

## RECENSIONES

*Editiones externae*

**Boier zwischen Realität und Fiktion.** Akten des internationalen Kolloquiums in Český Krumlov vom 14.–16.11.2013. Hrsg.: Maciej Karwowski, Vladimír Salac, Susanne Sievers. Kolloquien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 21. Bonn 2015. – ISBN 978-3-7749-4001-7 – VII, 435 p., 154 fig., 6. pl.

Despite the Celtic Boii tribe has a leading role in Central Europe the preserved ancient sources are highly incomplete and controversial. After the source of Poseidonios the antique author Strabon has written about them that they lived in precariously locatable *Hercynia silva*. The archaeological finds which the researcher connects to Boii are originated from the Czech Basin to Pannonia and from some part of Northern Italy before the Roman occupation. It is also well known that their hegemony ceased after the defeat inflicted by the Dacians. However, despite this defeat the Boii lived to see the Roman conquest and the Romans organised them in a *civitas*, a tribal administrative unit in their land, while they were governed by their Romanised elite who had been granted Roman citizenship in the northern part of Pannonia in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (recently summed up by Miklós Szabó in this volume and in SZABÓ 2015, 57–58). Besides these historical data there are many open questions left on the topic of the origin, wandering, coinage and ethnical identity of Boii. Many of these topics can be analysed only by archaeological methods.

Summarising the ‘realities and fictions’ of recent archaeological research an international colloquium was held in Český Krumlov in 2013. The participants of the conference summed up their scientific results in a volume, which dealt with the Boii from several aspects.

The volume edited by the foremost specialists from Vienna, Praha and Frankfurt and with contributions from many participants from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany and Austria, furthermore Hungary, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Poland in order to represent the new and important outcomes of any serious research. The title of the volume ‘*Boier zwischen Realität und Fiktion*’ is also remarkable in itself, since it is brief and attracts attention by being a little provocative. The topic of the meeting and the title of the book also refer to the trends that could be observed in Late Iron Age archaeology in last two decades. The book was published as the 21<sup>st</sup> volume of KVF

(Kolloquien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte) series of the RGK in the well-known quality of Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH in Bonn two years after the colloquium in 2015. The work contains 23 papers and an editorial foreword. It have to be mentioned here that another conference book was published recently with a similar theme, focusing on two Celtic tribes: the Boii and the Taurcii (KARWOWSKI–RAMSL 2016).

Studies in the first part of the volume give a general overview of Celtic Boii focusing on the major questions and problems. Roland Steinacher gives us a brief outlook of the ethnic identity and their wandering viewing the problematic of the Boii in antique historiography. Jan Bouzek sums up the story of the Boii from the available historical and archaeological data. Karl Strobel analyses the classical sources of geography and ethnography in order to ascertain the Boii was a folk or a name. Jiří Militky focuses on numismatic problems, the present state of coinage research and most of all the interpretational possibility of coin hoards. Manfred Hainzmann refers to the epigraphic background of the Boii. He divides the collective determinations and the personal ancestry indication in the epigraphical sources.

In second chapter of the volume many regional studies can be read. Vladimír Salač in his paper deals with the definition of ‘Urboiohaemum’ and ‘Boiohaemum’ in relation with ‘Böhmen’. Jan Kysela gives us a strong critical approach to previous research of Celtic Boii from some peculiar aspects. Natalie Venclova connects the early glass working and ‘Boian’ coinage of La Tène communities of the Middle Danube region. Alžběta Danielisová shortly summarises the archaeological finds which can be connected to Boii in Moravia. Peter Trebsche gives us a detailed outline of the identification of Boii in La Tène communities in the Middle Danube region from historic, numismatic and archaeological point of view. Maciej Karwowski gives a summary of his project carried out on Late Iron Age fortified hilltop settlements in the ‘Boian Danube zone’. The paper of Radoslav Čambai, Igor Bazovsky, Marek Budaj and Branislav Kovar gives some new information about recent result of the latest excavations of the *oppidum* in Bratislava. Miklós Szabó emphasised the uncertain localisation of *Hercynia silva* and the historical *topos* of Boiohaemum beside the fact that the Boii appeared in the Carpathian Basin during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Eva Kolníková raises the subject of coinage and economy and tries to find any answer for her questions at the eastern

borderland of the settlement area of the Boii. The craft, trade and the question of marriage is analysed by Andrzej Maciatowicz in contacts between the Celts and Germans as represented in the distribution of Iron Age brooches (*fibulae*). Marko Dizdar's paper about the contacts between Central Europe and south-eastern Pannonia during the La Tène Culture intends to explain the probable relation between Boii and Scordisci. Ana Marić collects the *fibulae* with the figure-of-eight decoration in the area of the Boii as a testimony to their south-eastern connections. Wolfgang David presents us an historical overview of Boii between North-Italy and the Danube Region. Bernward Ziegeus gives us a brief outlook of the appearance of 'Boian' in South-Germany and its majority. Susanne Sievers raises the question whether there were Boii in Bavaria and introducing us many interesting finds to answer this question. The work of Holger Wendung focuses on the Helvetii tribe as the neighbouring Boii and it emphasizes the com-

munication networking between Gallia and the Eastern Celtic area. In the last paper of the volume Gilles Pierrevelcin deals with any interesting epigraphic data from the territory of Gallia.

It is advantageous that the papers are completed by profuse bibliographies. The volume tries to answer numerous questioned unasked till now, but reflects also to the complexity and problems of the discipline, when it deals with different archaeological contexts and the highly problematic question of antique historical and epigraphic data and cultural transformations. Eventually, this book of the international conference in Český Krumlov is an up-to-date comprehensive summarising of the research of the Celtic Boii tribe.

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**Antal, Adriana: Venus cult in Roman Dacia.** Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House, 2016. – ISBN 978-606-543-794-4 – 330 p.

The monograph of Adriana Antal is the result of her decade long research carried on during her M.A. and Ph.D. studies at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. It is one the first works published from the numerous recent doctoral researches focusing on some general or specific patterns of Roman religious communication in Roman Dacia.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is also the very first synthesis of the Venus cult in Roman Dacia and one of the few monograph sized synthesis on the cult of a divinity in this province.<sup>2</sup>

Before analysing the book itself and the archaeological material presented within it is important to contextualize this work in the current trends of Roman religious studies. Historiography of archaeology focusing on the so-called Roman provincial religion (*Provinzialreligion*)<sup>3</sup> usually presented the material evidence of Roman religious communication in various forms. In most cases there are only catalogues or short papers focusing on a single divinity.<sup>4</sup> Another group of works presents the archaeological material in ethnic or regional groups<sup>5</sup> while others organised their material contextually, based on

an archaeological site<sup>6</sup> or – more rarely – thematically.<sup>7</sup> All of these methods and organising principles have their own advantages, too and it is always a pragmatic and very empiric choice of the scholar, who is limited in time and space to establish a comprehensive analysis. Unfortunately, few of these works focusing on singular objects, sites or divinities are able to go beyond presenting the material evidence as a result of a singular “cult” activity.<sup>8</sup> The possibility to omit religious intra-connectivity, interactions with other divinities and religious groups and the social or even political aspects of the material presented in such a work is very high. Each group of religious materiality has more common features than just one divinity: they are circulating in a special macro-space (Dacia), semi-micro spaces (cities, rural environments) and micro-spaces (households, human body) interacting with the Romans, who's view on religion was far beyond a single divinity. These are the major risks of a researcher who is collecting and analysing his or her material through the lance of a single divinity – or a collective name of similar divinities.

The title of Antal's book presumes a singular cult of a singular Venus, although she mentions already in her introduction (p. 7–12.) that the “goddess of love” in Dacia was identified with several different epithets (Augusta, Vitrix, Felix, ubique).<sup>9</sup> After a short presentation of research history the second chapter of Antal's book (Cult of Venus in Roman World) based mostly on Schilling's 1954 monograph records the origins and the distribution of the divinity from Lavinium to the provinces.<sup>10</sup> Antal presents this process as a linear, direct historical event, focusing on the religious “syncretism” of the earliest

<sup>1</sup> On the recent trends and publications on Roman religion of Dacia, see: BODA–SZABÓ 2014; SZABÓ 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Similar attempts were focusing on the cult of Mithras, although the latest monograph presents exclusively the archaeological material and the iconographic aspects of the finds without analyzing the forms of religious communication and the social aspects of it: SICOE 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Although the notion is still popular in German literature, methodologically was recently questioned.

<sup>4</sup> From the 1100 titles produced by the Romanian scholarship on Roman religion in Dacia, half of the studies are focusing on a singular divinity: SZABÓ 2014, 203.

<sup>5</sup> “Oriental” divinities, for example with Egyptian, Syrian, Thracian or Illyrian origin.

<sup>6</sup> Sanctuary monographs, e.g.: BENEÁ 2008; GUDEA–TAMBA 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Military religion for e.g.: POPESCU 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Cult in this sense means practiced worship, practiced religion, although the notion of cult was recently criticized and replaced with religion: RÜPKE 2012; RÜPKE 2016.

<sup>9</sup> On the complex problem of epithets, see: NEMETI 2012.

<sup>10</sup> SCHILLING 1954.

female divinity (or divinities?) named as Venus with Etruscan, Greek and other elements. Although, notions as *interpretatio romana* and religious syncretism are highly criticized today<sup>11</sup> Antal uses these notions without any critical approach, following a traditional, Romanian view on Roman provincial religion.<sup>12</sup> From her short presentation however relies that there was not one singular cult of Venus from Venus Calva till the Venus Genetrix of Iulius Caesar, but a much more complex, multiple transformation, that makes these divinities – except of their names – totally different social and religious entities.<sup>13</sup> In the second part of this chapter, the author presents the evolution of the major iconographic types of Venus. Although this chapter doesn't offer any new or additional information on the well-known iconographic evolution of the goddess(es) Antal's beautiful drawings made this chapter a highly appreciable and useful piece of work, if not, art.

The third chapter (Finding Venus – discovery contexts) presents the spatial and “statistical” aspects of the “cult” of Venus in Dacia. From the 390 objects only 203 have an exact archaeological context, 30 of these however could not be presented in the catalogue, due to problematic deontological issues.<sup>14</sup> She distinguished four major territories of discovery contexts: 45% civilian, 26% military, 25% worship places and 4% funerary contexts. By “worship places” Antal means public sanctuaries, although this notion is highly confusing in this context, because *all* the pieces are probably related to religious communication and a certain sacralised space, with other words: all of the objects representing or mentioning Venus are coming from spaces of worship, even if we talk about a house, a barrack or a public sanctuary, the differences between these spaces are their legal aspect and visibility. Such statistics are usually showing a disproportional picture on the distribution and spatial aspects of religious communication because – as in this case, too – half of the material are from undocumented context. Also space plays a crucial role in shaping religious experience and practices, in this case unfortunately cannot contribute to a holistic view.<sup>15</sup>

In the fourth chapter, Antal presents the major categories of the figured material of Venus in Dacia. After a short but concise discussion on the interrelationships on the appearance of figured pieces and the evolution of the local iconographic types she analysed the 56 bronze statuettes of Venus from Dacia (25% of all bronze statuettes from the province) after their chronologic and iconographic features, identifying the major types in the province, but also some unique case studies and imported pieces. As usually in Dacia, in this case, too, the identification of workshops is highly problematic. The 227 terracotta figurines of Venus known from various places (public, shared and primary spaces) represents 85% of all the terracotta material of Dacia, although only 65% have an exact place of provenience: 45 from sanc-

tuaries, 33 from forts, 36 from habitat complexes, 46 from workshops and 7 from funerary contexts. In establishing the chronologic features of some terracotta figurines the author tries to identify the exact chronology of some of the objects next to the terracotta find. This method however works only when the statuette was used for the last time, but cannot tell the durability of such an object. She in these cases also identifies the iconographic typologies and subtypes, highlighting that similarly to the small bronzes to the examples from Pannonia and Moesia plays an important role. In the case of the terracotta objects she identified some local workshops in Zlatna, Micăsasa, Slăveni, Turda, Orşova, Reşca and Sarmizegetusa.<sup>16</sup> In the next subchapter, she presents the 30 marble statuettes, a relief and bas-relief, following the same structure, focusing on chronology, iconography, workshops, imports and their significance. She rightly mentions that the material evidence proves that although the worship of the divinity is attested in several spaces among them in sanctuaries too, the absence of large sized statues suggests that there were no temples dedicated specially to the divinity. She also presents the 23 gems and 3 bone objects representing Venus, although in the case of the first category it would be hard to decide which of the gemstones are local products or are imported pieces. She presumes the existence of a gemstone workshop in Porolissum, Moigrad, based on unfinished gems.

Chapter five discusses the association of Venus with other divinities, which presents the fluid notion of divine agency and the strategies of Romans when it comes to religious communication and local appropriations, although the case studies from Dacia are not unique or unusual from an empire scale comparison. Among the associated divinities we find Daia Amor, Thanatos, Psyche, Isis, Hercules, Mercury, Diana, Liber Pater, Aesculapius and Hygeia, Neptune and Salacia, Epona and Nemesis. In the analysis of the associated divinities one should expect a much more detailed analysis of those inscriptions, where rare or even unique associations appear. Presenting statues and inscriptions as tools or even agents in the communication strategies with the divine could reveal much more important information about these sources and going beyond the tradition disciplinary boundaries of epigraphy and art history.

The next chapter, entitled „Public and private” is one of the most intriguing from a methodological and theoretical point of view. Antal constructs her own definition of public and private worship based on the traditional quote of Festus *De significatione Verborum* 245, which means that she interprets these two categories in a strictly legal and not in a cognitive or practice based point of view.<sup>17</sup> She discusses again the major spaces (temples, sanctuaries, households, forts and graves) where the presented material was found, fortunately now focusing much more on the individual actors and worshippers. Antal mentioned, that few pieces were found in forts with a certain context (for example the bronze statuette from Potaissa<sup>18</sup>) and tried to distinguish even in forts the “public” and “private” worship of the divinity, although these categories could work only in comparison of the religious communication within the *aedes principiorum* and the barracks. She states incorrectly that there were Mithras sanctuaries in the forts of Pojejena and Jupa, which is just a presumption in the old literature.<sup>19</sup> She rightly points out that the presence of the Venus terracotta

<sup>11</sup> BONNET 2013, 43, fn 7, with a relevant bibliography.

<sup>12</sup> NEMETI 2005.

<sup>13</sup> This linear continuity can be observed in the Cumontian interpretation of the cult of Mithras. He re-created a never existed direct evolution of the god from Persia to Rome. This linear genealogy of the divinities are still applied in contemporary interpretations, ignoring the much more complex phenomena of religious transformations and appropriations. For a radically new approach on Roman religious communication, see: RÜPKE 2016.

<sup>14</sup> 30 objects representing Venus are coming from the Liber Pater sanctuary of Apulum. The archaeological material – although was one of the most important one ever discovered in the territory of Romania – has still not been published after 14 years the project ended, though the project leaders declared numerous times that they would publish a monograph of the sanctuary. See also: SZABÓ 2015, 128–129, SZABÓ forthcoming.

<sup>15</sup> Important to note here that the map of Roman Dacia used by A. Antal on page 48 is wrong and not accepted anymore.

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly she neglects to cite BOLINDEŢ 2011.

<sup>17</sup> On a much more complex definition of public and private, see: ANDO–RÜPKE 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Instead of cat. no. 295 she gave a wrong number on page 142.

<sup>19</sup> See SZABÓ forthcoming.

statuettes in the barracks shows a much more individualised and personal religious experience, however the motivation of this is still under debate. Among numerous existing theories she mentioned the romantic and medical, healing aspects of these statuettes, although a much more pragmatic, erotic and magical use can be also plausible as she rightly pointed out in her conclusions.

The seventh, last chapter (Conclusion) concludes the major results of the book and a decade long research. Based on the 390 objects (bronze, terracotta, marble statuettes, inscriptions, moulds, lead votive plaque, lead statuette, amber statuette, marble relief, marble statue, gems, bone hair pins, a distaff and a mosaic), she arrives at some general and specific pattern regarding the cult of Venus (still, using the singular form) in Dacia. She pointed out the predominant use of terracotta and bronze statuettes in comparison with other cults and the “private” use of these objects in military and domestic environments. Antal argues that from an iconographic point of view the local products are mostly imitating the canonical Greek statues, Venus Anadyomene being the most popular in the province for terracotta statuettes, while in cases of marble or stone statuettes the Venus Capitolina type. She concludes that in the majority of the cases – as a general problem for provincial contexts – the archaeological environment and traces of religious practices and

motivations are lost and can be only presumed but not certainly identified.

The eighth chapter is the archaeological catalogue, where the 360 pieces are presented in topographic order, listing the settlements (in Romanian and Roman names) in alphabetic order. In most of the cases she gave also a high quality photograph to the short and well structured description (material, dimensions, state of preservation, discovery context, location, iconographic type, bibliography and description). The book is completed with a list of abbreviations, a bibliography and a very useful general index.

Adriana Antal’s book shows the limits and struggles of a Central-East European scholar very well, whose material evidence is highly limited by the current state of research and can discuss religious experiences, local appropriations only shortly and cannot go beyond the classical *polis*-religion and institutionalised religious practices. It also shows a traditional theoretical approach still popular in Romania when it comes to the interpretation of the materiality of Roman religion. Beyond these issues and some minor mistakes – such as the unacceptable map of Roman Dacia presented on page 48 – the book is a comprehensive and useful tool for further researches, published in a very good and pleasant quality and form, which makes it easy to read and makes one enjoy the beautiful drawings of the author.

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