
A GOD IN THE GARDEN.

NOTES ON THE CULT OF YARHIBOL IN APULUM

CSABA SZABÓ
ALEKSANDRA KUBIAK-SCHNEIDER¹
MIRUNA LIBIȚĂ-PARTICĂ

ABSTRACT

The study presents an inscription discovered in the 1970s and published shortly in the literature (IDR III/5, 102), dedicated to the Palmyrene sun god of Yarhibol. The altar was rediscovered by the authors in a private garden in Alba Iulia. The current state of the monument needs a revision of the inscription and a detailed contextualisation of the cult of Yarhibol in Apulum and Dacia, as well as the role of private collections in public archaeology.

RÉSUMÉ: UN DIEU DANS LE JARDIN. NOTES SUR LE CULTE DE YARHIBOL À APULUM

L'étude présente une inscription découverte dans les années 1970 et publiée dans la littérature spécialisée (IDR III/5, 102), dédiée à Yarhibol, le dieu solaire de Palmyre. L'autel a été redécouvert par les auteurs dans un jardin privé à Alba Iulia. L'état actuel du monument nécessite une révision de l'inscription, ainsi qu'une contextualisation détaillée du culte de Yarhibol à Apulum et en Dacie, ainsi que du rôle des collections privées dans l'archéologie publique.

KEYWORDS: Apulum, Yarhibol, Palmyrene religion, Roman religion, public archaeology

MOTS-CLÉS : Apulum, Yarhibol, religion palmyrénienne, religion romaine, archéologie publique

Introduction

The conurbation of Apulum is one of the most important urban centres of the Danubian provinces: the quantity and artistic quality of the material heritage produced and used in the city between 106-271 AD represents the third largest and most relevant Roman material heritage in an urban context North of the Alps after Carnuntum and Aquincum². In less than 160 years, the city produced an impressive quantity of votive monuments (635 altars, statue bases, statues, statuettes, reliefs, bronze statues) which represents the third largest amount of votive finds North of the Alps in the Roman Empire³.

From the rich catalogue of stone votive monuments a few were dedicated to Syrian divinities. In this paper we will focus on a recently rediscovered altar dedicated to Yarhibol, will present shortly the cult of the god in Dacia and will reflect on the importance of Roman monuments in private collections and their possible integration in public archaeology.

The Hinger-Barbieri collection

The monuments of Roman Apulum were systematically collected and used as decorative elements in private contexts (gardens, palaces) since the 15th century⁴. The largest collections from the Renaissance and Modern periods of the city were owned by the Roman Catholic bishops and the Habsburg military staff, however since the 18th century several other private collections were formed⁵. Johann Daniel Ferdinand Neigebaur (1783-

¹ This research is part of the project No. 2021/43/P/HS3/02595 co-funded by the National Science Centre and the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 945339. For the purpose of Open Access, the author has applied a CC-BY public copyright licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) version arising from this submission.

² On the history of the Roman settlement see: Diaconescu 2004; Ota 2012. On comparison of the votive material of the cities in the Danubian provinces: Szabó 2022a, 106-120.

³ Szabó et al. forthcoming.

⁴ Entz 1958, 60-61; Kovács 1992; Szabó 2014.

⁵ From the 15th to the end of the 18th century, most of the inscriptions were re-used in the major constructions of the Medieval and Vauban fortress (church-buildings, palace of the prince, palace of the bishop). A significant collection was

1866) and Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903) mentioned several private collections from the 19th century in their epigraphic corpora: the garden of Károly Pap, Johannes Pauer or Zsigmond Reiner are the most relevant from this period, before the foundation of the first museum of Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár, Karlsburg) in 1888⁶. Some of these collections kept in private gardens were later integrated in the first museum founded by Béla Cserni and the Historical Association of Fehér County, while others were transported to Sibiu (Hermannstadt) or Pest (later Budapest)⁷. As the modern city developed in the 20th century, several parts of the Roman conurbation (especially the territory of the *praetorium consularis*, the southern part of the *municipium Septimium Apulense* and the *colonia Aurelia Apulensis*) were looted and destroyed after the First World War. The museum of Cserni was closed in the interwar period and the city had no systematic excavations for several decades after 1916. Several Roman monuments discovered in the interwar period and in 1940s-50s ended up also in private collections. One of these collections were established by the Hinger family, who's house was in the territory of the *municipium Septimium Apulense*, north of the *praetorium consularis* (Strada Traian 17a today). The family was well-known in the city due to their private funerary company producing gravestones, coffins, and other funerary services as well. Béla Hinger (known also as Adalbert Hinger), the doyen of the family collected several Roman monuments in the 1960s and 70s. The exact provenance of the monuments collected in the garden of the Hinger-house is unknown, but presumably were found in the territory of Roman Apulum (the military town or perhaps, the civilian town as well)⁸. The house of the Hinger family today is owned by the Barbieri family (dr. Marius Barbieri and his relatives) and have several Roman monuments in the garden: marble plinth of a statue base or altar (plate I.1.), sandstone column capitals (plate I.2-3.)⁹, rectangular building blocks (plate I.4-5.), a decorative element with acroterion (plate I.6.), a statue base with a fragment of a column (plate I.7.) and column fragments (plate I.8-9.). The Roman collection of the Hinger-Barbieri house is among the largest private collections in Alba Iulia, although several other houses have Roman monuments in their garden¹⁰.

The most important monument of the garden is a Roman altar dedicated to the Palmyrene sun-god, Yarhibol. Based on the reports of Cloșca Băluță cited later by Ioan Piso, the monument was discovered in 1971 or 1972 (certainly before 1974). Ioan Piso mentioned in his corpus, that the monument was presumably discovered around the Franciscan Church, however no further information was given¹¹. The inscription was briefly mentioned in the catalogue of the Museum of Timișoara in the context of the Palmyrene funerary inscriptions from Tibiscum¹². Cloșca Băluță presented the inscription and delivered the first and till now, the only existing black and white photograph of the altar in his publication from 1977¹³. In his publication, the archaeologist from Alba Iulia mentioned the dimensions of the altar and the place of the discovery, arguing that it was found „hazardously” during a canalisation in the area of the Catholic Church on the Bulevardul Republicii (today Ferdinand). The place of the discovery indicates a secondary position; however the discovery was not documented and cannot be confirmed.

After his publication, the inscription was also published in *L'Année épigraphique 1977* (AE 1977, 661). The monograph of Silviu Sanie on the Oriental cults in Dacia introduced the inscription to the wider academic public and reused the photograph of Băluță¹⁴. The later publications simply reused the information from Băluță and Sanie¹⁵. The inscription was examined for the last time by Ioan Piso and Marius Ciută¹⁶. No photographs were made and published since the 1970s.

The altar of Yarhibol

The altar was documented twice: first in the 1970s by Cloșca Băluță, when the black and white photograph was taken (fig.1.) and later by Ioan Piso. The monument is preserved in open air as a decorative element of the garden.

formed in the garden of the bishop. In the end of the 18th century, the collection of Ignác Batthyány in his observatory became the second large collection of Roman finds: Moga 2011; Szabó 2022b, 254-260.

⁶ Nagy 2016; Szabó 2016, 151-179.

⁷ IDR III/5, 310 and 364. Szabó 2014, 60-61.

⁸ Verbal confirmation of Béla Hinger to Cloșca Băluță, cited by Ioan Piso in his catalogue of inscriptions: Piso 2001, 82 and recently confirmed by the current owners of the house, dr. Marius Barbieri.

⁹ Hampel 1911.

¹⁰ Szabó 2015a.

¹¹ Piso 2001, 82.

¹² Moga-Rusu 1974, 28.

¹³ Băluță 1977, 236-237, fig.3.

¹⁴ Sanie 1981, 276, pl. XIII/5. The same photograph as in IDR III/5, 102.

¹⁵ Sanie 1989, 1265, nr. 106; Piso 2001, 82, nr. 102; Nemeti 2005, 344, nr. 121; Szabó 2007, 34-35, cat. Nr. D.17; Carbó-Garcia 2010, 924, nr. 226; Piso-Țentea 2011, 116.

¹⁶ Verbal confirmation of the current owner of the house in July 2024.



Fig. 1. Photograph of the altar by Cloșca Băluță from 1976.

The monument is made from a porous limestone, which was heavily affected in the last five decades by erosion. The left part of the altar (approx. 3 to 6 cm) is missing and appears to be proportionally cut (fig. 2a-d)¹⁷. The reuse of the altar is further indicated by two diagonal lateral holes, likely part of a mounting system. This confirms that the monument was not found *in situ*, but in a secondary position (Medieval or Modern reuse). The length of the altar is 82 cm, with the width ranging from 30 cm at the upper register to 26-28 cm at the lower section.

The altar has large *foculus* (33 cm diameter, 5 cm depth), an unusual form among the altars of Apulum¹⁸. The corona is beautifully decorated with an eagle and two, six-pointed stars marked with a round symbol in the centre, marked with an acroterion in the right and probably, a missing one in the left (fig. 3). The eagle, as central decorative element of the corona appears also on an altar dedicated to Hercules Invictus from Apulum¹⁹ and the star appears in central position on an altar dedicated to Silvanus²⁰. Both elements are rare in the iconography of the *coronae* from Apulum, dominated usually by vegetal, floral motifs, *tympanon* and *acroteria*²¹. The combination of the eagle and the two stars with a solar motif inside is unique in Apulum and in Dacia as

¹⁷ Băluță argued, this cut happened in 1971 when the monument was found during a canalisation: Băluță 1977, 236.

¹⁸ See also: IDR III/5, 91, 104 and lupa 23329. An uninscribed altar with *foculus* was identified in the Principia and will be published in Cupcea 2024 (*non vidi*).

¹⁹ IDR III/5, 99.

²⁰ IDR III/5, 333.

²¹ A classic example with several analogies from Apulum: IDR III/5, 19, 59, 67, 68, 85 and many others. For another exceptional

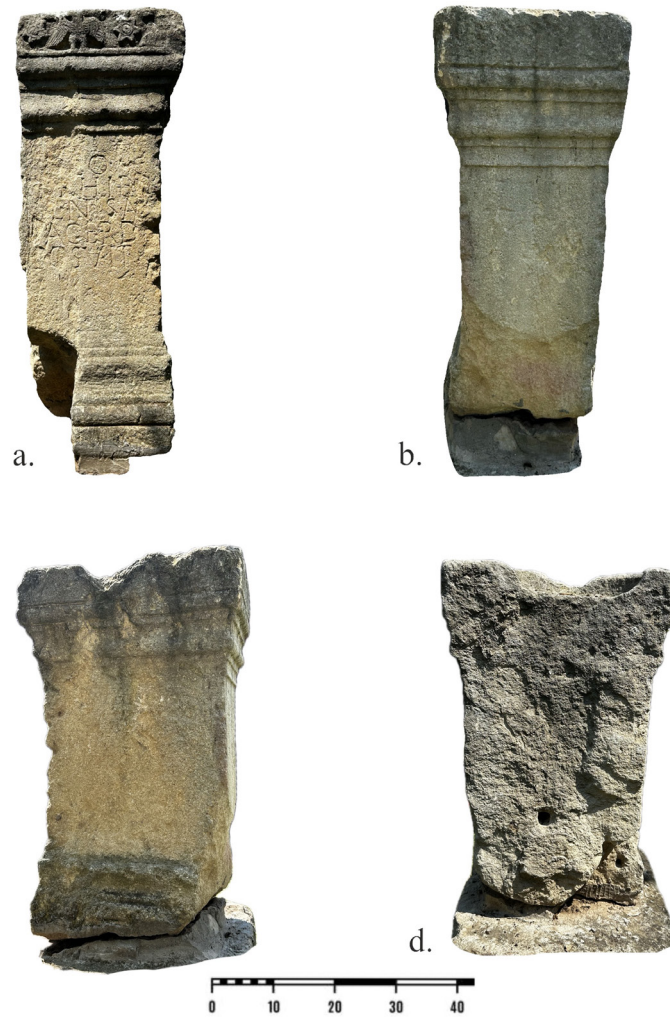


Fig. 2a-d. Photograph of the altar in its current state (frontal and lateral details)



Fig. 3. The *foculus* of the altar

well, therefore it is plausible, that this iconographic choice was not accidental and part of a pre-established visual offer of a workshop, but the personal order and choice of Aelius Nisa, the dedicant himself. The motive of the eagles in the Palmyrene art in the reference to the deities is very popular. It appears in the temples of Bel (Palmyrene civic god) and Baalshamin (weather god), but also in the niches in the temples of Nabu and Rabbasire.²² The association of the eagle with the supreme gods of Palmyra therefore is very common, but not uniquely associated with Yarhibol. The left corner of the basis is missing. Compared to the photograph of Băluță, the epigraphic camp was affected and severely damaged in the last decades: the letters D and E from the first line, I and E from the second line, A and E from the third line and partially the S in the fourth and P in the fifth line in the left part of the altar are damaged, probably due to the open air erosion and improper place of preservation of the monument. Ioan Piso presumed, that the name of divinity in the second line begins with a H, which was probably cut during the discovery of the altar, however the form of “Hierhibol” is not attested in Dacia or any other provinces, therefore we consider improbable that the letter H was part of the inscription²³. In its current status, the inscription reads as follows (fig.4a-b).²⁴:

[De]o
[Ie]rhibo[l](i)
[Ae]l(ius) Nisa
[s]acerd(os)
posuit



Fig. 4a. The epigraphic camp of the altar



Fig. 4b. Drawing of the altar with the inscription

Some of letters (N in Nisa and the last line especially) still bear the original red colour, often used to paint the inscriptions (fig.5).²⁵ The Palmyrene inscriptions were also painted on red or on black, e.g. on the altars with dedications and on the consoles bearing honorific statues.

Yarhibol in Palmyra²⁶

Yarhibol is one of the recognizable Palmyrene deities together with Malakbel and Aglibol. According to the epigraphical and archaeological sources, he received cult in the Spring Efqa, being called its divine image in

decoration see: IDR III/5, 167 and 168 contextualised in Szabó 2015b. These two could be related also to IDR III/5, 157.

²² For the temple of Nabu see Bounni 2004. For the eagles in the Palmyrene art see Colledge 1976, 48 and 158.

²³ The letter H can be presumed only if we consider that the left part of the altar was wider with 4-5 cm in its original form. This can be presumed based on the corona of the altar, which is partially preserved and the left acroterion is missing.

²⁴ For the reading of Ioan Piso see AE 1977, 661 = IDR III/5, 102: *Deo / [?H]ierhibol(i) / Ael(ius) Nisa / sacerd[os] / posuit*

²⁵ On colours of monuments from Apulum see: Bounegru-Ciobanu 2012; Ciobanu 2013.

²⁶ For Yarhibol in Palmyra see e.g. Teixidor 1979, 58; Gawlikowski 1990, 2616; Kaizer 2002, 124-127; Kubiak-Schneider 2021, 74.



Fig.5. Traces of red colour on the inscription

a Palmyrene Aramaic inscription from Dura-Europos as well as in Palmyra: mšb' dy 'yn' (the Image of the Source).²⁷ The earliest attestation of the cult of this god comes from Dura-Europos from the 2 Palmyrenes: Zabdibol from the Bene Gaddibol and Malku from Bene Komre (association of priests) built a temple for Bel and Yarhibol *extra muros*.²⁸ The dedication of this sanctuary is dated on the 32 BCE. (fig.6).²⁹

The name *yrhbw* is composite theonym which is created of two elements: *yrh* and *bwl*. The etymology would indicate the “Moon of Bol”, but M. Gawlikowski proposed the association to Hurrite *yarhu*, meaning source.³⁰

The new interpretation of the name is given by K. van der Toorn in his commentary to the Papyrus Amherst 63. He postulates the understanding “Yarḥi-Bol”, “Golden Bol”.³¹ Both interpretations correspond very well with the epithet “Image of the Spring”. Furthermore, the epigraphic sources from the Palmyrene hinterland also show connections of Yarhibol to the water management. An inscription from Arak brings an onomastic sequence of Yarhibol as such: *lyrhbw lšq' l'rq' lgd' dy qrt['] l'lh' škr[']* : Yarhibol, to the one who irrigates (lit. waters) the Arak? Or the cultivated land, to the protector of the village, to the rewarding god.³²



Fig.6. Relief of Yarhibol from the temple of Bel in Palmyra (Aleksandra Schneider-Kubiak, Palmyra, 2005)

²⁷ PAT 1099, 0410, 0411.

²⁸ For the recent discussion see Schörle 2024, 253. For the inscription see: PAT 1067.

²⁹ PAT 1067.

³⁰ Gawlikowski 1990, 2616.

³¹ Van der Toorn 2018, 33-34.

³² PAT 1622.

Although in Roman times the god was worshipped as a solar divinity, his name and the original cult site of the spring of Efqā suggest that it might have a Hurri and Akkadian origin and refers to “*the Lord who acts in the well*”.³³ His domain was irrigation, water and springs. Yarhibol is depicted as a young, beard-less deity with a solar nimbus. The last feature let the researchers think about him as sun god. He is interpreted as the Sun god of Palmyra, together with Malakbel. Greek texts in Palmyra never associate him with Helios. The association to the sun can be connected to the physico-chemical properties of sulfur. Sulfur is golden and easy to burn. This element can reflect in the picture of a god, divine patron of the source.

The god often represented with a solar radius on his head and wears indigenous, Palmyrene and is combined with Roman military costume³⁴.

The Spring Efqā, where his temple was located, is sulphurous.³⁵ It has a particular smell of rotten eggs, very characteristic for this kind of water full of hydrogen sulphide. Maybe the odour is not appealing, but the influence of sulphury water on health and agriculture is gigantic. Until 1990’ it was a natural pool used by locals both for leisure and balneotherapy. From the analogies from the modern sanatoriums, this water has benefits in curing pains (rheumatological), in strengthening immune system and in anti-ageing. Finally, the hydrogen sulphide is a natural fertilizer which stimulates growth of the dates palms as well as pomegranate trees.³⁶ This fact did not escape the observations of the ancient Tadmorians who depicted Yarhibol with the date palm and fruits on one of the reliefs from the temple of Bel.

Yarhibol is often connected, by the scholarship and by the iconographic attestations, with the god Bel, the cosmic and civic deity of Palmyra. He appears in the eyes of the scholars as “*acolite*”, member of the triad of Bel, assuming the divine lower position. He is mentioned in the inscriptions together with Bel, e.g. in the one mentioned above from Dura-Europos. Furthermore, Yarhibol had also a special place in the monumental temple of Bel in Palmyra.³⁷

Thanks to the epigraphic sources, we know that the cult of Yarhibol in Palmyra and Dura-Europos had an oracular feature.³⁸

The epigraphic sources attest the cultic and temple personnel who served the god Yarhibol in Palmyra.³⁹ We know 2 professions within the sanctuary of this god: *afkals* and *curators* (*epimeletai*). The first one: *afkal*, ʔpkl, is a ritual specialist, habitually translated “priest” and is confirmed by 2 inscriptions.⁴⁰ It is a loanword from Akkadian, meaning wiseman.⁴¹ The official title of this office is called: ʔpkl dy mšbʔ dy ʔynʔ: the wiseman of the Idol of the Source. The *afkals* are attested in Aramaic inscriptions in Hatra and in the Kingdom of Nabatea. In Palmyra they are connected with Yarhibol only, while in the other parts of the Aramaic writing world this was a rank of the ritual actors in connection to the various gods and goddesses (e.g. Allat).

Moreover, the god was in some way appointing his priests, wisemen and curators.⁴²

However, looking at the evidence from outside of Palmyra, the community did not consider this deity as a minor god. For the Palmyrenes in Egypt, Numidia, Cos, but also in Dura-Europos, Yarhibol was, together with Malakbel and Aglibol, a marker of identity and a divine link with the homeland. Yarhibol, being a protector of the source of water, is a divinity who gave life to the city in the oasis. The importance of this god reflects also in the onomastics. One of the very popular personal names in Palmyra was Yarhibola. No other theonym in the Palmyrene society was used in its entire form. Another popular name among Palmyrenes was Yarhai, a shorter form derived from Yarhibol.

The Palmyrene communities in Apulum and Dacia⁴³

The inscription of Aelius Nisa dedicated to Deus Ierhibolus (Yarhibol) is not unique in Apulum. Another inscription (probably also an altar) was discovered already in late Medieval period and reused as one of the first Roman monuments used as decorative element of the palace of the Princepe of Transylvania in the 16th century⁴⁴. The

³³ Dirven 1999, 47; Nemeti 2005, 170.

³⁴ Linant de Bellefonds 1990; Dirven-Kaizer 2013, 391-393.

³⁵ For the temple of Yarhibol in Palmyra see Kaizer 2002, 124-125; Seigne 2022. See also inscription PAT 1557 which confirms construction works within the spring.

³⁶ Zhao, Tausz, de Kok 2008.

³⁷ Inscription PAT 1347 from 32 CE mentions the name: Temple of Bel, Yarhibol and Aglibol (hyklʔ dy bl yrhbwl wʔglbwl).

³⁸ Gawlikowski 1990, 2616; Kubiak-Schneider 2021, 78.

³⁹ Kaizer 2002, 147; Nemeti 2005, 169-170; Nemeti 2019, 179-183.

⁴⁰ PAT 0410 and 0411 from 162 CE. For commentary see Kubiak-Schneider 2021, 79.

⁴¹ Kaizer 2002, 237; RIA v.apkallu.

⁴² PAT 1919. For the process of electing the priests in Palmyra see Kubiak-Schneider 2023.

⁴³ See also Gorea 2010, 147-149; Kubiak-Schneider forthcoming.

⁴⁴ Kovács 1992. The early reuse of the altar indicates that if there was a temple of the Palmyrene gods in Apulum it was

monument was dedicated by Aurelius Bassinus, decurion of the Dalmatian city of Aequum and *sacerdos* of the divinity (*sacerdos numinum*) CIL III 1108 = ILS 4344 = IDR III/5, 103 = Szabó 2007, 51, cat nr. D28:

Deo Soli / Hieribolo / Aur(elius) Bas/sinus dec(urio) / col(oniae) Aequens(is) / sacerd(os) nu/minum v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

Aurelius Bassinus became Roman citizen probably after the *constitutio Antoniniana*. The presence of two altars dedicated to the solar divinity, Yarhibol (both in Latinized, probably early 3rd century form) suggest the presence of a sanctuary of the god or at least, a Palmyrene temple with the presence of multiple Syrian divinities, as in the case of Sarmizegetusa shows⁴⁵. As the inscription of Bassinus was discovered before the 16th century, it is plausible, that the Palmyrene sanctuary of Apulum was looted already in Medieval times⁴⁶. The topography of the sanctuary is impossible to establish, the place and conditions of the discovery of Aelius Nisa's altar (bulevardul Republicii/Ferdinand I. nr. 21 in the vicinity of the Franciscan Church) suggest, that it was in the North-Eastern part of the *municipium Septimium Apulense*⁴⁷. The direct presence of a Palmyrene community in Apulum is hard to prove, however the connection between the province of Syria and the city has multiple evidence. The altar dedicated by Flavius Barhadadi to Jupiter Dolichenus and the Dolichenian Atargatis, evoked here as *Dea Syria Magna Cealestis*⁴⁸ also suggest a tight link with Northern Syria, although the origin of Barhadadi is uncertain and cannot be associated with Palmyra⁴⁹. Silviu Sanie presumed, that the appropriation of the North African divinity *Caelestis* and *Dea Syria/ Atargatis* occurred in Palmyra⁵⁰. The close relationship of the Dolichenian community with Syria is proven also by the votive column of Aurelius Alexander and Aurelius Flavius, Syrian *negotiatores* in Apulum⁵¹.

The worship of Yarhibol beyond Palmyra was connected to the presence of the Palmyrenes in various parts of the Roman Empire. Beside numerous attestations in Dura-Europos,⁵² we find him as well in Northern Africa and in Dacia. His name appears in four Latin inscriptions from this Roman province beside the inscription analyzed here in this paper (which gives us five in total). No Aramaic inscription mentioning this god is confirmed from this area.

He is attested in Apulum, Tibiscum and Sarmizegetusa in many different spellings: *Ierhabol* (Tibiscum, Sarmizegetusa),⁵³ *Hierobolus* (Sarmizegetusa),⁵⁴ *Hieribolus* (Apulum)⁵⁵ and *Ierhibol* (Apulum).⁵⁶

When it concerns the worshippers of Yarhibol in Dacia, they are members of the Roman army and have Roman names (Valentinus, Aurelius Laecanius Paulinus). Aelius Nisa is one of two priests of Yarhibol in Dacia and the only Palmyrene with this profession confirmed for Dacia. The name Nisa is Latinized version of the Aramaic *Nšʔ* which is popular in the Palmyrene epigraphy.⁵⁷ It is a *hypocoristicon* meaning. “*DN* (divine name) has lifted up”.

The second, Aurelius Bassius was a Dalmatian decurion of colony Aequum. Both are determined by the Latin “*sacerdos*”, a common term designing a priest. Sacerdotes in the Roman religions were priests appointed to the special temples. These were the people, as the term indicates, did the sacred things.

Dacia does not bring any iconographic representation of the god Yarhibol and all attestations come from aniconic altars.

An inscription from Dura-Europos attests the connections of Yarhibol with the archers and other soldiers, same as some texts from Northern Africa.⁵⁸ It is possible that the Dacian cult was also connected to the archers' units, but not only. It can be related as well to the non-military members of the society, as the example of Aelius Nisa

destroyed and looted in the late Medieval times.

⁴⁵ Piso-Țentea 2011; Țentea-Olteanu 2020.

⁴⁶ The Mithraeum discovered in 2008 was already reused as a Medieval house in the 13th century: McCarty-Egri-Rustoiu 2019.

⁴⁷ Băluță 1977, 236 mentions this territory as “the Eastern part of the *colonia Aurelia Apulensis*” which is incorrect. Szabó 2007, 34 mentions the southern part of the *colonia Aurelia Apulensis*” for unknown reasons.

⁴⁸ Possibly associated and interpreted here as *Iuno Dolichena*: Nemeti 2005, 112; Gavrilović-Vitas 2021, 238.

⁴⁹ Szabó 2007, 76 presumed that Flavius, son of Hadad was from Palmyra, while Silviu Sanie argued that the name is more common in Damascus, Hierapolis and not in Palmyra: Sanie 1981, 211. It is plausible that he is coming from Doliche, as many of the dedications from Roman Dacia can be associated directly with the mother-sanctuary of Jupiter Dolichenus: Speidel 2011; Andrade 2022.

⁵⁰ *Idem*, 111.

⁵¹ CIL III 7761 = CCID 153 = IDR III/5, 218: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) D(olicheno) / Aurelii / Alexan(der) et Fla(vi)us Suri / negotia/tores ex / voto l(ibentes) p(osuerunt)*. See also: Sanie 1981, 207.

⁵² For Yarhibol in Dura-Europos see Dirven 1999, 186-189.

⁵³ IDR, 3, 1, 137 – Tibiscum, Piso, Tentea 2011, 116 nr 1 – Sarmizegetusa.

⁵⁴ Piso, Tentea 2011, 116-117 nr 2. The forms *Hierobolus* and *Ierhobol* are attested in Northern Africa (Numidia, el-Kantara).

⁵⁵ IDR, 3, 5, 103.

⁵⁶ IDR, 3, 5, 102

⁵⁷ Stark 1971, 40.

⁵⁸ Dura-Europos: PAT 1099, Bertolino 2004: A.H1.03; Numidia – Northern Africa: EDH: HD015289 (<https://edh.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD015289>) (AE 1967: 0572a) For the connections between Yarhibol and soldiers at Dura-Europos see Dirven 1999, 186-189.

indicates. The presence of the non-Palmyrene worshippers of Yarhibol shows an attitude within polytheistic religious systems of making the cults accessible for the others and accommodation of gods beyond the borders of one city or of one region. The attestation of a Dalmatian priest of Yarhibol indicates training and spreading the knowledge about the non-indigenous deities to the members of the other communities, an approach known from e.g. Delos in Hellenistic period and the cult of the Syrian gods. It is also a sign of a political interaction between Palmyra and Rome. The inscriptions from Dacia are all written in Latin, not of the “own” language of the Palmyrenes,⁵⁹ what we can notice in many spellings of the name Yarhibol: Ierhibol, Ierhabol, Hierobolus, Hieribolus. In Palmyra this name transliterated into Greek is rather in the form Ιαριβωλος (Iaribolos) and in Dura-Europos Ιαρειβωλος (Iareibolos) which are standardized forms.⁶⁰ We observe a struggle with the Semitic name of the deity in all these variants. Yarhibol is always mentioned in the transliterated form and not with interpretation with Latin or Greek equivalent.

What is interesting, the re-published inscription here is the only one from Dacia which does not associate Yarhibol with Sol. It seems that the interpretation of Yarhibol with Sol was set only in Dacia, because the evidence from the rest of the Roman Empire for the cult of Yarhibol does not equate these two gods. Greek inscriptions from Palmyra or other places (e.g. Cos and Egypt) do not equate him with Helios.

By writing in Latin, one of the official languages of the empire, the gods were made more visible and understandable to outsiders, as they were already visible and understandable in Aramaic and Greek to the Palmyrenes. Such a strategy results in the end in the promotion of own identity and culture.

What is more, the epigraphic testimony from Dacia and from the other parts of the Roman Empire concerning the god Yarhibol differs from the sources from Palmyra. His attachment to the spring is not mentioned in the Greek and Latin inscriptions. Furthermore, the cultic functions are different outside of Palmyra. The only feature which is similar to the Palmyrene evidence is the oracular character of the cult.

Heritage in private properties and public archaeology

The rediscovery of the altar dedicated to Yarhibol, once part of the Hinger-Barbieri collection, highlights the intricate relationship between private collections and public archaeology. While this practice plays a significant role in preserving cultural heritage, it often narrows scholars’ access to broader study, reduces the cultural impact by restricting public engagement and compromises the integrity of historical items⁶¹.

The altar was deliberately displayed by its owner for ornamental purposes, with the addition of a cement support, 5 to 10 cm wide, intended to stabilize the monument within the garden setting. This intervention, however, occurred after the left side of the inscription had already been removed. Moreover, since its last documentation, the altar has been deteriorated due to exposure to the outdoor environment (sun, wind, rain, etc.) demonstrating the ongoing risks associated with these settings. Such modifications exemplify the dual implications of private ownership in heritage preservation; although private individuals may look after historical artifacts, alterations or repurposing of these objects present some risks. These changes obscure archaeological research and obscure the original context, ultimately hindering the comprehensive understanding of its historical and cultural significance.

Recent advancements in 3D modelling technology have offered scholars a practical solution to the challenges posed by private collections. In the early 2000s, 3D models and photogrammetry became a common tool among archaeologists⁶², introducing a non-invasive method of documenting and studying artifacts without risking further damage from relocation. In this case, an iPhone with *LiDAR* technology was used to create a detailed 3D model of the monument that was rediscovered in the garden. The increasing availability of affordable and accessible technologies, such as smartphones or tablets, allows archaeologists to produce high-quality digital replicas of ancient objects with minimal equipment, also enabling private collectors to actively participate in the preservation and documentation of cultural artifacts. As a result, the Yarhibol altar, despite being physically confined to a private garden, can now be examined by researchers through its digital representation at any time⁶³.

Whilst public institutions like museums are typically responsible for the conservation and display of artifacts⁶⁴ private collections often serve as informal museums, showcasing historical objects within personal or familial settings. Thus, private collectors play an essential role in the presentation and preservation of Roman heritage⁶⁵. The

⁵⁹ Kaizer 2004, 182.

⁶⁰ IGLS 17/1.53, 307, 343 and 344.

⁶¹ Schadla-Hall 1999, 148-149.

⁶² Remondino and Campana, 2014.

⁶³ Sketchfab, accessed August 2024.

⁶⁴ Hernández-Muñoz, 2023.

⁶⁵ Moshenska 2017, 187-200.

intentional display of the Yarhibol altar in this private garden among other types of lithic material (a marble base, bricks, stones etc.) demonstrates how heritage can be integrated into modern spaces while maintaining its historical significance. In Romania, private-public collaborations are relatively rare; however, even a brief partnership with the owners of such collections in Alba Iulia could provide valuable opportunities to enhance research, increase public engagement, and promote further collaboration through digital platforms or temporary exhibitions.

Conclusion

The case study of the altar of Yarhibol highlights not only the importance of antiquarian studies – reanalysing the existing or already published material, the archaeology of the archives and historiography – but established a direct and living bond with the public and private, academic and non-academic community, which constitutes the first step towards public archaeology and its various categories presented by Gabriel Moshenska and others. The biography of this object introduced the reader in the interconnected past of the Roman provinces dominated by various networks of mobilities (Palmyra-Dacia) and created a living bond between the various actors of the past and the present of Apulum (today Alba Iulia).

Liste des figures

Planche I. 1-9 : Monuments romains dans le jardin Barbieri (collection Hinger-Barbieri).

Fig. 1. Photographie de l'autel par Cloșca Băluță de 1976.

Fig. 2a-d. Photographie de l'autel dans son état actuel (détails frontaux et latéraux).

Fig. 3. Le foculus de l'autel.

Fig. 4a. Le champ épigraphique de l'autel.

Fig. 4b. Dessin de l'autel avec l'inscription.

Fig. 5. Traces de couleur rouge sur l'inscription.

Fig. 6. Relief de Yarhibol du temple de Bel à Palmyre (Aleksandra Schneider-Kubiak, Palmyre, 2005).

Abbreviations

IDR - Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae

IGLS – Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie vol. I –

PAT – D.H. Hillers, E. Cussini, Palmyrene Aramaic Texts, Baltimore, 1999.

RTP – H. Ingholt, H. Seyrig, J. Starcky, A. Caquot, Recueil des Tessères de Palmyre, Paris, 1955.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Andrade, N. 2022. Syrian Recruits and Units in the Roman Army. A military diaspora?, in: G. Christ, P. Sängler and M. Carr (eds.), *Military Diasporas: Building of Empire in the Middle East and Europe (550 BCE-1500 CE)*: 82-106. London: Routledge.

Băluță, C. 1977. Monuments épigraphique d'Apulum, in: D. Pippiddi and E. Popescu (eds.), *Epigraphica: Travaux dédiés au VIIe Congrès d'épigraphie grecque et latine (Constantza, 9-15 septembre 1977)*: 233-239. București: Editura Academica.

- Bertolino, R. 2004. *Corpus des inscriptions sémitiques de Doura-Europos*. *Annali dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale Suppl.* 94. Naples.
- Bounegru, G. and Ciobanu, R. 2012. *Între util și estetic. Scrisul la Apulum*. Catalog de expoziție, Alba Iulia.
- Bounni, A. 2004. *Le sanctuaire de Nabu à Palmyre*, Vols. I-II. Paris.
- Carbó Garcia, J.R. 2010. *Los cultos orientales en la Dacia romana. Formas de difusión, integración y control social e ideológico*. Salamanca.
- Ciobanu, R. 2013. Text, imagine, mesaj - considerații epigrafice, iconografice și stilistice asupra unor piese votive de la Apulum 50: 127-149.
- Colledge, M.A.R. 1976. *The Art of Palmyra*. London.
- Cupcea, G. 2024. *Latin Inscriptions from the Legionary Fortress of Apulum*. *Tyche Supplement Volume 16*. Vienna: Holzhausen Verlag.
- Diaconescu, A. 2004. The towns of Roman Dacia: An overview of recent archaeological research in Romania, in: I. Haynes and W. Hanson (eds.), *Roman Dacia: The making of a provincial society: 87-142*. Portsmouth RI: *Journal of Roman Archaeology*.
- Dirven, L. 1999. The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos. *Religions of the Graeco-Roman World* 138. Leiden.
- Entz, G. 1958. *A gyulafehérvári székesegyház*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Gavrilović-Vitas, N. 2021. *Ex Asia et Syria: Oriental Religions in the Roman Central Balkans*, Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Gawlikowski, M. 1973. *Le temple palmyrénien*, Warsaw.
- Gawlikowski, M. 1990. Les dieux de Palmyre, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, New York, II.18.4: 2605-2657.
- Gorea, M. 2010. Considérations sur la politisation de la religion à Palmyre et sur la dévotion militaire des Palmyréniens en Dacie. *Semitica et Classica* 3: 125-162.
- Hampel, J. 1911. Apulumi oszlopfők. *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 31: 228–253.
- Hernández-Muñoz, Ó. 2023. *Analysis of Digitized 3D Models Published by Archaeological Museums*.
- Kaizer, T. 2002. *The Religious Life of Palmyra: A Study of the Social Patterns of Worship in the Roman Period*. Stuttgart.
- Kaizer, T. 2004. Religious Mentality in Palmyrene Documents. *Klio* 86: 165-184.
- Kovács, A. 1992. Contribution des épigraphistes humanistes à la topographie de Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) au Moyen Age et au début de l'Ère moderne, in: I. Szamosközy (ed.), *Analecta Lapidum*. 1593. *Inscriptiones Romanae*. 1598: 25-36. Szeged: Scriptum Kft.
- Kubiak-Schneider, A. 2021. Des dédicaces sans théonyme de Palmyre. Béni (soit) son nom pour l'éternité. *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* 197. Leiden-Boston.
- Kubiak-Schneider, A. 2023. The Rules of the House (of Gods): Administrative and Ritual Norms of the Palmyrene Temples. *Electrum* 30: 293-306.
- Kubiak-Schneider, A. forthcoming. Palmyrene Gods in the West: Interferences, Interpretations and Interactions, in: J. H. Rando, S. Bianchi Manchini, L. Perez Yarza (eds.), *One God, Multiple Cultures*. Bordeaux.
- McCarty, M., Egri, M. and Rustoiu, A. 2019. The archaeology of ancient cult: From foundation deposits to religion in Roman Mithraism. *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 32: 279-312.
- Moga, M. and Rusu, I. 1974. *Lapidarul Muzeului Banatului: monumente epigrafice romane*. Timișoara: Muzeul Banatului.
- Moga, V. 2011. Considerations on some artefacts of Roman Period from the collection of the Batthyaneum Library, in: D. Hende-Biro (ed.), *Batthyaneum, omagiu fondatorului Ignatius Sallestius de Batthyan (1741-1798)*: 235-236. București.
- Moshenska, G. (ed.). 2017. *Key Concepts in Public Archaeology*. London: UCL Press.
- Nagy, G.J. 2016. The life and scientific work of Zsigmond Reiner. *Apulum* 53: 285-307.
- Nemeti, S. 2005. *Sincretismul religios în Dacia romană*. Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House.
- Nemeti, S. 2019. *Le syncrétisme religieux en Dacie Romaine*. Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House.
- Ota, R. 2012. De la canabele legiunii a XIII-a Gemina la Municipium Septimium Apulense. Alba Iulia.
- Piso, I. 2001. *Inscriptions d'Apulum. Inscriptions de la Dacie romaine, III/5, Vol. I-II*. Paris.

- Piso, I. and Țentea, O. 2011. Un nouveau temple palmyrénien à Sarmizegetusa. *Dacia N.S.* 55: 111-121.
- Remondino, F. and Campana, S. (eds.). 2014. *3D Recording and Modelling in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage: Theory and Best Practices*. Archaeopress.
- Sanie, S. 1981. *Culte orientale în Dacia Romana. Cultele siriene și palmiriene*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Sanie, S. 1989. Der syrischen und palmyrenischen Kulte im römischen Dakien. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt II.18.2*: 1165-1271.
- Schadla-Hall, R.T. 1999. Public Archaeology. *European Journal of Archaeology* 2(2): 147-158.
- Schörle, K. 2024. The Palmyrene Diaspora, in: R. Raja (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Palmyra*: 251-260. Oxford.
- Speidel, M.A. 2011. From Dacia to Doliche (and back). A New Gravestone for a Roman Soldier, in: E. Winter (ed.), *Von Kummuh nach Telouch: Historische und archäologische Untersuchungen in Kommagene*. *Asia Minor Studien* 64: 207-215. Bonn.
- Stark, K. 1971. *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions*. Oxford.
- Szabó, Á. 2007. *Daciai papság*. Budapest: Martin Opitz.
- Szabó, C. 2014. Discovering the Gods in Apulum: Historiography and new perspectives. *ReDivia II*: 53-82
- Szabó, C. 2015a. Romans in the garden: Notes on some recently attested stone monuments from Alba Iulia. *Apulum* 52: 217-225.
- Szabó, C. 2015b. Karl Gooss and the temple of Jupiter in Apulum. *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 2.4: 136-144.
- Szabó, C. 2016. *Béla Cserni and the beginnings of urban archaeology in Alba Iulia*. Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House.
- Szabó, C. 2022a. *Roman Religion in the Danubian Provinces: Space Sacralisation and Religious Communication during the Principate (1st–3rd century AD)*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Szabó, C. 2022b. The reception of Roman Mithras in Transylvania in the 18th-19th century. *La Revista de Historiografia (RevHisto)* 37: 249-271.
- Szabó, C., Muntean, I., Libiță-Partică, M. and Gyurka, O. Materiality of Roman Religion in Apulum: Catalogue and topography of the finds. *Apulum* 61: 309-773.
- Teixidor, J. 1979. *The Pantheon of Palmyra*. Leiden.
- Țentea, O. and Olteanu, B. 2020. Decorating Overlapping Buildings: A Domus and Palmyrene Temple at Colonia Dacica Sarmizegetusa. *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 3(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/traj.413>.
- Van der Toorn, K. 2018. *Papyrus Amherst 63*. Münster.
- Zhao, F.-J., Tausz, M. and de Kok, L. 2008. Role of Sulfur for Plant Production in Agricultural and Natural Ecosystems, in: R. Hell et al. (eds.), *Sulfur Metabolism in Phototrophic Organisms*: 417-443. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6863-8_21.

CSABA SZABÓ
University of Szeged
Department of Religious Studies
szabocsaba.pte@gmail.com

ALEKSANDRA KUBIAK-SCHNEIDER
University of Wrocław
aleksandra.kubiak-schneider@uwr.edu.pl

MIRUNA LIBIȚĂ-PARTICĂ
Independent Archaeologist
mirunalibitapartica@gmail.com



Plate I. 1-9: Roman monuments in the garden Barbieri (Hinger-Barbieri collection).