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MAPPING ROMAN RELIGION
A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Abstract

The article presents a short history of research, focusing on the cartographic representations of Roman religion and its material evidence in the 20th century European scholarship of religious studies, Roman archaeology and digital cartographic studies. By analysing the major works of Roman religious studies where cartographic representations and visualization played a relevant role, the article attempts to establish a methodological approach for a digital cartographic representation of the materiality of Roman religion in the Danubian provinces during the Principate, through the case study of the Digital Map of Sanctuaries of Roman Dacia.

Keywords: cartography, religion, sanctuaries, Danubian, provinces

1. Introduction

One can fall in a terrible generalization by claiming, that maps are useful tools in classical archaeology [1, 2]. Producing interactive maps and visualizing economic, political, prosopographical networks is a booming area in Humanities and classics [3, 4]. While network studies and digital cartography is almost a compulsory part of classical archaeological projects, the scholarship focusing on Roman religion rarely embraced this field and the advantages of visualizing big data [5, 6]. Mapping Roman religion is a useful and relevant topic: it can highlight several aspects of Roman religious communication, which cannot be read from epigraphic texts, iconographic (visual) narratives or literary accounts on Roman religion. Modern maps - so called, deep maps - asks why, how and whose experiences have created a sense of place. It seeks to 'map' the unmappable [7, 8]. Deep mapping Roman religion means, introducing spatiality in Roman religious studies and to visualize those tools and facets of Roman religious communication, which were never been represented on maps before [9, 10].

In this article I will present the short history of the topic, focusing on a careful selection of maps and their typology and through the case study of Roman Dacia, the article will present also a methodology of mapping Roman sanctuaries and their materiality in the Danubian provinces.

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2. Visualizing Roman religion - a short research history

In his seminal work on Roman religion from 1907, Jules Toutain, the doyen of Roman religious studies in France presented the history of Roman religion in a positivist approach, as a contrast and conscious reaction to the more cultural-historical - and in that period, radical - approach of Georg Wissowa [11] and the study of the once called Oriental religions initiated by Franz V. Cumont [12]. None of these influential works had a single map of Roman religion or the geographical distribution of the material evidence, sanctuaries or other tools of religious communication. Similarly to these seminal works, the recent paradigmatic books and synthesis on Roman religion are also lacking this important aspect [13]. Mapping Roman religion was more important in provincial contexts; however few studies in the early 20th century had systematic cartographic studies (Figure 1) [14].

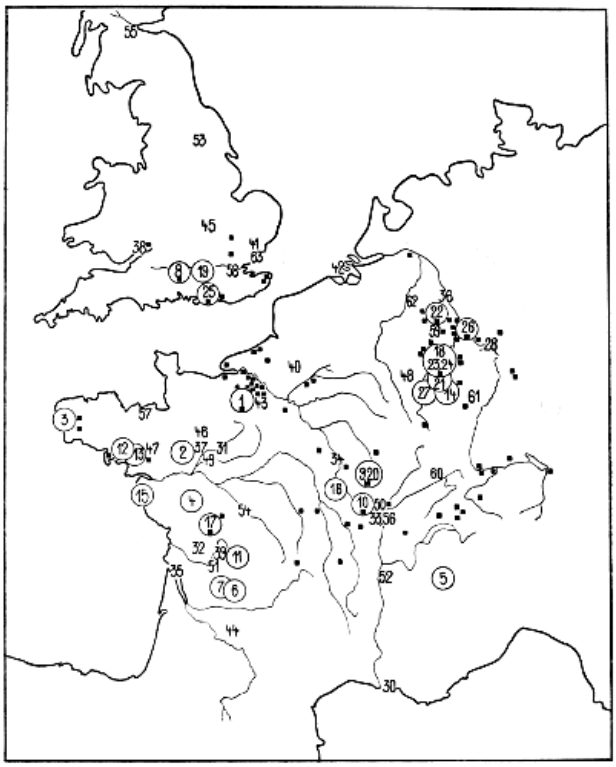

Figure 1. Celtic sanctuaries from Gallia.

Due to the great number of systematic excavations in the end of the 19th and early 20th century in Rome and in its peripheral provinces (*Limesforschung* in Germany, Austria-Hungary especially), the topographic representations of sanctuaries were regular elements of site-monographs, but religion was not part of the major maps focusing on Roman Empire in this period [15-17].

A new era in mapping Roman religion emerged with the EPRO series from 1961 to 1991, focusing on the so called Oriental religions edited by M.J. Vermaseren. In more than 110 volumes, Vermaseren was able to unite an international team of scholars of Roman religion and history, producing a remarkable corpus of materiality of Oriental cults (especially, the catalogues of Isiac cults, Mithras, Dolichenus, Thracian Rider, Danubian Rider, Sabasios, Men, Attis-Cybele) [18]. Many of these publications - especially those which published a corpus of an individual divinity - had also cartographic representations of the geographic distribution of the finds, however, most of the maps used by M. Vermaseren himself rarely represents even the provincial border, while the finds are marked with a single dot, marking the settlements - urban and rural - where they were discovered. Although the complete map of Mithraic finds and sanctuaries published by Vermaseren in 1960 is indeed, a powerful tool, it is incomplete and outdated today. The latest attempt of visualizing the material evidence of this cult was published by M. Clauss in 2012 [19].

None of the maps in the EPRO series distinguished the materiality of Roman religion by their typology (altars, sanctuaries, small finds) or archaeological context (topographic references within the settlements [20]). The case study of the map on Mithraic finds from Roman Dacia represents well the major problems of the EPRO series and generally, the Western scholarship: even the names of settlements are written incorrectly (Romanian or Hungarian settlements, incorrectly identified topographic data) [21].

The maps published in the ANRW series focusing on Roman religion are much more accurate; however they are mostly geographic or administrative maps of the Roman provinces. One of the best accounts of sanctuary catalogues and maps from the series was published by A.B. Follmann-Schulz [22]. A similar account on the sanctuaries we find also in a short summary of K. Dietz and G. Weber [23]. Their article reflects the old, German positivist school, where materiality of Roman religion was quantified in various forms of statistics. Sanctuaries are mentioned on maps after their number and distribution in settlements, suggesting that these are economic tools or factors in Roman urbanization [24].

An early example of mapping Roman religion was the atlas of Roman-Celtic sanctuaries from Gaul made by I. Fauduet [25]. This work arrives after an almost century long research of Romano-Celtic sanctuaries in France [25, p. 10; 26].While before 1960 there were less than 200 archaeologically identified sanctuaries, between 1959 and 1990 more than 164 archaeologically attested and 414 presumed (identified through aerial photography) sanctuaries were catalogued [25, p. 14-15]. The catalogue of I. Fauduet and her team contains 653 sites, from which 286 were identified through aerial photography [25, p. 17]. These are presented in various maps and plans: there are general, blind maps with dots, representing the geographical distribution of sanctuaries, a methodology which helps to identify the regionality of this type of architecture and religious phenomena [25, p. 14-16]. Furthermore, maps with contemporary administrative units of France quantify the archaeologically and aerially identified sanctuaries

[25, p 17]. The catalogue itself presents each modern, administrative unit of France with two types of dots (archaeologically and aerially identified sanctuaries), the modern name of the settlement and the number of the sanctuary (Figure 2).The corpus of the plans presents a selection of sanctuaries with various types of plans and buildings, mentioning only the name of the settlement, the catalogue number and the scale of the maps (1:500, 1:1000, 1:2000). Finally, the most relevant part of the book is the presentation of the digital database, which is unfortunately not available online. The database presents 5 folders of each site. If the atlas, the catalogue of plans and the digital database would be transferred on an interactive map, the atlas of I. Fauduet would be the best case study for mapping Roman religion in provincial context [25, p. 102-130].

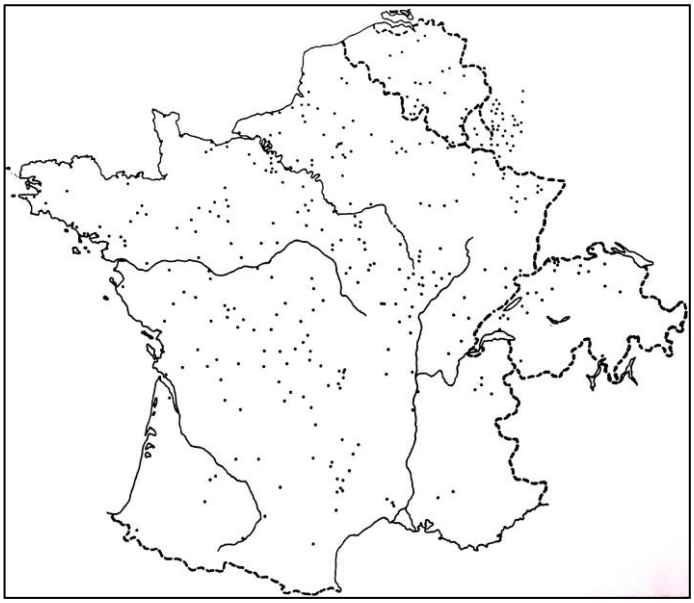

Figure 2. Sanctuaries in Gallia.

Another remarkable example for mapping the material evidence of a Roman divinity was published in 2001 by L. Bricault, who collected the Isiac finds of the Roman Empire in a form of a religious atlas, the first work of this kind [27]. In his work, L. Bricault continued the seminal work of J. Leclant, who already mapped in 1974 the Isiac finds of Hispania [28]. Leclant's map was highly innovative in comparison with the maps published by M. Vermaseren: it presents with specific symbols not only the settlements where Isiac finds were identified, but also the typology of objects (altars, statue-bases, statues, statuettes, other small finds). The map was very useful tool for the large number of monographs published in the EPRO series and proved the importance of visualizing big data. Bricault's atlas continues the visualization of Isiac finds with the methods of Leclant, even his symbols evokes his great predecessor's map (Figure 3) [29]. Bricault's atlas presents each province or region of the Roman

Empire with their Isiac sanctuaries, altars, statues, statuettes but also the distribution of divinities. The atlas is an indispensable work, although works only together with the catalogue of the finds (RICIS) [30]. Since 2017, the atlas is available also online, although it is not complete yet [http://ricis.huma-num.fr/recherche.html, accessed on 5.03.2020].

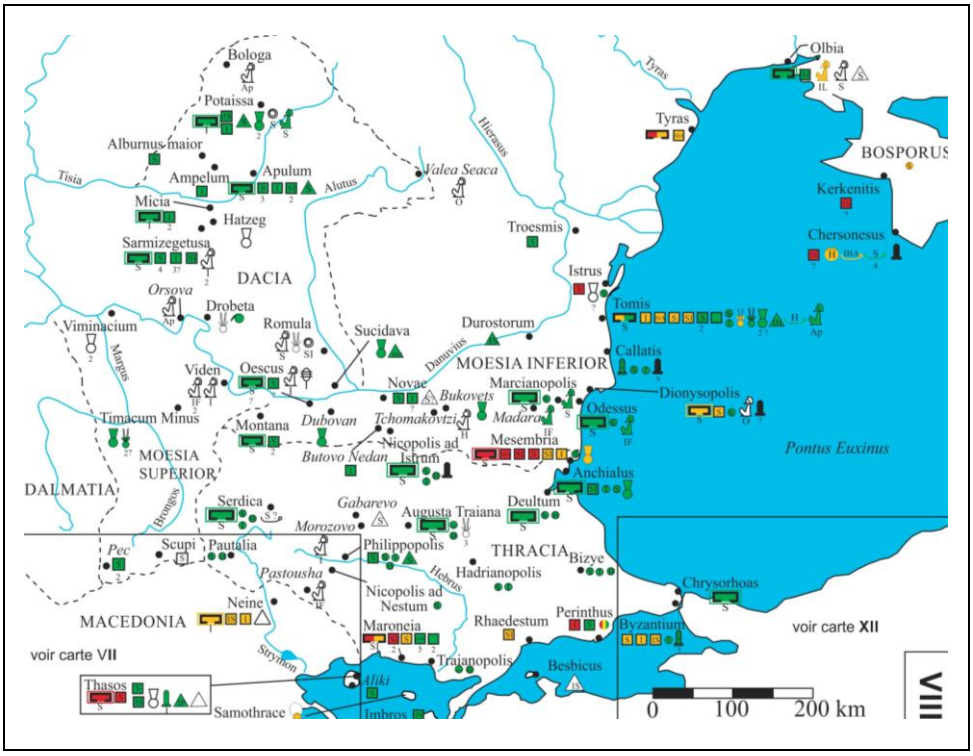

Figure 3. Isiac finds in Dacia.

This atlas was published few months after the Barrington atlas of ancient world, which was the culmination of R. Talbert's long research and attempt to revitalize the cartography of Roman world [31]. Although Talbert's atlas didn't have any elements focusing on the material evidence of Roman religion, his activity provoked the apparition of several GIS based maps of ancient Rome and the Roman Empire [http://awmc.unc.edu/awmc/applications/alacarte/, https://pleiades.stoa.org/].

In 2001 J. Rüpke and H. Cancik initiated a short lived series (Religion der Römischen Provinzen - RRP) which resulted in four volumes focusing on the religious life of Iudaea-Palaestina, Sicily and Germaniae [32-35]. As a continuation of Rüpke's project on Roman provincial religion, the books of this series produced numerous maps on Roman religion in the above mentioned provinces, following however the old, German view on sanctuaries and materiality of Religion [36]. While the maps of Spickermann are just quantifying

Roman sanctuaries, the maps of Belayche were focusing on the religious changes and evolution of Iudaea-Palaestina [32, p. 52, 280].

Another important initiative was coordinated by the RGZM from Mainz in 2005-2007, which had several important chapters and maps focusing on Roman religion in the Northern borders (Limes of Britannia, Germaniae, Danubian provinces), although most of the maps on the distribution of sanctuaries were from 20-30 years old publications [https://www2.rgzm.de/transformation/home/FramesUK.cfm, accessed on 5.03.2020].

Following a century old tradition of classical topography and cartography of ancient sites in Italy, the works of L. Ceccarelli on the sanctuaries of Lazio and the FTD series on the sanctuaries of Italy are using the classical methodology of the LITUR and other large scale topographic projects [37]. In her monumental work, L. Ceccarelli presents the 29 settlements in alphabetic order (number of the settlement, Latin and in case of, modern name), short historical and topographical introduction of the site, a general, topographic map of the settlement [37, p. 278], a list of sanctuaries attested only by literary sources and list of sanctuaries attested archaeologically. The archaeological material (inscriptions, statues, decorative elements) are often mentioned only in the footnotes. Similarly to this, the structure of the FTD volumes are following the same method: after a relatively detailed history of the site, a subchapter enrols the epigraphic or other sources of priests and pontifical colleges, suburban and extra-urban sanctuaries from pre-Roman period, sanctuaries from Roman times, sanctuaries with uncertain chronology or attestation and late-Roman sanctuaries. The maps and photos are unfortunately in the end of the volume. Numerous recent works focusing on individual divinities published well elaborated maps, where the distribution of the sanctuaries is presented in a classical way [19, 38].

Due to the widespread use of digital tools and GIS technology in historical sciences in the last two decades [39], several new digital maps of the Roman Empire were published. The most well-known examples (EDH map, Ubi erat Lupa map) are useful tools of visualizing big data, especially Roman inscriptions and figurative monuments [https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/home/, accessed on 5.03.2020], but they are not working as interactive maps, only as static tools [http://lupa.at/map, accessed on 5.03.2020]. An interactive map which would connect the 13.600 votive inscriptions of the EDH Database and the 5180 votive monuments of the Lupa project would be extremely useful for Roman religious studies too.

Based on the work of I. Fauduet, B. Pace recently published a study on the spatial distribution of Roman religious materiality in Aquitania [40]. The novelty of his maps consist in the topographic details: not only sanctuaries and votive monuments are represented on the maps, but also the major Roman roads and communication channels between settlements, the urban and rural environments of sanctuaries [40]. Such maps are the first examples, which follows the paradigm of Witmore, who urged the necessity of maps, not as decorations and representation in texts, but as "*a thing, bound in a network of relations; a heterogeneous assemblage*" [2, p. 126]. Recent developments in mapping

changed the paradigm of representing archaeological data on so called, thin maps [7] and shifted towards the theory of deep maps or mapworks [7, p. 188]. This spatial turn in archaeology has few traces in the study of Roman religion, which urge us for a methodological shift in research.

3. Geohumanities and Roman religion - new approaches

Roman religious studies changed radically in the last decade, due to the new methodological approach of the Lived Ancient Religion project, which shifted our focus from the dichotomy of institutionalized Reichsreligion (polis-religion) and the great variety of provincial religion to religious appropriations, lived religious experiences, embodiment and religious individualization [41-43]. This new approach interprets the materiality of Roman religion as tool and sometimes as agent in religious communication between human and divine agents [44, 45]. Archaeological sources (instrumenta sacra [46], inscriptions [47], figurative monuments [48], small finds [49, 50]) and sacralised spaces [51] became active, constantly changing and evolving agents in this cultural-historical approach, which doesn't allow anymore a static representation of the materiality of religion. Visualizing or mapping the materiality of lived ancient religion is a new provocation, which was ignored till now [42].

Following the paradigmatic shift in geohumanities [1], Roman religious studies need to produce also deep maps, where the materiality of Religion are not decorative, static data, but tools of religious, economic, social, political and several other types of networks and interconnectivities. While printed maps and atlases are limited in transferring information and can rarely go beyond the level of thin maps, as reading or decorative tools [1], digital maps are considered as fluid narratives of contemporary historiography, where the representation of complex notions (the local variations of religious experiences, visual narratives, the interaction of text and object, the mobilities of humans and objects, religious networks, economic routes, typology of objects, plans and phases of sanctuaries, etc.) can be playful, but also a constantly changeable and short lived experience [52]. A good example for such an initiative is the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire (DARE) made by the Lund University [https://dare.ht.lu.se/, accessed on 5.03.2020]. Their tile maps and rich gazetteer contains more than 26.000 ancient names, creating the most detailed map of the Roman Empire. In comparison, the Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites has around 2800 entries [53]. The current raster tiles map of the Empire has several layers and searchable meta data which are related to the materiality of Roman religion (distribution of divinity names, temples), however it is far from complete, especially in the area of the Danubian provinces. A more detailed, vector tiled map of the Roman Empire is in preparation by the same team [http://commons.pelagios.org/2017/09/rdg-update-the-roman-empire-vector-map-project/, accessed on 5.03.2020].

Digital cartography and its technological advantages represent a new opportunity also in the study of Roman religion in the Danubian provinces. While the epigraphic and figurative material is well documented and mapped in this

area, sanctuaries of the Danubian provinces were mapped as 'thin maps' mostly in province-monographs [23, p. 273] or syntheses on various divinities [54-56].

4. A case study - the Digital Atlas of Roman Sanctuaries in the Danubian Provinces

As part of my project focusing on Roman religious communication in the Danubian provinces during the Principate, I created a digital map of sanctuaries and their materiality in the Danubian provinces during the Principate [57; www.danubianreligion.com, accessed on 5.03.2020]. The digital map unites the methodology of I. Fauduet, L. Bricault and J. Åhlfeldt using a Google Mymap surface [58]. This collects not only the most important topographic, architectural and historical data about the archaeologically, epigraphically attested and presumed sanctuaries in public and secondary spaces, but will connect also the site and the settlement with several, already existing digital databases and open access sources (EDH, Lupa, DARE, Biblioteca Digitală, CORE, Academia.edu, Sci-Hub and many others) [https://danubius.huma-num.fr/en/gis/, accessed on 5.03.2020].

Google Mymap gives the opportunity to create new points on extremely precise scale (1:5 m), therefore we can locate all the archaeologically attested sanctuaries, even on the most remote places (mountains or non-habited areas too). Each settlement has a specific vignette: large cities and legionary settlements; auxiliary forts and military vici; mining settlements; bath-complexes; caves or spelaeum. Each settlement has a short historical description, enrolling the major events, troops, architectural or geographic features and a summary of its religious life. The description will be followed by a short bibliography and links to several digital databases.

The sanctuaries are marked with 3 different signs, distinguishing the archaeologically (orange), epigraphically (purple) and presumably attested sanctuaries (blue). Each of the site-descriptions will follow the same structure: name (sanctuary name, divinity or divine agents, ancient denomination of the building - templum, aedes, fanum, spelaeum, etc.), location (topographic data, coordinates), dimensions, description (building history and stratigraphy, major finds, forms of religious communication), archaeological repertory (inscriptions, statues, small finds cited after abbreviations of the major corpora or bibliographic references) and bibliography (specific references only). Each sanctuary-sheet have few photos, illustrations on the major finds and a building plan too. In those cases, where the archaeological context of the finds is attested, the exact place of the objects from the sanctuary inventory will be presented in their *in situ* context with GIS coordinates, which will allow a more detailed analysis of the materiality of Roman religion. Larger archaeological contexts, complex-sanctuaries or sacred areas are marked with a transparent layer and a specific description too. In contrast with the above mentioned digital maps, where are a limited amount of layers and searchable keywords, the searching engine of the Google Mymap gives the opportunity for an endless amount of keywords (Figure 4).

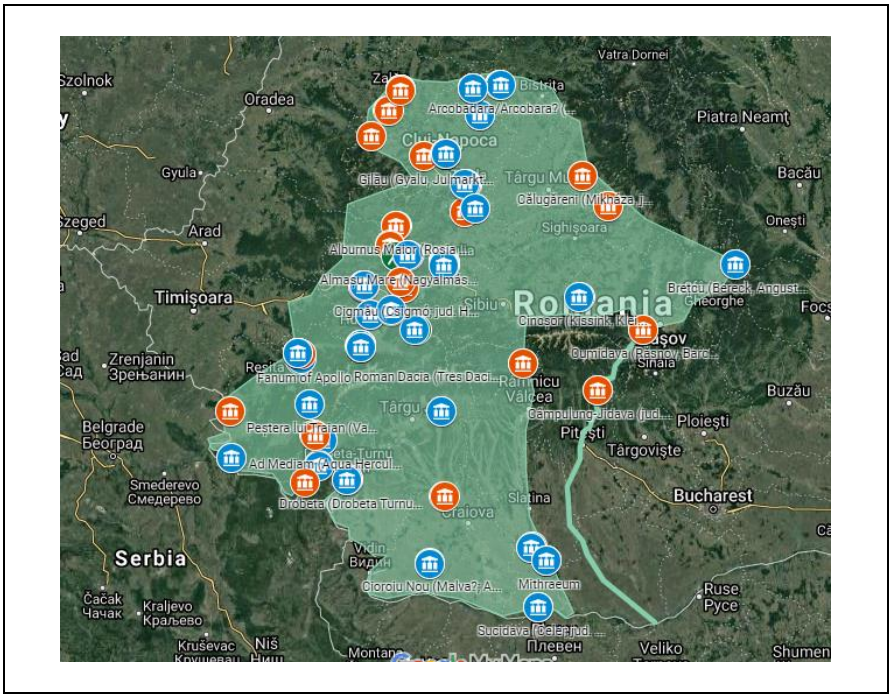

Figure 4. Digital Atlas of Roman Sanctuaries in the Danubian Provinces (DAS) – the part of Roman Dacia [www.danubianreligion.com].

The visual representation of the sanctuaries of Roman Dacia shows the innovative aspects of a dynamic map [51, p. 8-9]. The 54 archaeologically attested, 19 epigraphically known and at least 67 presumed sacralised spaces of the province represents a large archaeological data (140 sanctuaries, 45 settlements, 1478 votive inscriptions and hundreds of figurative monuments) transformed in 190 vignettes on the digital atlas. The visualization of sacralised places from public and secondary spaces gives numerous details and a bird-eye overview on the major religious transformations of Roman Dacia in the period of 106-271 AD. From the 140 sanctuaries represented on the map, 47 are concentrated in two of the largest cities of the province, Apulum and colonia Sarmizegetusa, which represents 33% of the attested sacralised spaces. Together with the 8 other urban centres, we can observe, that more than 60% of the sacralised spaces and the attested votive material comes from urban environment. This urban aspect of Roman religion is well documented also in the presence of the high number of sacralised secondary spaces of small group religions in the province. Although, the military aspect of the province was stressed in numerous studies, the archaeological material shows a much more balanced relationship between the urban, civilian and the military communities. The visualized data shows however, that the largest agglomeration of sacralised spaces were in the Mureș valley and on the Via Traiana, from Porolissum and Drobeta, which can be argued also by the intra-provincial mobility of the Dolichenian, Mithraic, Bacchic and Palmyrian groups too, attested epigraphically between Porolissum, Ampelum,

Apulum, Micia, Praetorium, Sarmizegetusa and Tibiscum [51, p. 78-120]. The interactive, dynamic map gives not only a mobile and living visualization of a large archaeological database and big data, but also gives the first comprehensive bibliographic database on Roman religion of Dacia [59].

5. Conclusions

As every map, a digital atlas focusing on the material evidence of Roman religion is a subjective tool and it reduce the complexity of religious interactions, appropriations, local changes and evolutions in a visual, digital and navigational experience [60]. With other words: every scholar of Roman religious studies is conscious of J.Z. Smith's paradigmatic message: *map is not territory* [61]. We can produce the most sophisticated digital maps and reconstruct ancient religions through innovative methodologies and approaches, our scholarly appropriation and imagination will make these locative and digital maps only as knowledge-productions and a subjective way to present a history, a reality, but not the holistic complexity of past societies [62, 63]. Despite of this axiomatic lack of our methodology on mapping religion, a digital map of sanctuaries and their material for the Danubian area is a step to summarize a century long research and to create a knowledge-base, which can be later a starting point for more sophisticated works and analysis on Roman religion in this area of the Empire. A complex, interactive and constantly expanded digital atlas of sanctuaries and their material in the Danubian provinces will be therefore an indispensable tool for classical archaeologists, art historians, epigraphists and scholars of Roman religion too.

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