nd century BCE, the temple of Apollo Ietros continues to be mentioned in inscriptions from Istros for the same reasons as in the previous century, lacking any evidence of private religious communication with the divine agent. Further south, two inscriptions from the Megarian colony of Callatis show a series of oracular responses

by Apollo Pythios, confirming the city's close relationship with the Delphic oracle. Epigraphic evidence multiplies throughout the 1st century BCE, being recorded at Istros, Callatis, Dionysopolis and Tomis. At Istros, Aristagoras is mentioned as having been four times priest of Apollo, while an unknown person is said to have assumed the priesthood of Apollo Ietros. The situation encountered in the Milesian colony must be understood as a response of necessity, given the difficult times through which the Western Pontic Greek cities were subjected throughout this century. The epithet Boreas is also attested at Istros during this period, which represents the essence of a religious narrative developed by the Milesian settlers. The eponymy of the god Apollo at Callatis and Tomis can also be explained in the context of the difficult situation of this century. The monument at Tomis dated in the second half of the century proves that, like at Istros, the temple of Apollo was intended for the display of public documents. Further south, at Dionysopolis, the first use of the religious communication strategy invoking the divine agency of the Delian pair is noted. In view of these aspects, the rarity of epigraphic evidence attesting individual traces of religious communication with the divine agent should be emphasised, with most of the information suggesting a political relationship between individuals and divinity. Worshipped throughout the ages as a healer (Ietros), and oracle (Pythios), as a god of immigration, conquest and occupation, or repulsor of evil, guardian of gates and protector of roads (Agyeus), regarded as god "of the den", worshiped in an underground cavity (Pholeuterios), or as a protective god against the wind (Boreas), all these attributes emphasise the inexhaustible and continuous creation of human agents. At the same time, various strategies of communication with the divine agent were implemented throughout this period, the most representative being the practice of displaying public documents in the temple of the divine agent. Used repeatedly and involving the investment of significant financial resources, this strategy was used to successfully maintain sacralised spaces.

The creation of the Alpine provinces Raetia and Noricum, as well as the conquest of more distant regions along the Danube, which were transformed into the provinces of Pannonia and Moesia during the 1st century CE, led to changes in the religious landscape in these regions, with some religious traditions managing to survive the arrival of the Romans or being reinvented and transformed by the personal choices of the new protagonists, while others were condemned to oblivion. Religious material dated to this period suggests that the first groups of worshipers of the cult of Apollo were established along the Amber Road, while the presence of a *sacerdos* at Carnuntum confirms a high level of development of the cult, which already represented an

attractive option for individuals on the religious market. Despite the turmoil and political instability that characterised the north-western coast of the Black Sea during this period, the cult of Apollo continued to be practiced at Tomis, which would become the main cultic centre on the seashore in the following period. In this situation, the emergence of the cult of Apollo in the Danubian provinces is linked to the existence of two main focal points: the eastern part, represented by the Greek *poleis* on the north-western coast of the Black Sea, where Tomis was the most important cult centre and the religious narratives were specifically Greek, and the western part, located around the Amber Road, which did not have a fixed cult centre, but was characterised by the dynamics of religious narratives specific to the global variant of the cult of Apollo. The two areas connected by the Danube would give rise in the following centuries to new cultic variants resulting from the contact with the religious traditions of the populations conquered by the Romans.

The creation of the province of Dacia in the early 2nd century CE completed the puzzle of the Danubian provinces. The Danube facilitated and intensified economic and cultural interaction in this macro-region, while increased mobility led to an unprecedented flourishing of the cult of Apollo in its various variants. However, a different popularity or dissemination of the cult of Apollo was noted in Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia Superior and Pannonia Inferior, where only 6 epigraphic monuments were identified during this century, while 26 inscriptions came from Moesia Inferior and Dacia. The lack of religious material from Moesia Superior dated to this period can only be explained by the current level of research. An important point of reference is the second half of this century, and in particular the reign of Marcus Aurelius, when communication between individuals and the divine agent was intensified due to the endless wars and the plague. The religious communication strategies implemented by human agents in the context of the pandemic were due to the belief that Apollo was able to protect the Empire and its inhabitants.

Another point of reference in the existence of the cult of Apollo is represented by the Severan period, when, on the basis of strong arguments, three visits of emperors were proposed which stimulated the importance of the cult. The first moment is represented by the visit of Septimius Severus and his family in 202 CE, who most probably travelled through Moesia Inferior along the Danube, from where he entered Dacia to attend the inauguration of the temple of Apollo at Tibiscum, and on this occasion, he replaced the governor of the province, Lucius Octavius Iulianus, with Lucius Pomponius Liberalis. After settling this “provincial problem”, the emperor

continued on to Rome via Pannonia, where he visited Sirmium, Intercisa, Aquincum, Carnuntum, and probably Savaria. The next event was Caracalla's visit to the temple of Apollo Grannus at Phoebiana in 213/214 CE to recover from his physical and mental health issues. From here, the emperor most likely followed the course of the Danube to inspect the units on the *limes* and, arriving at Brigetio, would have visited the newly built temple of Apollo and Hygia. Arriving in Dacia after crossing the *Barbaricum* to Porolissum, Caracalla appointed C. Iulius Septimius Castinus as governor and most probably visited the temple of Apollo at Tibiscum for the second time, leaving the Danubian provinces through Sirmium. The last imperial visit that stimulated the religious agency of the worshipers of Apollo was made by Severus Alexander and Iulia Mamaea in 234 CE, when they probably visited the temple of Apollo and Diana at Montana and then the sacred space in the *praetorium procuratoris* at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, from where they travelled on to Pannonia, Noricum, Raetia, and finally Germania Inferior.

After these events, the religious materiality of the cult of Apollo began to diminish significantly, the last trace of religious communication to be dated with precision being represented by a statue base commissioned between 251-253 CE by the Greek Heraclida, praying to *Numinibus praesentissimis Apollini et Bono Puero* for the health of Dacia's financial procurator, Marcus Aurelius Marcus. This new strategy of religious communication involving the association of Apollo and Azizos was most probably developed towards the end of the Severan dynasty or in the context of the Parthian expeditions of Gordian III, Philip the Arab, Trebonianus Gallus or Valerian I, following repeated conflicts with the Parthians and the frequent movement of legionary detachments to the eastern front. The fact that it was used in all three cases encountered in the province of Dacia for the health of the dedicants or those close to them can be interpreted as the response of individuals to the plague during the reign of Trebonianus Gallus. In addition to this tragic event in the middle of the 3rd century CE, barbarian invasions in the north, endless conflicts in the east, and widespread financial hardship in the Empire were other reasons that discouraged individuals from publicly manifesting their attachment to Apollo, and a private religious practice was most likely adopted.

The establishment of Roman rule had a significant impact on the cult of Apollo due to the increased mobility and connectivity that facilitated the transmission of religious narratives and the formation of new religious communication strategies, eventually leading to the creation of a global cult. This official variant of the cult found in all the Danubian provinces had at its core a continuity

of the Greek god who retained his healing (Medicus, Salutaris, etc.) and oracular (Pythios, Claros, etc.) attributes, but who now had strong links to the imperial household and whose divine agency could influence the stability and security of the Empire (Apollo Augustus, Conservator). In parallel, regional or local variants of the cult of Apollo were also practiced, developed either as a result of contact between the global cult and religious narratives specific to the religions of populations conquered by the Romans (Apollo Auluzelus, Aulousadenus and Aulousada, Apollo Cendrissenus, Apollo Grannus, Apollo Pirunenus, Apollo Propitius), or due to other ancient variants that have survived from the Hellenistic or Classical periods (Apollo Agyeus, Apollo Patrius). The only cultic variant that had the potential to spread on a macro-regional level was the association of Apollo Grannus found everywhere in the Danubian provinces except for both Moesia Superior and Inferior, where the cult of Apollo most likely had a conservative aspect, based on Greek or Thracian religious narratives that resisted the new cultic options. However, the worship of the divine agent within the cult building at Montana cannot be excluded, future discoveries could change these observations at any time. In order to obtain divine intervention, individuals resorted to the use of religious communication strategies that aimed to associate Apollo with Asclepius and Hygia in Pannonia Superior, Raetia and Dacia, with Azizos in Dacia, with Diana in Pannonia Superior, Raetia, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior and Dacia, respectively with the Nymphs in Pannonia Superior and Raetia.

Because of the variety of attributes he possessed, Apollo was among the most frequented and often called upon deities in the Roman Empire. In an attempt to see who the worshipers of the cult of Apollo were, 116 individuals were analysed, of whom, as was to be expected, most had Latin names (68.1%), followed by Greeks (15.5%), Illyrians (4.3%), Thracians (4.3%), Celts (1.7%), Dacians (0.9%) and a further 6 individuals whose ethnic origin is difficult to determine (5.2%). In terms of the occupations of these worshipers, military personnel are the largest professional category, with a percentage of 64.7%, followed by imperial officials (10.3%), magistrates and decurions (8.8%), Augustales (7.4%), miners (7.4%), and religious personnel (1.4%). Under these circumstances, it is worth emphasising that the cult of Apollo was intended for everyone, regardless of their occupation or social status, the religious communication immortalised by the 8 women, 5 slaves, and 4 freedmen demonstrating this. However, the temple of Apollo and the Thracian Rider at Sexaginta Prista is the best example of how the placement of votive monuments in the most visible position within the cult building reflects the social

competition and rivalry between individuals who expressed their status and legitimised their economic, political, and social position through these practices¹. The greater the financial resources at their disposal or the more important their status, the higher the level of visibility that individuals achieved within the cult, but also in society. In the absence of more such evidence, the *sacerdos* at Carnuntum does not have the potential to provide details on the types of religious ranks, the length of time for which these positions were held, how individuals were selected, or the social categories that could fill these positions.

A central role in the cult of Apollo was played by images whose main purpose was to convey cultic details and information in the absence of writing. Analysis of visual narratives has the potential to observe the level of individualisation or personalisation of the cult, while also reflecting the personal religious choices of the worshipers. The analysis of the 34 iconographic monuments showed that most of them come from Moesia Inferior (38%), while the rest come from Dacia (26%), Raetia (13%), Pannonia Inferior (9%), Pannonia Superior (6%), Noricum (6%), and Moesia Superior (3%). Statistically, most iconographic monuments were classified as type II. A. 1. c. (8: 22%), followed by type II. A. 1. d. (6: 17%), type II. A. 1. a. (4: 11%), type II. A. 1. g. (4: 11%), type II. A. 1. e. (3: 8%), type II. A. 2. (1: 3%), type II. A. 3. (1: 3%), while for 9 monuments (25%), the typological classification could not be achieved. The main characteristic in the Danubian provinces was to represent Apollo with as many attributes as possible, which may suggest both the poor knowledge of religious narratives of the artisans, but also an increased level of individualisation to which the worshipers have resorted. The topographical analysis of the religious materiality captured in some cases the intention to place massive monuments in highly visible spaces as a strategy to attract potential religious customers. Of the seven iconographic types identified, the only one that is found in all the Danubian provinces is the Apollo Citharoedus type (II. A. 1. d. and II. A. 1. e.). An interesting aspect is the rarity of monuments depicting Archer Apollo, given the popularity he enjoyed in the context of the Antonine Plague.

Regarding the sacralised spaces where Apollo was venerated in the Danubian provinces, their number is relatively small considering the territory of this macro-region, being identified from an archaeological point of view only at Phoebiana, Draganovets, Sexaginta Prista, Montana and Tibiscum, while epigraphically, they were mentioned at Teurnia, Brigetio, Ratiaria and Tomis. On the basis of strong arguments regarding in particular the religious materiality of the cult of

¹ Szabó 2018, 47.

Apollo, the existence of other sacralised spaces has been proposed at Aquae Iasae, Aquincum, Alburnus Maior, Apulum, Războieni-Cetate and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. Statistically, the most sacralised spaces were identified in Dacia (7: 41%), followed by Moesia Inferior (4: 23%), and Pannonia Superior (2: 12%), while only one each was identified in Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia Inferior and Moesia Superior (6%). Although the interest in the sacralisation of space in Dacia is significantly more pronounced than in the rest of the Danubian provinces, it does not mean that this province had a monopoly on the cult of Apollo in the macro-regional religious market.

The main cult centre in the province of Dacia was at Apulum, where it was proposed that there were three sacralised spaces, which practiced the global version of the cult, as well as the association between Apollo and Azizos. The *fanum* of Apollo at Tibiscum was another place where the global version of the cult was practiced at least in the context of the imperial visits of the early 3rd century CE. The cult building in the *praetorium procuratoris* at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa represents a unique case in the Danubian provinces where the global cult, but possibly also the cult of Apollo Grannus, was only intended for a certain social category, namely the financial procurators and their entourage. The community of Illyrians at Alburnus Maior practiced a traditional variant of the cult, based on religious narratives brought from Dalmatia, while at Războieni-Cetate, the global variant was specific. The existence of a small sacralised space of Apollo in the central area of the auxiliary fort at Porolissum is unlikely, given the unclear religious materiality on the basis of which it was assumed².

As far as Moesia Inferior is concerned, the main cultic centre was the temple of Apollo and Diana at Montana, where the global version of the cult was practiced. Surviving the period dominated by the turmoil and political instability of the 1st century CE, the temple most probably dedicated to Apollo Agyeus at Tomis is the oldest cult building in the Danubian provinces and has been active since the Hellenistic period. Given that specifically Greek religious narratives, as well as religious communication with the divine agent through the Greek language continued to be the main forms of expression of the worshipers, it is worth asking whether the cult of Apollo practiced at Montana was appropriated from Tomis given the good knowledge of Greek religious narratives identified here, as well as the presence of Greek language in some cases, although Latin was the majority language. The fact that epigraphic sources relating to the temple at Tomis are non-existent after 172 CE can be explained by the rise in popularity of the temple at Montana which, from the

² Zăgreanu, Deac 2014, 213; Zăgreanu 2016, 210.

second half of the 2nd century CE onwards, enjoyed maximum flourishing, probably representing a better option for individuals in the context of the Antonine Plague. As for the two cult buildings dedicated to Apollo and the Thracian Rider from Draganovets and Sexaginta Prista, the latter represents a unique case in the Danubian provinces, where old local traditions were continued after the arrival of the Romans. In addition, it was most likely older than the one from Draganovets, although both fell into disuse around the same period. The size and shape of the two temples are similar, but architecturally, the one from Sexaginta Prista has an apse on the NE side, while the temple from Draganovets has a small room on the SE side. The orientations of the two sacralised spaces are also different, as are the techniques and building materials used for the walls. The establishment of a competition between the two temples is suggested by the use of the strategy of association between Apollo and the Thracian Rider, but also by the fact that at Draganovets, Apollo was worshipped as a Thracian deity through the epithets *Aulousadenus* and *Aulousada*, emphasising the intention of individualisation and differentiation, while at Sexaginta Prista, the global version of the cult of Apollo was used.

Pannonia Superior is another region that had variety in terms of the cultic options practiced in the sacralised spaces of the divine agent. The introduction of the cult of Apollo in the sanctuary at Aquae Iasae obviously offered new options for individuals arriving at the thermal complex. What draws attention to this global variant of the cult is the obvious preference for the religious narratives of Apollo-Sol or Pythian Apollo which, as we have seen, indicate the possibility of the performance of divination rituals. The successful maintenance of this sacralised space was primarily due to the hot springs, as well as the introduction of new cults that diversified the visitors' choices. The temple at Brigetio practiced the global variant of the cult, while the association of Apollo with another deity with healing attributes may suggest such a specialisation of it.

The main temple of the cult of Apollo Grannus in the Danubian provinces was that of Phoebiana (Raetia) which acquired regional importance in the context of Caracalla's visit in 213/214 CE. The temple of Teurnia (Noricum), not far from it, was dedicated to the same deity. Given that the people living in this region had most probably worshiped Grannus since before the establishment of the Roman rule, cultic transfer from one temple to another is unlikely. Rather, it can be assumed that there was competition between the two, both on the basis of proximity and worship of the same divine agent, but especially due to their simultaneous activity. This may explain the obvious intention of monumentalising them, although in the absence of the

archaeological identification of the temple at Teurnia with its *navale*, such a comparison is impossible. Another sacralised space where Apollo Grannus may have been worshiped together with other deities was located at Aquincum (Pannonia Inferior). The main cultic center of the province of Moesia Superior is located at Ratiaria, where a *templum* was built that most likely housed the global version of the cult.

With the exception of the temple at Tomis which is first mentioned in the second half of the 1st century BCE, interest in the sacralisation of space during the 2nd century CE is evident at Phoebiana, Teurnia, Alburnus Marior and Tibiscum, while during the same century, the cult of Apollo was introduced into already existing sanctuaries and was worshiped together with other deities in the Nymphaeum at Aquae Iasae, at Draganovets, in the *templum* at Montana, at Sexaginta Prista, in the Asclepieia at Apulum (II), and at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. Between the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, the sacralised spaces at Aquincum, Ratiaria and Războieni-Cetate were inaugurated, while during the 3rd century CE, the *templum* of Apollo and Hygia at Brigetio and two new sacralised spaces at Apulum (I and III) came into use.

The majority of the sacralised spaces dedicated to Apollo in the Danubian provinces fell into disuse towards the end of the 3rd century CE (11: 64%): Brigetio, Aquincum, Ratiaria, Draganovets, Alburnus Maior, Apulum I, Apulum II, Apulum III, Războieni-Cetate, Tibiscum, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. The temples of Montana and Sexaginta Prista were abandoned around the middle of the 3rd century CE (12%), those of Phoebiana and Teurnia disappeared in the first half of the 3rd century CE (12%), and the temple from Tomis towards the end of the 2nd century CE (6%). The only one that may have functioned until the beginning of the 4th century CE was the cult building from Aquae Iasae (6%).

From a topographical point of view, Apollo's sacralised spaces did not follow a standardised pattern regarding their positioning inside or outside the settlements' walls, regardless of the latter's status. An interesting feature of the sacralised spaces (with the exception of those at Alburnus Maior and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa) is their location near water, which underlines the importance of this element in the cult.

As far as the donors of cult buildings were concerned, anyone who could afford to make such acts of munificence was entitled to do so, regardless of gender or social status. The fact that the analogies found throughout the empire suggest that women preferred to mention the sums spent

for the construction of temples indicates their desire to stand out and to enhance their public prestige, given their exclusion from political life.

To sum up, the existence of a global, official cult of Apollo, similar – in terms of dissemination, but different in meaning – to the Greek one, is therefore irrefutable. During the Greek period (Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic), Apollo was perceived as a deity with common cultural roots, and his cult was celebrated differently in the *poleis* where the individualisation of religious narratives and epithets led to the creation of a local marker. During the imperial Roman era, the cult of the divine agent transformed into a global one, based on Greek narratives, but with strong ties to the imperial household, which could ensure the stability and security of the Empire. The great contribution of the imperial Roman period lies in the increased mobility between the urban settlements of the Danubian provinces and beyond, which led to the spread of this global cult in regions still populated by indigenous peoples, who gave rise to local variants – often becoming regional – resulting from the association with their traditional deities. Differences between the sacralised spaces of the Greeks and those of the Romans eventually appear only in terms of their designation (*templum*, *fanum*, or *ἱερόν*), while the need for monumentalisation and decorative details remained at the discretion of the communities or the benefactors, which was always a collective or personal decision aimed at distinguishing them from other temples with which they were often in competition. The striking difference between the Greek and Roman civilisations is only observed in the case of those without whom temples and deities would lose all significance – the worshippers. While in ancient Greece, Apollo was considered a significant cultural marker of the Hellenes³, his adoption by the Romans – as the only deity from the Greek pantheon whose name remained unmodified – put an end to this perception. Apollo was not considered a god of the *patria* by all Roman citizens, mainly due to the existing variety in the religious market able to satisfy the needs of the various cultures and civilisations interwoven in the Roman Empire. The interest shown by Octavian or Caracalla towards Apollo undoubtedly played a significant role in enhancing the global prestige of the cult, while the devotees' relations with Apollo (Augustus, Conservator) served as clear signs of loyalty to the imperial house, most often expressed by imperial officials, magistrates or military personnel. In other words, one could

³ Language, religion, shared tales and customs represented the foundation of Greek identity (see Kaldellis 2008, 13-41). Such a Hellenic unity is presented by Herodotus, who immortalised the gratitude offered by the Greeks to Apollo at his Panhellenic sanctuary (see Willey 2015, 76).

not identify as culturally Greek without considering Apollo as one of the main deities of the pantheon, but one could be a Roman citizen without culturally identifying with the official pantheon and implicitly with Apollo, as long as the imperial cult was worshipped⁴. The artificial creation of a Roman citizen did not mean that they renounced their own culture and implicitly their traditional deities, which were often passed on to their offspring, although they more or less came to embrace Roman culture and often to identify themselves as Romans. Leaving the global perspective of the Roman Empire and zooming in on a regional and local levels, it is clear that the cult of Apollo worshipped by different ethnic and cultural communities was different from the global, official one. The association with traditional divinities or the creation of new religious narratives conferred a distinct identity to the cult of Apollo, setting it apart from other competing cultic variants, while the rituals or monumentalisation of the sacralised spaces had the potential to give them regional significance. All these aspects are clearly reflected in the cases encountered in the Danubian provinces and beyond.

⁴ While in the eastern part of the empire the imperial cult was a voluntary matter, in the west it was imposed by Rome (Beard et al. 1998, 348-349).