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Jamie Bone

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Military Religions in Roman Dacia: Patterns of Epigraphic Dedications in Urban Centers

Jamie Bone

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

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## **Abstract**

Roman Dacia, as a frontier province of the Roman Empire, contained a substantial military population throughout its occupation. While this allowed the military to begin as the dominant agent in religious dedications, economic advancement and population growth allowed for a shift to a civilian-oriented dedicant base in major urban centers. This project looks to the epigraphic and archaeological record to examine the demographic information concerning the dedicants to four “military” deities: Mithras, Sol Invictus, IOM Dolichenus, and Mars. Doing so allows for an exploration into the dedicatory participation of the military and civilian populations, particularly in the case of gods often associated primarily with soldiers.



## **Introduction: The Military Influence in Roman Dacia**

Following the conquest of Dacia under Emperor Trajan (r. 98-117), the new Roman province entered a state of intensive assimilation and acculturation. One of the most significant parties involved in this process was the Roman military. As a frontier province only recently brought to heel, legions and auxiliaries were plentiful. Veterans also entered as a large percentage of initial colonists. This mass influx of military personnel allowed for this collective to become one of the most influential socio-cultural groups in the province. Most urban centers in the province began as *castra* (military bases) or as offshoots of these structures. That most settlements held an early, and often persisting, military presence meant that many of the cultural practices upheld within were influenced or even established by soldiers. This is especially true in the case of religion. Soldiers were active dedicants of votive inscriptions and temples, acting as both devoted followers and exemplars for others in the community to imitate. Thus, the military stood as the most significant agent of religious importation and integration in Roman Dacia. Initially, that is. As certain communities grew larger and gained more economic or political prestige, a civilian population began to take over as the primary dedicants to the gods. This was true even in the case of gods often associated solely with the military, as will be the focus of this thesis. The discussion to follow will make the case that large urban centers saw a shift from a dedicatory tradition dominated by the military to one primarily controlled by a civilian population. This is grounded largely in the fact that increased economic prosperity attracted civilians to these settlements, which allowed for communities to thrive without depending on the presence of soldiers. On the other hand,

smaller settlements retained a mostly military dedicatory tradition due to their continued reliance on legions and auxiliaries politically and economically.<sup>1</sup>

## Colonization and the Military

Memorialized within the spiraling frieze of Trajan's Column, the violence of conquering the newest frontier province ensured that the military would be a prominent entity from the very inception of Roman Dacia. Territorial expansion and military bolstering undertaken by the independent Dacian kingdom elevated their peripheral position to that of an external threat to the Roman Empire. The first significant conflict occurred from AD 86-88 between the Dacian kingdom and Roman forces led by the emperor, Domitian (r. 81-96). With the Romans suffering heavy losses, the conflict ended in an uneasy ceasefire that resulted in Dacia begrudgingly accepting its new designation as a client state of the Empire. Nonetheless, it was a moral victory for the Dacians, who would continue quietly strengthening their defenses. Subsequent campaigns would not be launched against the Dacians until Trajan came into power. The emperor would go on to

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<sup>1</sup> Literature concerning religion in Roman Dacia is not new. Archaeological finds concerning religious activity in the province go back to the fifteenth century. Initial publications began around the same time. However, when compared to areas such as Italy or Gaul, the attention given to initial religious archaeological finds in Roman Dacia was minimal. It was not until the 21<sup>st</sup> century that scholarship truly began to flourish and gain foreign interest. A set of works were especially useful in creating this thesis. *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization* by Ioana Oltean details Roman settlement patterns in the province and how they impacted native Dacian populations. *The Dacian Stones Speak* by Paul MacKendrick is an examination of the province's history from the Neolithic era to that of Roman occupation. The Greco-Roman influence is explored through various archaeological examples. Adriana Rusu-Pescaru and Dorin Alicu's *Templele Romane din Dacia* provides a comprehensive source for temples thus excavated or attributed through epigraphy. Albeit it's early publication date (2000) did require subsequent articles to provide more updated information concerning excavations. *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia: Materiality and Religious Experience* written by Csaba Szabo, was the most recent in-depth analysis dedicated to the various religious communities in Roman Dacia as observed through archaeological excavation. *Religions of Rome*, a work by Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, was especially helpful for its information concerning deities across the Empire and their typical patterns of worship.

wage two military campaigns against Decebalus. The First Dacian War (AD 101-102) ended in a familiar tense peace, but this time the Romans had gained something invaluable. Trajan's Bridge, designed by Apollodorus of Damascus, spanned the Danube at Drobeta, making military entry into the province much simpler come the second campaign. As Trajan's Second Dacian War came to a close in AD 106, the Roman Empire had procured a decisive victory resulting in the ultimate demise of the Dacian kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

With the land now under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire, the new Roman inhabitants quickly began to build upon the ruins of their predecessors and transform the once foreign lands into a province of their own. Known to be a land of rich mineral deposits and fertile lands, the swift establishment of a functioning infrastructure was desirable to the colonists and merchants flocking into the new province.<sup>3</sup> The task of constructing these new settlements and establishing a system of administration within them that followed Roman values was given largely to both current and former members of the military.<sup>4</sup>

The process of colonization in Roman Dacia took place largely during the reign of Trajan. While various urban settlements were still in nascent phases and had yet to

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<sup>2</sup> I. P. Haynes, and W. S. Hanson. "An Introduction to Roman Dacia." in *Roman Dacia: The Making of a Provincial Society*, eds. W. S. Hanson and I. P. Haynes (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2004), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Dacia was known for its rich mineral deposits prior to Trajan's invasion and the desire to gain unlimited access to such resources was likely a significant motivation for entering the conflict in the first place. Michael Schmitz, *The Dacian Threat, 101-106 AD*. vol. 1 (Caeros Pty Ltd, 2005), 29.

<sup>4</sup> While this discussion will go on to examine the province's cultural formation influenced by the military, they were also largely responsible for the physical construction of the province's settlements as well. Over 3,000 examples of *sigilla impressa*, or stamped tiles, have been found in the buildings of settlements within the province. About 2,500 can be tied specifically to military units who would have helped in the construction of these structures. These counts come from a search of "*sigilla impressa*" in the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March of 2021.

receive official recognition, *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa* being the only attestable urban settlement to have received official status under Trajan, and the administrative structure would be reworked by subsequent emperors such as Hadrian (r. 117-138) and Marcus Aurelius (r. 161-180), the bulk of colonists would be brought into the province during Trajan's time as emperor. This is best attested to in a section of Eutropius's *Breviarium Historiae Romanae* ("A Summary of Roman History"):

Idem de Dacia facere conatum amici deterruerunt, ne multi cives Romani barbaris traderentur, propterea quia Traianus victa Dacia ex toto orbe Romano infinitas eo copias hominum transtulerat ad agros et urbes colendas. Dacia enim diuturno bello Decibali viris fuerat exhausta.<sup>5</sup>

His friends deterred him from attempting to do the same for Dacia, lest many citizens of Rome be given over to barbarians, because Trajan, after he had conquered Dacia, had transplanted there infinite troops of men from the whole Roman world in order to cultivate the fields and cities. For Dacia had been drained of men by the long-lasting war of Decebalus.

While this passage is specifically referencing Hadrian's reign, its contents reveal that Trajan was the figure responsible for much of the transplantation of colonists into the new province. Furthermore, it explicitly dictates that this was necessary because the Dacian Wars had depleted the male population. In particular, the local elite were conspicuously absent, which meant that indigenous culture and administration were also largely absent.<sup>6</sup> These gaps would be filled with new colonists, many of which came from the military sphere.

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<sup>5</sup> Eutropius, *Breviarium Historiae Romanae*, VIII.6.

<sup>6</sup> While Dacians are almost entirely absent in the surviving archaeological record, this did not mean that they were absent in the province. Rather, their social status likely contributed to their inability to penetrate the epigraphic medium dominated by colonists. Thus, their peripheral status made it much more rare for an identifiable Dacian to survive in the epigraphic record. Indigenous cultural values (religion for example) likely did not survive simply due to its role in prior and possible resistance and the need for a loyal population in a frontier province. The main thing to note is that indigenous populations were still present in the province (many settlements are attested to archaeologically), but the most visible administrative stratum had been largely replaced, leading to many ancient sources speaking of their "extermination". Dan Ruscu. "The Supposed Extermination of the Dacians: the Literary Tradition." in *Roman Dacia: The Making of a*

From the very beginning, individuals with ties to the Roman military were a significant proportion of the population and held considerable influence, particularly legionary veterans.<sup>7</sup> The stationing of two legionary forces, the *XIII Gemina* and the *IV Flavia Felix* in Apulum and Berzobis respectively, immediately after conquest would have supplied the settlements housing them with upwards of 6,000 men each. This combination of a substantial veteran population and the importation of large legions alongside numerous smaller military units ensured that Roman Dacia held a significant military presence essentially from the minute of its inception. That military bases came to serve as administrative foci for much of the rural population and remained such throughout Roman occupation solidified their influence.<sup>8</sup>

The primary function of the large military presence was a practical one, defense. As a province located on the fringe of Roman domain, this was not inherently unusual. Frontier provinces, such as Britannia, Germania, and Syria, would typically have several legions and auxiliaries stationed within their established boundaries as a preemptive measure to combat aggressive entities lying just beyond the Roman borders. At times, these forces would also serve to suppress uprisings and maintain a state of homeostasis within the conquered provinces. Roman Dacia was no different. While the dominant justification for stationing bodies of troops in frontier provinces was as a mechanism of defense and order, the continuous presence of these Roman forces also served as a means of assimilating the communities of new provinces into following what would have been

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*Provincial Society*, eds. W. S. Hanson and I. P. Haynes (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2004), 78; 82-84.

<sup>7</sup> Graziela M. Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia: Evidence from Religion*. (Yale University, 2011), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Haynes and Hanson, "An Introduction to Roman Dacia", 18.

considered proper “Roman” administration and cultural practices. Within the broad sphere of culture, one of the most significant elements would have been religion.

As a social group that was frequently moved across the Empire as needed, the men in the military, which were also conscripted from all reaches of the Roman Empire, would naturally bring their religious beliefs along with them to new locations.<sup>9</sup> What allowed for these traditions to truly take root in their new homes was the social sway held by the armed forces. In Roman Dacia specifically, which had a vacuum where indigenous administration had previously stood, the military took a crucial role in the development of the province socially and economically.<sup>10</sup> Furthering their influence by becoming frequent benefactors of the religious communities of Roman Dacia through acts of euergetism, the sway held by the military was not something simply assumed but an earned quality through their contributions to the construction and maintenance of their new communities.<sup>11</sup> The prominence and breadth of military involvement within the communities of Roman Dacia would seem to suggest that the primary agent of religious transmission amongst the populace was the military. This is mostly true, at least initially.

While it cannot be denied that the military was significant in both the importation and initial establishment of a variety of cults in the new province, the argument to follow puts forth that the economic development of large urban centers created a transition to a

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<sup>9</sup> Auxiliaries in particular were recruited from across the Empire. However, by the third century, the time in which Roman Dacia is largely incorporated into the Empire, it was increasingly common for *auxilia* to be locally recruited.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Chappell. "Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation in Imperial Dacia, 106–274 CE." *Classical World* (2010): 89-106.

<sup>11</sup> Euergetism was the practice of the wealthy elite of communities distributing part of their wealth to the community. This was often done through the sponsorship of different structures. The practice of constructing or restoring temples to different deities in particular was a somewhat common practice for both the civilian and military elite of Roman Dacia. Examples of this can be seen in inscriptions such as *IDR III/5.1*, 354 and *IDR III/5.2*, 709.

more civilian-dominated religious community. Furthermore, while more prosperous urban centers saw a greater civilian presence in religious worship, smaller communities that saw less development retained their initial military character.

For many deities, a pattern of primarily civilian worship would not be at all unusual. Many prominent divinities such as Asclepius, Liber Pater, and Silvanus have a larger or equivalent base of worship amongst the civilian population in comparison to their military followers. In particular, state cults were worshipped prominently by both soldiers and the local elite. The mass popularity of Iupiter Optimus Maximus (IOM) is primarily the result of this prominence. The archaeological record of Roman Dacia supports all of this as well. Therefore, the deities to be discussed are those that *should* have their followers come predominantly from the military population regardless of urban development due to their close association with this specific social group. By examining so-called “military gods” specifically, the transition from military to civilian dominance of worship should be more evident.<sup>12</sup> Thus the four deities to be examined within the archaeological record are as follows: Mithras, Sol Invictus, IOM Dolichenus, and Mars.

### **The Dii Militarii and Mars**

Mithras, Sol Invictus, and IOM Dolichenus comprise what are known as the *Dii Militarii*. Literally, “gods of the military” or more colloquially, “soldier religions”, the three deities are grouped together due to many similarities shared amongst them. Firstly,

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<sup>12</sup> As most of the evidence to be presented is epigraphic and dating these pieces is often extremely difficult (attributable years often range centuries), a clear, chronological transition is hard to establish with confidence. Thus, while a general shift is understood, the specifics of such a transition remain ambiguous.

is their origin. Their cults are believed to have originated in regions of the East, namely regions once ruled by the Persian Empire. However, the cults visible within the western Roman Empire were distinct from their eastern counterparts, as the gods had been syncretized with deities more familiar to the Romans. IOM Dolichenus being an assimilation of IOM and the Syrian god Ba'al is the most obvious example. For this reason, it can be argued that western variants of the cults merely mimicked their eastern counterparts but did not truly stem from them.<sup>13</sup> Yet their exotic appearance made the cult appealing to men of both eastern and western ethnic backgrounds.<sup>14</sup> This attraction extended quickly into the military, earning the trio their collective name as the *Dii Militarii*.

Of the three *Dii Militarii*, Mithras is undoubtedly the most prevalent. Thought to have possibly originated in modern-day Iran, the cult that soon became known as Mithraism in the Roman Empire was distinct when compared to variants of the east.<sup>15</sup> As a rather malleable and tolerant religion, Mithraism was accepting of syncretization with other minor or indigenous deities. An example of this can be seen in the imagery of Mithraic "hunting scenes" found only along the Danube.<sup>16</sup> As a mystery cult, the exact rituals of worship are difficult to definitively identify, although an internal hierarchy of

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price. *Religions of Rome*. Vol. 1. (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 279.

<sup>14</sup> Dedicants from Syrian kingdoms and cities such as Commagene and Palmyra are common in inscriptions to all three of the *Dii Militarii*. It should be noted however that eastern names were often given to slaves regardless of their initial origin, so some skepticism is required when looking at dedicants of this social group. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 294.

<sup>15</sup> Lucinda Dirven, and Matt McCarty. "Local Idioms and Global Meanings: Mithraism and Roman Provincial Art." *Roman in the Provinces. Art on the Periphery of Empire*. Chesnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art (2014): 43.

<sup>16</sup> "Hunting scenes" were common in Danubian provinces and often associated with the Thracian Rider. These examples of Mithras in such scenes suggests a syncretization between the two deities. (CIMRM 1283; CIMRM 1292); Chase A M Minos, "The Unique Nature of the London Mithraeum" *The Post Hole* 41 (2014): 42.



seven grades of initiation is known to have existed in Italy.<sup>17</sup> While limited exclusively to men, the cult welcomed those of all societal ranks and ethnic backgrounds to participate. This variety is seen in the epigraphic record which suggests that the main adherents of the cult were soldiers, imperial slaves, and ex-slaves.<sup>18</sup> Despite its high inclusivity, the Cult of Mithras was largely unable to penetrate the local elites throughout most of the Empire, with the cult remaining largely military in nature.<sup>19</sup> Mithraism is best recognized today through its underground sanctuaries, *tauroctony* reliefs, and *petrogenitus* statuary.<sup>20</sup>

Often syncretized or incorporated alongside the other *Dii Militarii* is the deity, Sol Invictus. Originally a personification of the sun known as *Sol Indiges*, the more well-known moniker of *Sol Elagabalus* popularized by the Emperor Elagabalus (r. 218-22), so named for his strong affinity with the deity, would come into prominence following syncretization with the Syrian god of the same name.<sup>21</sup> Most commonly the deity is referred to as *Sol Invictus*, the unconquered sun, when he is worshipped in Roman Dacia. Although worshipping Sol Invictus alone was much more uncommon than syncretizing him with Mithras. It can be said that the divinity enjoyed two significant periods of popularity, once as *Sol Invictus* under Elagabalus and another as *Deus Sol Invictus* under Aurelian (r. 270-275).<sup>22</sup> Roman Dacia was a site of considerable popularity for Sol Invictus in a pre-Aurelian setting, enjoying considerable popularity amongst the military

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<sup>17</sup> Csaba Szabó, and Imola Boda. *The Gods of Roman Dacia: an Illustrated Dictionary*. (LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2019), 52.

<sup>18</sup> Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 294.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 293.

<sup>20</sup> A *tauroctony* is a “bull-slaying” scene depicted in Mithraism; the term comes from the Greek *tauroktonos* (ταυροκτόνος). *Petrogenitus* imagery, literally a depiction of “birth from stone”, were less common than the *tauroctony* but still significant. The scene refers to Mithraic mythology which states that the god was born from a rock holding both a dagger and a torch.

<sup>21</sup> Szabo and Boda, *The Gods of Roman Dacia*, 63.

<sup>22</sup> Gaston H. Halsberghe. *The Cult of Sol Invictus*. Vol. 23. (Brill Archive, 1972), 172.

and finding its way into the civilian population as well.<sup>23</sup> As the only *Dii Militarii* to receive official recognition as a cult, traditional Roman means of worship and dedication are common.

IOM Dolichenus, the final of the three *Dii Militarii*, is a syncretic formation between Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the Syrian deity, Ba'al. Specifically hailing from the Syrian kingdom of Commagene, his worship took a variety of forms dependent on the status of the dedicants: a god of victory for the military, a god of success for merchants, a god of salvation for the common people, and a god of order and leadership for political leaders.<sup>24</sup> Similar to Mithras, the Cult of IOM Dolichenus was a mystery cult. While less is known than in the case of Mithraism, the presence of dedicants identifying themselves as *sacerdotes*, or priests, indicates that there was likely some form of internal hierarchy, even if a simpler one.<sup>25</sup> It also followed the pattern of excluding women but remaining quite accessible to all levels of society if one were male. Epigraphic evidence, which shows a high proportion of military dedicants, is also a strong indication that the cult was particularly appealing to men in the military, thus supporting its inclusion as one of the *Dii Militarii*.

The last and most well-known deity to modern readers is the Roman god of war, Mars. Originally an archaic Roman divinity of plants and fertility, his association with war and armies would come after he became associated with the Greek deity, Ares.<sup>26</sup> He would continue to be further syncretized with numerous localized deities as his worship

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<sup>23</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 80.

<sup>24</sup> Szabo and Boda, *The Gods of Roman Dacia*, 37.

<sup>25</sup> A specific example from Rome (*CIL* 06, 31187) is dedicated by M. Ulpian Chresimus, who identifies himself as a priest of Jove Dolichenus (*sacerdos Iovis Dolicheni*). Other such instances have been found across the Empire.

<sup>26</sup> Szabo and Boda, *The Gods of Roman Dacia*, 47-48.

travelled across the Empire. Two examples of this, namely *Mars Singilis* and *Mars Toutatis*, can be observed in the inscriptions that have survived from Roman Dacia.<sup>27</sup> Out of all the deities thus discussed, it would stand to reason that the god of war himself would be disproportionately popular with the military. However, as one of the *Dii Consentes*, the twelve major deities of the Roman people, Mars was a considerably popular deity amongst all levels of the social pyramid. Local elite, in particular, were expected dedicants as the worship of Mars was a state cult.

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The forthcoming analysis will examine the prominence of these four deities as well as the social standing of their dedicants within different urban settlements of Roman Dacia. Beginning with the major urban settlements most “military” in character, Part I will examine these patterns in the legionary settlements of Apulum and Potaissa. Part II will transition to smaller urban settlements which had considerable interaction with auxiliaries, numeri, and vexillations of the legions.<sup>28</sup> The settlements of Micia, Drobeta, Romula, Tibiscum, and Porolissum will be the primary focus. This section will also include a brief discussion of the myriad of small sites which are noteworthy to document the transmission of worship, but do not have enough archaeological evidence to discuss on their own. By beginning with large and small military settlements, these sections will show how, despite a significant military presence, the worship of the “military” deities would be usurped largely by the civilian populations in large urban settlements due to

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<sup>27</sup> Szabo and Boda, *The Gods of Roman Dacia*, 48.

<sup>28</sup> A vexillation, or *vexillatio*, was a detachment of a large Roman legion. These temporary groups would often be sent where needed to assist with defense, construction, or other tasks.

civilians becoming more prominent as the settlements grew economically. Meanwhile, smaller communities with less growth remain mostly military in character.

Part III will return to the category of major urban settlements but will shift to those most often regarded as “civilian.” The settlements of Sarmizegetusa, Napoca, Ampelum, and the two spa towns, Aquae and Germisara, all began as military bases or experienced an initial military presence but became distinctly civilian in character as they developed. In this study the term “civilian” has a broad definition, encompassing a variety of people from different walks of life (priests, merchants, freedmen, slaves, etc.) who remain distinct from soldiers. This section is meant to show that the significance “military” gods came to have in Roman Dacia occurred in major civilian settlements as well, despite no significant military presence.



Figure 1: Roman province of Dacia, part of modern day Romania and Serbia, from the conquest of Trajan in 106 AD to the evacuation of the province in 271 AD. Roman settlements and legion garrisons with Latin names are included in the map, as well as the Costoboci, Carpi and Free Dacians. [Original image](#) by Andrei Nacu and licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Romania](#) license.

## Part I: The Legions at Apulum and Potaissa

Sat atop the apex of the Roman military machine, the men of the legions were the most elite soldiers in the Empire. Comprised solely of Roman citizens, these mostly heavy infantry troops constituted the largest unit of troops present in the Empire. With their composition having the potential to reach upwards of 6,000 men, the stationing of even a single legion in an area was certain to have a significant effect on the acculturation of indigenous communities around them. The presence of these legions was also a beneficial stimulant to the economy of new settlements while simultaneously serving to solidify imported political and religious institutions. As a province both bordered by unconquered people and one having been stripped bare of its former infrastructure, Roman Dacia could not have been a more appropriate recipient of its own legions.

Following its inception as a Roman province, two legions were stationed within Roman Dacia. The *XIII Gemina* and the *IV Flavia Felix* were imported into the new province by Trajan at the nascent settlements of Apulum and Berzobis respectively.<sup>29</sup> The *IV Flavia Felix* was eventually moved from Dacia to Singidunum in Upper Moesia under Hadrian, and it would not be until after the Marcomannic Wars that a new legion, the *V Macedonica*, was moved back into the province permanently at Potaissa.<sup>30</sup> There has been speculation that a third legion, the *I Adiutrix*, was also present in Dacia at some point. However, there is still insufficient archaeological or written evidence to establish the validity of this claim.<sup>31</sup> Even if they had been stationed in the province, the lack of evidence in the archaeological record suggests that the duration would have been far too

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<sup>29</sup> Ioana A. Oltean. *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*. (Routledge, 2007), 56.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

brief for any significant cultural effect to have occurred. However, there is evidence to support legionary activity outside of the urban centers in which the known legions were stationed.<sup>32</sup> While their impact on communities would have also been minimal due to their temporary nature, evidence does exist to attest to legionary vexillations, or detachments, serving in border zones either near or alongside the auxiliaries.<sup>33</sup>

As an accompaniment to the bulk of the legionary forces, camp followers would travel alongside their respective legions throughout the Empire. This group included the families of the soldiers, but more significantly, it also included a large group of “suppliers.” Metalworkers, blacksmiths, and others involved in the production and maintenance of weaponry were a valuable asset to have in such close vicinity. Other, more casual, services were also supplied to the soldiers: pottery, alcohol, cooking, and prostitution all have archaeological or literary evidence supporting their existence.<sup>34</sup> When a legion was stationed in a specific location, the soldiers would construct a fortress, or a *castrum*. In turn, the camp followers would establish their own settlement around or in close proximity to their legion, a *canabae legionis*. If the legion was stationed in this location for a long period of time, both the *castrum* and the *canaba* had the chance to develop further into fully fleshed out settlements. Major urban buildings of a typical settlement such as temples, amphitheaters, baths, and forums would all be located within the *canabae*. It was the presence of the legion that helped to foster economic, political,

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<sup>32</sup> Example of stamped tile (*sigilla impressa*) belonging to legions can be found in Apulum, Ampelum, Micia, Potaissa, Sarmizegetusa, and many other locations in Roman Dacia. While many are from the stationed legions (*XIII Gemina*, *IV Flavia Felix* and *V Macedonica*) there are also others from legions such as the *I Italica* and *VII Claudia*. These were likely vexillations sent to assist with construction and defense when needed.

<sup>33</sup> Chappell. "Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation", 96.

<sup>34</sup> Ben Kolbeck. "A Foot in Both Camps: The Civilian Suppliers of the Army in Roman Britain." *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*, vol 1, no. 1 (2018), 4.

and cultural growth within these civilian settlements.<sup>35</sup> As the main source of consumers, a legion of 5,000 men with a salary of 300 *denarii* each could spend over a quarter-million *denarii* annually within its surrounding *canabae*.<sup>36</sup> That these communities were magnets for merchants should not be a shocking development. These civilian settlements would continue to thrive as long as the military was present and in some cases could grow to a state of self-sufficiency where it could survive even if the legion departed. Of the two *canabae* that formed around the stationed legions of Roman Dacia, both would go on to receive the highest official status of *colonia*.

The long-lasting presence of the legions in Apulum and Potaissa allows the two settlements to be regarded as the most “military” of the major urban centers in Roman Dacia. Attaining a level of prosperity not seen in smaller military settlements, owed greatly to the legions themselves, these urban centers went on to attract a significant civilian population as well. As veterans intermingled with the civilian population, often procuring elite positions within the communities, the military remained prominent despite the influx of colonists unassociated with their social group. Therefore, it stands to reason that the military should have maintained a dominant position in religious dedications at both sites. However, the archaeological record reveals that this was not the case at either location, even when it concerned military deities.

### **The Settlement of Apulum**

Prior to the breakout of the Dacian Wars, a Dacian *oppidum* existed in the area soon to become a prosperous Roman urban center. *Apoulon*, or *Apula* in some ancient

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<sup>35</sup> Stephen Chappell, “Cultural Change in Imperial Dacia.” (unpublished manuscript, October 1, 2019), electronic.

<sup>36</sup> Kolbeck, “A Foot in Both Camps”, 7-8.



sources, as an important military site for the Dacians, did not survive past the conclusion of the Dacian Wars.<sup>37</sup> Destroyed and stripped of its inhabitants, the hill fort was abandoned. Yet its latinized name would live on in its distant Roman successor, *Apulum*.

Established as a legionary base at the inception of the province, Apulum would be the main station for the *XIII Gemina* throughout the duration of Roman occupation. Due to this presence and it being the only legion in the province between the removal of the *VI Flavia Felix* and the insertion of the *V Macedonica*, Apulum became both the military and the judicial center of Roman Dacia from the time of Hadrian onwards.<sup>38</sup> The urban center would also become home to the *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, the governor of the three Dacian divisions, after a structural reorganization of the province under Marcus Aurelius following the Marcomannic Wars.<sup>39</sup> This accompanied its appointment as the capital of the division, *Dacia Apulensis*. The bestowal of such a role would have brought Apulum considerable political power. The only urban center that held significance on par with Apulum was the administrative capitol of Sarmizegetusa, but even this *colonia deducta* would see its influence wane under that of Apulum's over time.

Apulum, while frequently referred to as a single entity, was actually made up of two settlements. Upon the construction of the legionary *castrum*, it did not take long for a *canabae legionis* to emerge around it. Somewhere in the same Trajanic timeframe, a second settlement was established four kilometers away from Apulum along the Mureș River.<sup>40</sup> Starting life as a *vicus* of Sarmizegetusa, the new community would go on to receive official status as first a *municipium* under Marcus Aurelius then as a *colonia*

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<sup>37</sup> The name "Apoulon" originates from Ptolemy's *Geographia* (III, 8.1-4).

<sup>38</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 58.

<sup>39</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 164.

under Commodus.<sup>41</sup> *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis*, identified as Apulum I, was the more prosperous half of Apulum and where much of the archaeological evidence that has been found originated. The *canabae*, despite being constructed earlier, did not receive official status until Septimius Severus granted it such as *Municipium Septimium Apulense*.<sup>42</sup> Labelled as Apulum II, the noticeably smaller number of inscriptions found as compared to the quantity of Apulum I, indicate that this community lived a more modest, somewhat less prosperous life which would be more comparable to settlements like Napoca and Drobeta.<sup>43</sup> While Apulum II would have had a community mainly comprised of military personnel and parties closely tied to the legion, Apulum I was primarily inhabited by freedman and colonists from eastern regions of the Empire (typically Greece and the Levant).<sup>44</sup> Despite these differences, it can be seen through archaeological evidence that these two communities associated with one another frequently, even appearing to have played a game of one-upmanship amongst elites when it came to the religious dedications of some cults.<sup>45</sup>

### **Military Religions in the Archaeological Record**

Apulum is often regarded as a site of proliferation and expansion for many of the most prominent religious cults in all of Roman Dacia. With just over 1,400 inscriptions,

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<sup>41</sup> A. Diaconescu, "The Towns of Roman Dacia: An Overview of Recent Research" in *Roman Dacia: The Making of a Provincial Society*, eds. W. S. Hanson and I. P. Haynes (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2004), 109.

<sup>42</sup> Mihăilescu-Bîrliba, Lucrețiu. *Ex Toto Orbe Romano: Immigration into Roman Dacia with Prosopographical Observations on the Population of Dacia*. (Peeters, 2011), 5.

<sup>43</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 237.

<sup>44</sup> Csaba Szabó. "Micro-regional Manifestation of a Private Cult. The Mithraic Community in Apulum." (2012), 52.

<sup>45</sup> An example of this can be seen in three inscriptions of an *Asklepieion*. *IDR* III/5.7, *IDR* III/5, 13, and *IDR* III/5:6 show a continuous expansion of the *portico* of the temple. Two of the dedicants were from Apulum I, while the third was from Apulum II. Csaba Szabó. *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia: Materiality and Religious Experience*. (Archaeopress Publishing Ltd, 2018), 49.

around 460 of which are specifically votives, this claim is well-founded.<sup>46</sup> This does not even take into account the hundreds of fragmentary pieces of votive statuary and reliefs that have also been found through excavations. Complementing the votive evidence, the presence of two temples can be attested for archaeologically, nine through inscriptions, and another twelve are presumed to have existed due to the cosmopolitan population and the wealth of the settlement.<sup>47</sup> The sheer quantity of deities present in the corpus as a whole does well to support the idea that the settlements of Dacia contained a veritable “mosaic of cults”.<sup>48</sup>

When this rich archaeological profile is narrowed specifically to Mithras, Sol Invictus, IOM Dolichenus, and Mars, there is still much to discuss. Amongst the collected votive inscriptions, around 50 pieces (~11%) can be identified as referring to one of the three *Dii Militarii*, with Mithras enjoying a particularly strong showing. Dedications to Mars can be observed in smaller, but no less significant, amounts. Amongst the temples believed to be present in Apulum, a *Mithraeum* is one of the two known through excavation, and a *Dolichenium* and an *Aedes* of Sol Invictus are amongst the nine identified from epigraphy.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the rich catalogue of Mithraic evidence suggests the presence of possibly five or six other *Mithraea* somewhere in the settlement.<sup>50</sup> From this it is clear that deities often associated with the Roman military

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<sup>46</sup> These estimates were taken from the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021, specifically searching broadly under “Apulum”, and the narrowing the search to anything marked as “*tituli sacri*”. “*Militaria diplomata*” were excluded. As epigraphy is a form of evidence coming from ancient times, it is difficult to definitively claim a finite number as pieces may have been moved, destroyed, or remain hidden in context.

<sup>47</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 181-189.

<sup>48</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 73-96.

<sup>49</sup> For clarification: a *Mithraeum* is an underground temple dedicated to the worship of Mithras. A *Dolichenium* is the same type of structure but dedicated to the worship of IOM Dolichenus and normally at ground level. An *aedes* is a “shrine” or “temple”.

<sup>50</sup> Szabó. “Micro-regional Manifestation of a Private Cult”, 410; 416.

were significant in Apulum. This was likely the result of both the lasting presence of the *XIII Gemina* and the large percentage of veterans amongst the civilian population. A substantial minority of easterners within both the civilian and military populations would have further helped to bolster the popularity of deities such as Mithras, Sol Invictus, and IOM Dolichenus.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Community of Worshippers and their Dedications**

Apulum enjoys a rich archeological profile only comparable to the settlement of Sarmizegetusa. This is due largely to the continuous and thorough excavation of archaeologists in modern-day Alba Iulia. However, this also provides researchers with a considerable amount of evidence unlike many other settlements of the province. For this reason, this section will discuss the adherents of Mithras, Sol Invictus, IOM Dolichenus, and Mars separately.

Before going into details concerning the dedicant communities of individual gods, the overall social divisions will be briefly examined. Of the 57 total votive inscriptions to the four “military” deities, 19 are military in character, 31 civilian, and 7 unidentifiable. These percentages make clear that the civilian population was more prevalent in the dedicatory tradition, but the military dedications are notable. Of the 19 inscriptions coming from the military, four are *legati augusti*, two *beneficarii consularii*, one is a *cornicularius*, one an *actarius*, one is a *signifier*, and another an *imaginifer*.<sup>52</sup> All of these

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<sup>51</sup> Eastern and Egyptian deities were present to a highly odd degree within Apulum, even for a province with a substantial minority of easterners. Other archaeological evidence of Eastern gods includes an eastern sarcophagus design and multiple sculptures of the Egyptian god Ammon. Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 30.

<sup>52</sup> A *legatus Augusti* was the commanding officer of a legion, a *beneficiarius consularis* was an officer on the governor’s staff, a *cornicularius* was the chief clerk in a military unit, an *actarius* was a clerk who

positions were prominent ones within a legion. That over half of the nineteen military dedications came from those in positions of prestige makes clear that dedications were the domain of the elite for the military population of Apulum.

Civilians dedicants were significantly more varied, with many prominent figures mixing with just as many freedman or slaves. The bulk of dedicants are people identifiable as either citizens, freedman, or slaves. This variety signifies that dedications were both more inclusive and accessible to those in the civilian community than to those of lower ranks within the military. This may also account for their greater quantity. Now, this examination will shift to individual deities in order to observe which gods military and civilian dedicants of either class preferred to gift votive offerings.

Table 1: Votive Inscriptions to “Military” Gods in Apulum

	Military	Civilian	Unknown	Total
Mithras	7	24	5	36
Sol Invictus	4	2	1	7
IOMD	4	3	1	8
Mars	4	2	0	6
Total	19	31	7	57

Falling behind only IOM in the number of inscriptions dedicated to him in Apulum, Mithras enjoyed a remarkably visible popularity amongst both communities of the settlement. The sheer number of dedications earns Apulum secondary status for the highest quantities found in the province, only falling behind the amount that has been found at Sarmizegetusa.<sup>53</sup> Numerous Mithraic inscriptions, *tauroctony* reliefs,

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ranked second after the *cornicularius*, a *signifer* was the standard-bearer of a century, and the *imaginifer* was the standard-bearer of a standard specifically with the Emperor's portrait.

<sup>53</sup> Chappell, "Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation", 100.

*petrogenitus* statuary, *Cautes* and *Cautopates* statuary, and a *Mithraeum* have all been found in Apulum. The majority of these finds have come from Apulum I, once again signifying the slight wealth gap between the two parts of the larger community.<sup>54</sup>

Although many of the specifics of Mithraic worship in Apulum remain largely obscured due to its status as a “mystery cult”, numerous aspects of those participating in his worship can be gleaned from their inscriptions. There have been 36 inscriptions that dedicate to Mithras found in Apulum, of these all but five have the names of their dedicants preserved in the stone.<sup>55</sup> Amongst the 31 where names are given, 17 provide explicit or inferable information concerning the social status of the dedicant. A single inscription (IDR III/5, 291) records a social status while the name of the dedicant has been lost. That a total of 31 inscriptions contain any identification at all is noteworthy as Mithraic inscriptions have an oddly high propensity towards containing no personal information at all.<sup>56</sup> Luckily, this allows for a better analysis of the military and civilian composition of Mithraic adherents in Apulum.

Beginning with adherents connected to the military, it is relatively certain that the party responsible for bringing Mithras to Apulum was the *XIII Gemina*. The legion had previously been stationed in Poetovio, an urban center in the province of Pannonia.

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<sup>54</sup> An important note to make here is that the only current archeologically backed *Mithraeum* in Apulum was actually found in Apulum II. But this does not mean that there is no such structure present in Apulum I.

<sup>55</sup> The 36 inscriptions ascribed to the worship of Mithras are dedications to “*Deus Mithras*”, “*Deus Invictus Mithras*”, “*Deus Sol Invictus Mithras*”, “*Invictus Mithras*”, “*Sol Invictus Mithras*”, “*Deus Invictus Omnipotentis Mithras*”, “*Omnipotentis Mithras*”, “*Sol Mithras*”, or simply, “*Mithras*”. Inscriptions were incorporated into this study due to the clarity in which each god is presented. Examples containing dedications to entities such simply labelled as “*Invictus*”, while a common epithet for both Mithras and Sol Invictus, can also be associated with other deities such as Serapis. For this reason, unless there was a clear piece of statuary or other appropriate accompaniment that made clear that the dedication was to Mithras, it was excluded. The three exceptions are IDR/5, 42, ZPE-205-272, and an unpublished inscription. These are addressed to one of the Mithraic torchbearers, *Cautes* or *Cautopates*.

<sup>56</sup> Chappell, “Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation”, 100.

Through the dedications of the veterans who settled there and the early introduction of the Mithraic cult to the settlement, the *XIII Gemina* would have known of and brought the cult along with them when they were transferred to Apulum.<sup>57</sup> Their continued patronage to Mithras can be attested to in six inscriptions.<sup>58</sup> Amongst this small sample, a wide variety of statuses within the military context are manifest, ranging from common dedicatory statuses (*veteranus* and *beneficiarius consularis*) to far more uncommon dedicatory titles (*imaginifer*).<sup>59</sup> An additional inscription (IDR III/5.1, 285) can be grouped with the legion as well. While civilians of the merchant class, Turranius Marcellinus and Antonius Senecio Iunior would have had a close association with the *XIII Gemina* as *conductores armamentarii*.<sup>60</sup> The dedicants of this group of seven inscriptions likely would have lived in either the legionary fortress or the community built around it, Apulum II. However, all of their votives, including *tauroctony* reliefs and other accompaniments such as altars and statue bases, were found in the context of Apulum I.<sup>61</sup> While known evidence suggests the existence of two *Mithraea* within the vicinity of Apulum II, the fact that these inscriptions were found in the civilian-dominated half of the community suggests a strong cross interaction between the military and civilian populations of Apulum.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Szabo, "Micro-regional Manifestation of a Private Cult", 52.

<sup>58</sup> IDR III/5.1, 270; IDR III/5.1, 271; IDR III/5.1, 282; IDR III/5.1, 286; IDR III/5.1, 290; IDR III/5.1, 291.

<sup>59</sup> There is only one other example of an *imaginifer* (a soldier who carried a standard with the Emperor's portrait) in a Mithraic context throughout the Empire. (*CIMRM*, 1008).

<sup>60</sup> *Conductores armamentarii* were contractors of the arms stores, or armories.

<sup>61</sup> As all of these finds were made centuries after Roman occupation, there is the possibility that some have been moved over time as Apulum was continually inhabited to modern day. Only *in situ* finds can be claimed conclusively either way.

<sup>62</sup> The current "Mithraeum III" excavation in Alba Iulia (modern-day Apulum) and a bulk find of Mithraic monuments found in the garden of the Oancea family, the hypothesized "Oancean Mithraeum", suggest the existence of two *Mithraea* in Apulum II. Matthew McCarty, Mariana Egri, and Aurel Rustoiu. "Connected Communities in Roman Mithraism: Regional Webs from the Apulum Mithraeum III Project (Dacia)." *Phoenix* 71, no. 3/4 (2017): 373-374; IDR III/5.2, 709 also supports this, although which *Mithraeum* it specifically alludes to is unknown.

The remaining 24 inscriptions in which identification of the dedicant is given most likely fall into the civilian sphere of the population, coming almost entirely from Apulum I. A difference of 24 to 7 already brings into question the natural assumption that a “military religion” would be primarily worshipped by the legion and its affiliates alone. On the contrary, this sample set shows clearly that civilian participation in the worship of Mithras at Apulum was on par with, if not potentially more significant than, military participation.

Mithraism would have been an appealing religion to the civilian male population of Apulum. The cult had an internal hierarchy that did not necessarily reflect the social divisions outside of its sanctuaries.<sup>63</sup> An example of this difference manifesting can be seen in the case of Secundinus. The dedication of a beautiful and clearly expensive *signum*, in this case a statue of the *tauroctonos* scene, signified that he was an important member of the Mithraic congregation. Not only would he have been a role model for those below him in the religious hierarchy of the cult, but he would have also been a significant contributor to the framework of the sacralized space.<sup>64</sup> While it was clear from the size and material used to construct the *signum* that Secundinus certainly had wealth, the scantily detailed manner in which he dedicated the piece and the onomastic suggest that that outside the walls of the Mithraeum, Secundinus was someone of modest, perhaps even marginal, status.<sup>65</sup> His example shows that the ability Mithraism allowed

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<sup>63</sup> Mithraism was known to have a seven-grade hierarchy in its worship within the Italian peninsula. This specific means of social organization was not present in all *Mithraea* and there is not enough evidence to definitely state that it was present in Roman Dacia. However, the existence of a hierarchy within the religious community was likely, even if it was not in the specific seven-grade structure. Roger Beck. *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun*. (Oxford University Press, 2006), 72.

<sup>64</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 101.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*



for any man to elevate themselves within its religious framework was part of what made the cult so appealing to those of lesser status. A number of inscriptions from Apulum even show that slaves could join and act as dedicants alongside members of the elite.<sup>66</sup>

Many prominent members of the civilian community also partook in the act of dedicating to Mithras. Statorius, a decurion and priest of Apulum II, made a dedication of the temple itself, built from his own means, *pecunia mea*.<sup>67</sup> While a decurion was also a position in the military, the context of the inscription makes it more likely that Statorius was a civilian decurion, or a member of the city senate. Another man, M. Aurelius Maximus, also identifies himself as a priest of Apulum II in his inscription.<sup>68</sup> Priests, or *flamines*, of the Roman Empire were usually separated from military and political office, but still held significant privileges as high religious officials in Roman society. Similarly, those serving as *augustales* were priests specifically in charge of attending to the worship of Imperial Cult. A third inscription from an *augustalis* named Cratus dedicated a statue of Cautopates, one of the two torchbearers in the Mithraic religion.<sup>69</sup> That two *flamines*, one of which was also a decurion, along with an *augustalis* would take the time and effort to dedicate to Mithras shows that even the civilian and religious elite of Roman society were attracted to the religion.

Many of the remaining inscriptions from the civilian set are reflective of the eastern population that made up a significant minority within Apulum I. Names such as

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<sup>66</sup> Inscriptions from Dioscorus (*IDR* III/5.1, 273; *AE* 2016, 1335) and Vitalis (*ZPE*-205-268; *ZPE*-205-271; *ZPE*-205-272) are both likely to have been dedicated by slaves or freedman in servile positions. Other inscriptions where no status or occupation are recorded are also markers of a lower status in Roman society.

<sup>67</sup> *IDR* III/5.2, 709.

<sup>68</sup> *IDR*/4, 63.

<sup>69</sup> Unpublished inscription in A. Diaconescu, I. P. Haynes, and A. Schafer. "Apulum: The Shrine of Liber Pater." *Current World Archaeology* 10 (2005), 44.

Euthyces, Sextus Syntrofus, and Chrestion all show clear signs of eastern origin.<sup>70</sup> A single Mithraic inscription from Aurelius Stephanus was dedicated in Greek instead of Latin, signifying that the eastern population was great enough that such a dedication was not completely unheard of in Apulum.<sup>71</sup> Mithraism, as it existed in the western Empire, had long since become distinct from its eastern equivalent by the time Roman Dacia was assimilated into the Empire.<sup>72</sup> So while it had been largely reconfigured by western hands, its pseudo-eastern appearance meant that having a large number of dedicants originally from the eastern regions of the Empire was not unusual. Instead, it reflects a possible desire to express a sense of cultural community amongst the large population of residents from that region, something that will be seen in the coming discussion of IOM Dolichenus as well.

Similar and often syncretized with Mithras, the god Sol Invictus is also present amongst the votive dedications in Apulum. Currently, seven inscriptions to the deity have been found in the settlement.<sup>73</sup> While this sample size is far smaller than the quantity found for Mithras, it does not diminish the significance of Sol Invictus to the community of Apulum.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, this set of inscriptions contains more detailed information than the Mithraic set, with all but one providing the dedicant's name. The presence of a cult temple, or *aedes*, is also attested to through epigraphy. Dedicated by C. Caerellius

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<sup>70</sup> IDR III/5.1, 281; IDR III/5.1, 277; IDR III/5.1, 272.

<sup>71</sup> IDR III/5, 267.

<sup>72</sup> David Ulansey. *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World*. (Oxford University Press, 1991), 8-9.

<sup>73</sup> The 7 inscriptions ascribed specifically to Sol Invictus are dedications to “*Sol Invictus*”, “*Sol*”, “*Deus Sol*”, and in one case the Greek title, “*Helios*”. Examples in which the god was syncretized with Mithras were grouped with Mithraic dedications due to the explicit use of “*Mithras*” in the inscriptions.

<sup>74</sup> An additional inscription exists that is dedicated to “*Deus Invictus*”. This could be attributable to either Mithras or Sol Invictus, however due to lack of clarity and having no dedicant information either way, it has been excluded to avoid confusion.

Sabinus, a commander of the *XIII Gemina*, the inscription specifically dictates how he restored the temple of Sol Invictus (*Soli Invicto aedem restituit*).<sup>75</sup> The presence of an original *aedes* suggests that a considerable number of adherents existed in Apulum well before its restoration sometime in the early 180's.<sup>76</sup> That the temple would be restored by a significant member of the military elite speaks to its continued prestige within the settlement population. Additionally, a legionary commander restoring the temple, most likely voluntarily, also speaks to the significance of Sol Invictus amongst the *XIII Gemina*.<sup>77</sup>

Unlike Mithras, whose worship was more civilian in nature, Sol Invictus has a more dominant military following. Amongst the six dedicants that give any personal information, four provide detail concerning their social status.<sup>78</sup> All of them are members of the military. Three of the dedicants identify themselves as *legati legionis*, commanders of the *XIII Gemina* and members of the senatorial class. The presence of dedications from three elite members of the legion within a single building, in this case the *aedes* of Sol Invictus, signifies that the structure was an extremely important space in the religious lives of soldiers living in Apulum.<sup>79</sup> The fourth dedicant, Marcus Aurelius Sila, identifies himself as an *actarius*, a clerk who would have been in charge the distribution of wages and provisions within the military.<sup>80</sup> Serving directly under the *legati legionis*, his position was still one of importance amongst those of the legion. His dedication further

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<sup>75</sup> *IDR III/5.1*, 354.

<sup>76</sup> Halsberghe, *The Cult of Sol Invictus*, 48.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>78</sup> *IDR III/5.1*, 350; *IDR III/5.1*, 353; *IDR III/5.1*, 354; *IDR III/5.1*, 358.

<sup>79</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 57.

<sup>80</sup> George Cupcea. *Professional Ranks in the Roman Army of Dacia*. (Archaeopress, 2014), 22.

signifies the importance of Sol Invictus within the military context, as it was not only the most elite of officers participating in euergetic acts.

The presence of Sol Invictus within the civilian sphere is much more ambiguous. Without a surviving temple and a small quantity of physical evidence outside of epigraphy, the prominence of Sol Invictus in the civilian population is difficult to ascertain. However, the presence of an *aedes* does help to suggest a sizeable group of civilian adherents alongside their more prominent military counterparts.<sup>81</sup> Thus, despite a much smaller set of inscriptions than those discussed for Mithras, it can still be argued that there was significant civilian participation within the Cult of Sol Invictus.

Of the two inscriptions that are able to be studied, the first, dedicated by L. Valerius Felix, illustrates that citizens, specifically, were active participants.<sup>82</sup> The second inscription, dedicated by a Greek man identifying himself as Hermes, exemplifies the involvement of the eastern community of Apulum in this worship.<sup>83</sup> Hermes, or more accurately Hermes Gorgiou, was a *peregrinus*, or non-citizen.<sup>84</sup> His dedication, when taken together with the one from L. Valerius Felix, shows that the worship of Sol Invictus was not limited to either end of the social spectrum in Apulum. Unfortunately as only two civilian examples survive, it would appear that when it came to votive dedications towards Sol Invictus, at least in Apulum, the military was the more significant agent.

On the other end, the archaeological record suggests a more equivalent civilian-military dedicant base for IOM Dolichenus. This equivalency begins as far back as the initial importation of the cult to Apulum. Likely being transplanted in a similar fashion as

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<sup>81</sup> Halsberghe, *The Cult of Sol Invictus*, 47-48.

<sup>82</sup> *IDR* III/5.1, 351.

<sup>83</sup> *IDR* III/5.1, 355.

<sup>84</sup> Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 119.

the other *Dii Militarii* (i.e. the *XIII Gemina*), IOM Dolichenus also had a noticeable civilian means of importation. This is attestable through a specific inscription. In it, the divinity is specifically addressed as “*Deo Commageno*”, a title referencing the location from which the god was believed to have originated from.<sup>85</sup> While soldiers from Commagene were present in the *XIII Gemina*, many merchants and traders came from the region to Roman Dacia as well. As merchants immigrated, they worked to establish the worship of IOM Dolichenus within Apulum and a complementary site, Ampelum. By doing this, they attempted to maintain a communal identity and simultaneously establish a uniquely Commagenian economic network in their new provincial home.<sup>86</sup> Their efforts largely paid off as the presence of two *Dolichenia* are attributable to Apulum, one in the *colonia* and the other in the *municipium*.<sup>87</sup> At least one can be definitively placed in the settlement, as an inscription dedicated by Aelius Valentinus explicitly dictates his restoration of the temple.<sup>88</sup> Although it is unknown where the *Dolichenium* referred to by Aelius Valentinus is, the presence of a temple, with the high possibility of a second, speaks to the significance of the cult amongst the population of Apulum.

While there may have been a strong civilian presence amongst adherents, there is still considerable evidence to support heavy military involvement. Eight inscriptions can be attributed to IOM Dolichenus, four of which can be definitively linked to the military.<sup>89</sup> Two veterans, one of which specifically states his status as a veteran of the

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<sup>85</sup> IDR III/5.1, 223; Beard, *Religions of Rome*, 275.

<sup>86</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 67; 163.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

<sup>88</sup> IDR III/5.1, 217.

<sup>89</sup> Seven of the inscriptions ascribed specifically to IOMD are dedications to “*Iovi Optimo Maximo Dolicheno*”, which is typically abbreviated to I O M D in inscriptions. An additional inscription typically attested to IOMD (IDR III/5.1, 223) labels the deity as “*Deo Commageno*”.

*XIII Gemina* and the second likely to be the same, dedicate to IOM Dolichenus.<sup>90</sup> A third individual, Iulius Gracilis, gives his status as *eques numeri Maurorum Tibiscensium* and *ex singulari consularis*.<sup>91</sup> While the *numeri* were not as significant or large as legions, they were still prevalent in regions with large military presences and members were able to hold specialized positions.<sup>92</sup> The fourth dedicant, Flavius Barhadadi, identifies himself as a priest to IOM Dolichenus for the *XIII Gemina*.<sup>93</sup> IOM Dolichenus had enjoyed a growth in popularity during the third century and had since been brought under imperial protection, so the fact that the legion would have a priest to an eastern syncretic deity was no longer unusual. While it cannot be stated definitively, it is likely that these four dedicants would have been primarily engaged with the congregation and *Dolichenium* present in Apulum II. Most likely established following an initial group of adherents in Apulum I, this second group would have likely been made up almost entirely of veterans and active military personnel.<sup>94</sup> That the only identifiable priest had the name Barhadadi, a name of clear Syrian origin, it is also probable that this group was composed of largely eastern adherents within the military context. That his particular inscription also dedicates to the African goddess Magna Caelestis adds weight to this claim as well.<sup>95</sup> This carries a clear parallel with the civilian sect in Apulum I.

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<sup>90</sup> IDR III/5.1, 217; IDR III/5.1, 220.

<sup>91</sup> A horseman of the Numerus Maurorum Tibiscensium and a former governor's bodyguard. IDR III/5.1, 219.

<sup>92</sup> Whereas auxiliaries were originally the military branch that relied on home recruitment, the *numeri* had largely taken over this role by the third century. This makes it highly likely that Iulius Gracilis originally came from the African continent with the rest of his cohort.

<sup>93</sup> IDR III/5.1, 221.

<sup>94</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 67.

<sup>95</sup> Magna Caelestis was a case of *interpretatio* assimilating the African goddess, Tanit, and Iuno Caelestis. She held a similar position to the god Bel Hammon, as Juno did to Jupiter. The use of the epithet "*Magna*" with a female deity may also suggest a level of syncretism with Magna Mater, an eastern goddess associated with motherhood and the earth. By the third century, Magna Caelestis was largely an African deity. Szabo and Boda, *The Gods of Roman Dacia*, 16, 20.

Of the known civilian dedicants, the most notable are a pair of Syrian merchants named Aurelius Alexander and Aurelius Flavus. Specifically identifying themselves as *suri negotiatores* (Syrian merchants), the duo speaks to the prevalence of eastern, and specifically Syrian, dedicants to IOM Dolichenus in Apulum.<sup>96</sup> If the Apulum II congregation was primarily active military and veterans of Syrian origin, the Apulum I group was most likely composed of merchants and colonists of the same background. That Aurelius Alexander and Aurelius Flavus chose to dedicate to a god from their homeland as opposed to another deity tied more directly to their profession suggests a selection grounded in maintaining a cohesive sense of Syrian identity amongst the cosmopolitan population of Apulum.<sup>97</sup> This, together with the cultural group from Commagene (which was previously an independent kingdom in Syria, but had since been absorbed into the Empire by the Flavians), expresses a strong emphasis on maintaining a cultural uniformity amongst adherents of IOM Dolichenus. In this regard, unlike the more inclusive cults of Mithras and Sol Invictus, IOM Dolichenus was a religious group that remained largely within its demographic population of origin even within a context far from an eastern homeland. While staying in this parameter, the worship of the cult ended up near evenly divided between those of eastern origin in the military and civilian populations.

Moving away from the three *Dii Militarii*, the Roman god of war enjoyed a similar level of popularity to Sol Invictus. Mars, as an official deity of the Roman state, would have certainly been present in a legionary settlement. From the evidence present in Apulum, it becomes abundantly evident that of the gods thus discussed, Mars by far is the

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<sup>96</sup> *IDR* III/5.1, 218.

<sup>97</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 66-67.

most obviously “military” deity in the settlement. Six inscriptions to Mars have been found in Apulum, often with him accompanied by the goddess Victoria and one in which he is in secondary position to IOM.<sup>98</sup> Of this set of inscriptions, four were dedicated by members of the military, most likely belonging to the legion given their ranks but this is not explicitly stated. The dedicants identified themselves with prominent titles: L. Arrius Probus, a *beneficiarius consularis*, P. Aelius Crescens, a *duplicarius* and dedicant of two inscriptions, and P. Aelius Rufinus, a *cornicularius*.<sup>99</sup> While it is not clear whether or not these were all dedicated to the same location, as in the case of Sol Invictus, the predominance of military dedicants makes evident the significance of Mars amongst the military population.

Outside of this set of military inscriptions, the only other notable dedicant is a man named Farnaces Gaii.<sup>100</sup> His status as a *peregrinus*, or non-citizen, would have placed him in a much more marginal social position than any of the prior military dedicants.<sup>101</sup> It is unclear why this man would have chosen to dedicate to Mars specifically, as opposed to a god of his homeland or another, more popular, god. Having noted this oddity, it does nothing to detract from Mars’ place as a god of the military in Apulum. It is unlikely that his following leaked much into the civilian community, likely remaining largely in the perimeters of the military establishment as an imperial entity.

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<sup>98</sup> The 6 inscriptions ascribed specifically to Mars are dedications to “*Marti*”, “*Marti Conservatori*” and “*Marti Patri Conservatori*”. Almost all of these inscriptions come from votive statue bases, although other pieces of votive imagery have also been found in Apulum.

<sup>99</sup> A *duplicarius* was quite literally, a “double-paid” soldier. A *cornicularius* was the chief clerk in a military unit. *IDR* III/5.1, 201; *IDR* III/5.1, 248; *IDR* III/5.1, 249; *IDR* III/5.1, 250.

<sup>100</sup> *IDR* III/5, 707.

<sup>101</sup> There is also the potential case that Farnaces could have been the slave or son of Gaius. Given the Anatolian origin of the name Farnaces (often spelled as Pharnaces), being a child of the Latin Gaius is unlikely. However, the slave option remains a possibility. Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 117.



### **Overall Patterns of Worship of Military Deities in Apulum**

Many of the findings discussed do well to support the argument that the urban development and growth of Apulum caused civilians to become more prominent in dedications to military deities than those affiliated with the *XIII Gemina*. The most popular deities, Mithras and IOM Dolichenus, saw their adherents reach a state of equivalence. Their religious communities were split between the civilian-dominated Apulum I and the military-dominated Apulum II, but both divisions maintained the same level of significance within the community as a whole. The large and mixed social community of Mithraism is likely the largest factor for why so much physical evidence yet remains to the modern day. Meanwhile, the worship of IOM Dolichenus was bolstered by its primarily Syrian and Commagenian adherents. While their uniformity encouraged a strong cultural cohesion amongst adherents of all walks of life, there was likely still diffusion amongst other ethnic groups present in the community. This phenomenon would not have been unusual for a large urban center like Apulum.

Sol Invictus and Mars, the least popular of the deities, also had the most distinctive “military” character. There likely was civilian involvement, especially in the case of Sol Invictus due to the presence of an *aedes*. However, the individuals that primarily took on the role of dedicant and benefactor of religious activities were soldiers. This may also inversely have contributed to their lack of popularity when compared to Mithras and IOM Dolichenus.

## The Settlement of Potaissa

Potaissa, a prominent urban center to the north of Apulum, was established soon after the Dacian Wars came to a close. First attested to in the *Milliarum of Aiton*, a milestone found between Potaissa and Napoca, its inclusion in the inscription confirms that the town was occupied by Roman citizens as early as AD 108.<sup>102</sup> Established for industrial purposes, the economy of Potaissa was grounded in the nearby ancient salt and gold mines.<sup>103</sup> The inhabitants were largely divided into two groups: the first was primarily composed of colonists and administrators, while the other was largely made up of displaced natives.<sup>104</sup> Yet, unlike Apulum which was given a legion from its inception, Potaissa had no permanent military establishment for another sixty-one years.

Those living in Potaissa were not unfamiliar with the military, as its proximity to the military road leading to the northern frontier guaranteed that legions and auxiliaries filtered through the settlement with some regularity. This proximity would lead to the establishment of a *castrum* north of the settlement, which was quickly joined by a *canabae* just outside the fortress gates.<sup>105</sup> The *castrum* would see a rotation of armed forces before the Marcomannic Wars finally resulted in it becoming the permanent station of the *V Macedonica* in AD 169. It was this change that would allow for the community of Potaissa to truly thrive.<sup>106</sup> While it could not take the title of the military center of Roman Dacia away from Apulum, the settlement would be given the title of military headquarters of *Dacia Porolissensis*. The arrival of the *V Macedonica* would

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<sup>102</sup> *CIL* III, 1627.

<sup>103</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 39; Paul Lachlan MacKendrick. *The Dacian Stones Speak*. (UNC Press Books, 2000), 126.

<sup>104</sup> Chappell, "Cultural Change in Imperial Dacia."

<sup>105</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 126.

<sup>106</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 240.

also boost Potaissa to the second largest urban center in Roman Dacia, only falling behind the population of its fellow legionary base, Apulum.<sup>107</sup> The settlement would go on to receive the status of *municipium* under Septimius Severus, and subsequently the status of *colonia* with *ius Italicum*.<sup>108</sup>

While it is known that the community was able to flourish following the implantation of the legion, much remains unknown concerning the construction of the settlement physically, culturally, and ethnically. This is largely due to the unfortunate fact that what was Potaissa now lies squarely under the modern town of Turda, Romania. Excavations have been minimal, but some details can be gleaned from the small number of inscriptions that have been found. Through the epigraphic record, it is known that the settlement contained an aqueduct, baths, and a basilica.<sup>109</sup> Currently, only the bath complex has been excavated. Epigraphy is also one of the only means currently available for getting a sense of the community composition. Egyptians, Pannonians, Italians, Illyricans, Thracians, and Phrygians can all be accounted for in this manner, reflecting a common mix of colonists typical of urban centers in Roman Dacia.<sup>110</sup> Legionary veterans were also present within the community. While not attracting as many as Apulum, which found over two-thirds of all veterans settling within it, Potaissa still held a sizeable veteran community.<sup>111</sup> The presence of the *V Macedonica* and legionary veterans would

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<sup>107</sup> Chappell, "Cultural Change in Imperial Dacia."

<sup>108</sup> Being given the honor of *Ius Italicum* (the rights of an Italian town) meant that the colony was free from taxation by the imperial state. *Ius Iuridicum* was also seen to have the same meaning in certain sources, but due to the dominance of *Ius Italicum*, it will be used instead. Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 240-241.

<sup>109</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 126.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Chappell, "Cultural Change in Imperial Dacia."

have a significant impact on establishing Roman cultural, political, and religious values within Potaissa.

### **Military Religions in the Archaeological Record**

Something important to discuss is the vast difference in available materials from the two legionary fortresses and their surrounding settlements. Apulum is one of the most well-documented and thoroughly excavated sites in all of Roman Dacia. Meanwhile, Potaissa, while certainly not among the worst, has received far less archaeological endeavors simply due to the difficulties of having a city now sitting on top of it. For this reason, a much clearer image of religious life exists for Apulum than it does for Potaissa. With this taken into account, conclusions made concerning Potaissa are done so with the knowledge that much remains lost or undiscovered.

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While lack of archaeological excavation has left researchers with a much smaller sample size than sites like Apulum and Sarmizegetusa, notable patterns of worship can still be observed in the epigraphy of Potaissa. A total of 271 inscriptions have been found at the site (as compared to the over 1,400 at Apulum), with 112 specifically identified as votive in nature.<sup>112</sup> However, 20 are too fragmentary for any proper use, so the total shifts to 92.<sup>113</sup> In conjunction to these inscriptions are numerous statuettes and reliefs dedicated to a variety of gods and goddesses.<sup>114</sup> Evidence of temples have also

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<sup>112</sup> As with Apulum, these estimates were taken from the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021, specifically searching broadly under “Potaissa”, and then narrowing the search to anything marked as “*tituli sacri*” and excluding “*militaria diplomata*” from the same location.

<sup>113</sup> Chappell, “Cultural Change in Imperial Dacia.”

<sup>114</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 310-19.

been found with two attestable through archaeology, one through inscriptions, and another five theorized due to the community composition and wealth present within.<sup>115</sup> Through these mediums, it becomes apparent that deities such as IOM, Silvanus, Liber Pater, and Venus enjoyed considerable popularity amongst the community of Potaissa.

Concerning the *Dii Militarii* and Mars specifically, eleven inscriptions can be definitively linked to one of the deities: six to Mithras, three to IOM Dolichenus, and two to Mars.<sup>116</sup> Comprising nearly 9% of the total inscriptions, it becomes clear that while no one military deity approached the level of popularity enjoyed by divinities such as IOM (who makes up 32% of the surviving epigraphic record himself), collectively the deities enjoyed a respectable degree of popularity. This is further bolstered by physical offerings, including five *tauroctony* reliefs to Mithras and a single bronze statuette dedicated to Mars. Furthermore, the amount of surviving evidence concerning Mithras specifically signals that at least one *Mithraeum* was likely present somewhere in Potaissa. Similarly, the ethnic composition of Potaissa makes the existence of a *Dolichenium* likely. However, there is currently no hard archaeological evidence to conclusively validate the existence or possible location of either temple.

Table 2: Votive Inscriptions to “Military” Gods in Potaissa

	Military	Civilian	Unknown	Total
Mithras	3	2	1	6
IOMD	1	1	1	3
Mars	0	2	0	2
Total	4	5	2	10

<sup>115</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 182-188.

<sup>116</sup> The divinity Sol Invictus has no definitive inscriptions dedicated to him in Potaissa, hence why he has not and will not be discussed within this section. This could suggest either a general insignificance to the population of Potaissa or a higher rate of syncretization with Mithras and/or IOM Dolichenus in the settlement.

## The Community of Worshippers and their Dedications

Due to the much smaller sample size than in Apulum, the analysis of the archaeological evidence found in Potaissa will be conducted by splitting the corpus into “military” and “civilian.” Within these divisions, dedications to all applicable gods will be discussed together and social status will be the primary focus of discussion.

Of the ten inscriptions, four dedicants identify themselves as members of the military.<sup>117</sup> Aelius Maximus and Aurelius Dolens both describe themselves as *miles*, or foot soldiers, of the *V Macedonica*.<sup>118</sup> Equivalent in rank to a modern private, this identification meant that these two dedicants were about as low as one could get in the military hierarchy.<sup>119</sup> Despite this low status, Aelius Maximus was also able to dedicate a votive relief alongside his inscription, signifying that he had some access to wealth even though he was low-ranking in the legion. Another mid-ranking officer, a *tesserarius* named Flavius Marcellinus, dedicates to Deus Invictus.<sup>120</sup> The entity, Deus Invictus, could refer to either Mithras or Sol Invictus, but in this case it is likely referring to Mithras due to the absence of the other deity elsewhere in epigraphy. Both the low-ranking and mid-ranking dedicants choose to make their votive offerings to Mithras. This once again reflects the accessibility of Mithraism and marks him as a significant deity amongst the lower ranks of the military.

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<sup>117</sup> Of note is an additional inscription dedicated by a *miles* named Aurelius Montanus (*CIL* III, 879). While often attributed to Mithras, the dedication to *Invictus* is simply too vague to include. As there is no accompanying statuary or reliefs, it is unclear whether this epithet applies to Mithras or to another deity such as Silvanus or Hercules and is thus excluded from this discussion.

<sup>118</sup> *CIL* III, 899; *CIL* III, 6255.

<sup>119</sup> Cupcea, *Professional Ranks in the Roman Army of Dacia*, 17.

<sup>120</sup> A *tesserarius* is an under-officer “tactical” class ranked after a *signifer* and an *optio* (which is a centurion’s second-in-command). Cupcea, *Professional Ranks in the Roman Army of Dacia*, 23.

The only dedicant of considerable standing amongst the military dedicants is Titint(us?).<sup>121</sup> Identifying himself as a *beneficiarius legati*, Titint(us?) would have served as either an aide or bodyguard to the commander of the legion, a position which would have elevated him considerably above soldiers ranked as *miles*. Instead of Mithras, this dedication was made to IOM Dolichenus, possibly symbolizing that the elite of the military were more invested in the worship of IOM Dolichenus than other military deities. The surviving military inscriptions reflect that both elite and common members of the military establishment in Potaissa were participating in the act of dedicating to military deities.

Interestingly, across all of the military dedicants in Potaissa, *miles* dedicate in a much higher percentage than in the other legionary settlement of Apulum (18% compared to 3%). This is indicative of the fact that those of lesser status in the military were more involved in dedications to deities in Potaissa than they were in Apulum. However, while an interesting observation, this does not distract from the fact that these few military inscriptions from Potaissa seem to support the fact that civilians were just as involved in dedicating to “military” deities as the military itself.

Whereas there were only four military inscriptions, five civilian inscriptions have survived. Equivalent in quantity to the military in their identifiable dedications to IOM Dolichenus, and with dedications to Mars *only* coming from civilians, it is evident that civilians held relatively equal significance in votive dedications when compared to their military counterparts. The civilians whose dedications have survived come from every level of the social hierarchy. At the uppermost level, M. Aelius Anton(ius?) dedicates to

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<sup>121</sup> *ILD* 480.

IOM Dolichenus and identifies himself as both a *decurion* of the *colonia Napoca* and an *iuridicus* (judge) of the *municipium Porolissum*.<sup>122</sup> Either position would have bestowed considerable social status upon him. Interestingly, this creates a parallel to the only military dedicant to IOM Dolichenus. Both men were amongst the elite of their respective social spheres, possibly strengthening the argument that the worship of IOM Dolichenus was primarily conducted by the upper echelons.

In the center of the civilian dedications is L. Aelius Rufinus. Although his exact social status is not provided in the inscription, his *tria nomina* is a clear signal that he was at the very least, a Roman citizen.<sup>123</sup> While this still leaves his specific social status ambiguous, citizenship would have kept him from the lowest ranks in society.<sup>124</sup> The final identifiable dedicant, Hermias, chose to give a votive offering to Mars.<sup>125</sup> Hermias was a slave, the lowest possible rank on the social ladder but still able and willing to make a dedication to a deity.<sup>126</sup> This could have been a means to prove himself worthy of freedom to his master as he made another dedication to Mercury while also enslaved.<sup>127</sup> The pattern of inclusion of all social ranks suggests that the act of dedicating to these military divinities was important to a variety of civilians.

### Overall Patterns of Worship of Military Deities in Potaissa

From the surviving epigraphic record, civilian adherents to the *Dii Militarii* and Mars outnumber their military equivalents five to four. This difference is negligible and

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<sup>122</sup> *ILD* 479.

<sup>123</sup> *CIL* III, 1600.

<sup>124</sup> Mihailescu-Birbila, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 38.

<sup>125</sup> *CIL* III, 897.

<sup>126</sup> Mihailescu-Birbila, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 119.

<sup>127</sup> The inscription (*CIL* III, 898) can easily be attributed to the same Hermias as the votive dedications are identical in wording apart from the specific deity being dedicated to.



casts the dedicatory status as one of equivalency between the military and civilian populations. A shared variability was found amongst the collective dedicants of both groups, although the elite and lower classes did split themselves when it came to the specific deity they worshipped. IOM Dolichenus appears to have enjoyed an elite patronage, with both of the highest ranking dedicants from the civilian and military spheres making their dedications to him. Conversely, Mithras seemed to have attracted exclusively those of lesser status in both populations. However, the most interesting is the offerings made to Mars. Coming only from the civilian population, the god of war and armies had no surviving dedications from any rank of the military. These patterns place Potaissa squarely in a position of “equivalency”. Neither the military nor the civilian population have a strong dominance in either epigraphic or physical votives when the three deities discussed are taken together.

## Conclusions

Neither Apulum nor Potaissa, despite having the *XIII Gemina* and the *V Macedonica*, stationed within, showed a clear military dominance of the epigraphic record where “military” deities were concerned. The overall demographic distribution within the inscriptions of Apulum found that the civilian population was a more significant contributor of votives. Meanwhile, Potaissa, which is known to have the more influential military population in administration of the two settlements, reached a state of equivalency between its military and civilian dedicants.

When it came to the worship of the gods within each community, the demographic character of Mithras was remarkably similar in both locations. While it

lacked elite dedicants in Potaissa, the majority of its worshippers were either citizens, freedmen, or slaves in both communities. IOM Dolichenus was primarily a deity of the elite in both Apulum and Potaissa. While appearing slightly more accessible, and a *lot* more Syrian in character, in Apulum, the dedications of both legionary settlements came primarily from dedicants of the upper elite. The final of the *Dii Militarii*, Sol Invictus, is impossible to compare due to a lack of inscriptions from Potaissa. Though from what is observable in Apulum, the deity enjoyed a primarily military following with some civilian participation. Perhaps the most interesting distinction is found when looking at Mars. Purely military in Apulum and purely civilian in Potaissa, it is difficult to surmise why this stark contrast may have occurred. However, the small epigraphic sample size in Potaissa could be a possible contributor to this pattern.

What can be taken away from the analysis of this corpus is that the presence of a large military entity like a legion did not necessarily mean that the military would inevitably become the dominant party in religious activities. On the contrary, the economic development and infrastructural growth of these communities would have attracted many merchants and colonists unaffiliated with the military to the settlements. As the urban centers grew and flourished, civilians attained either an equivalent or greater significance in dedications to gods, even “military” ones, despite the presence of the legions remaining ever present.

## Part II: Smaller Settlements

During Trajan's Dacian Wars, a number of military fortifications were set up as his forces pushed further into the Dacian kingdom. Many of these would go on to serve as the base for townships, with communities growing either around or near various *castra*. While the most prosperous of these would be Apulum and Potaissa, owed largely to the presence of their legions, many less opulent settlements were also established in close vicinity to smaller military entities. This allowed the military to become the main source of political, economic, and socio-cultural formation for these communities, much as the legions had done for Apulum and Potaissa.

Auxiliaries were present in the province in high numbers. Military documents record at least 58 auxiliary units transferred into the province, coming in a variety of forms and functions.<sup>128</sup> Their *castra* were scattered strategically across the province, with most in relatively close proximity to the road network. As their military bases remained occupied, settlements began to sprout around them. Much like the *canabae* that grew around legionary *castra*, military *vici* often formed around those occupied by auxiliaries.<sup>129</sup> The type of auxiliaries present was irrelevant, as these townships grew around *castra* occupied by *cohors*, *alae*, and *numeri*. Auxiliary forces rotated more frequently than legions, with different units cycling through different *castra* as needed and the presence of multiple groups at once not uncommon. However, the military fort would always have at least one group present. This put the communities which formed

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<sup>128</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 56.

<sup>129</sup> *Vici* (singular, *vicus*) are towns often associated with auxiliary *castra*. It could also refer to a neighborhood of a larger settlement.

around them in the interesting position of being largely civilian in development but also constantly exposed to the military population and their socio-cultural practices.

Since the ethnicities of the men in smaller military units were far more varied and initially less “romanized” than their legionary counterparts, the influence of their indigenous culture was often felt more strongly in the communities around them. This is most evident in the Roman Dacian settlement of Micia, which is discussed below. The high concentration of smaller military units comprised of men from across the Empire may help to partially explain the pattern in which twenty percent of inscriptions found in Roman Dacia refer to Levantine cults.<sup>130</sup> As all three of the *Dii Militarii* fall into this category, it could also support their dominance in the epigraphic record. Yet, the following discussion will examine the patterns of worship, specifically through dedicants, in a number of settlements which were founded around and routinely garrisoned by smaller military units. Looking at Micia, Drobeta, Romula, Porolissum, and Tibiscum, the question of whether the military presence within these smaller communities meant that the military dedicants were dominant in the worship of the *Dii Militarii* and Mars is examined.

Table 3: Votive Inscriptions to “Military” Gods in Smaller Settlements

	Military	Civilian	Unknown	Total
Micia	2	3	2	7
Drobeta	2	0	2	4
Porolissum	1	0	0	1
Romula	1	1	2	4
Tibiscum	0	2	1	3

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<sup>130</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 188.

## The Settlement of Micia

Beginning as a *pagus* (essentially a district or rural subdivision) of a considerably large auxiliary *castrum*, the settlement of Micia would go to become one of considerable religious standing in Roman Dacia.<sup>131</sup> Regarded as the largest religious center outside of Sarmizegetusa and Apulum, temples and votives to numerous deities have been found through archaeological expeditions.<sup>132</sup> Amongst these finds are an epigraphically attested *Mithraeum* and *Dolichenium*.<sup>133</sup> Beyond its role as a religious center, Micia was also considered as an important commercial and customs center of the province.<sup>134</sup> While a lack of evidence leaves it unknown whether or not the settlement ever went on to earn the title of *municipium*, the presence of an amphitheater and a baths complex together with temples and shrines suggests a considerable amount of wealth present within the community.<sup>135</sup>

Most importantly for the discussion at hand, Micia was garrisoned by a number of smaller military units throughout its Roman occupation. The *ala I Hispanorum Campagonum*, the *cohors II Flavia Commagennorum*, and the *numerus Maurorum Miciensium* can all be attested for at this location.<sup>136</sup> The cohort in particular was stationed in Micia for a considerable period of time, from at least the reign of Hadrian to

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<sup>131</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 242.

<sup>132</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 188.

<sup>133</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 185-187.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>135</sup> It should be noted that while the placement of temples signals they were most likely civilian structures, the same assessment of the baths and amphitheater means they were most likely constructed by and for the military.

<sup>136</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 217-218; Other examples of epigraphically attested military units present at some time in Micia are the *ala I Bosporanorum*, *cohors I Vindellicorum*, and the *cohors I Alpinorum*. Other dedications from the centuries of the *IV Flavia Felix* and the *XIII Gemina* legion have also been found.

the first half of the third century.<sup>137</sup> The mark left in Micia's epigraphic record by the smaller military units is considerable, with nearly forty percent of inscriptions having a connection to these bodies of troops.<sup>138</sup> From this, it becomes quickly evident that the military had a significant role in the cultural formation of Micia, which leads to the question of whether this applied also when the *Dii Militarii* and Mars are specifically examined.

### **Military Religions and Dedicants in the Archaeological Record**

Before continuing it should be made clear that most of the previous archaeology that has been conducted in Micia was focused primarily on the military fort, baths complex, and the amphitheater. Both aerial and ground-level radar efforts are underway, and a concentration on larger structures (likely civilian in nature) has begun to take place, but previous emphasis on strictly commercial and military centers of the community has created a slight skew in findings that should be noted.

Micia has a considerably rich epigraphic record, with 103 votive pieces currently discovered. Of these only seven specifically reference either Mithras, IOM Dolichenus, Sol Invictus, or Mars.<sup>139</sup> While a rather paltry 6.8% may not suggest a high degree of popularity, even for the typically popular Mithras, the manner in which these dedications were made may suggest otherwise. Group dedications, namely from the *ala I*

*Bosporanorum* and the *cohors II Flavia Commagenorum* in this case, were common in

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<sup>137</sup> Ian Haynes. *Blood of the Provinces: the Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans*. (Oxford University Press, 2013), 229.

<sup>138</sup> This estimate was taken from a search in the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021. The specific search criteria were the location "Micia" with "tituli sacri" and "milites" selected as search criteria while excluding "militaria diplomata" from the results. Five results were not counted as they were legionary dedications.

<sup>139</sup> IDR III/2, 276; IDR III/3, 49; IDR III/3, 66; IDR III/3, 67; IDR III/3, 107; IDR III/3, 108, IDR III/3, 155.

Micia. One possible theory for why this occurred so frequently is that it could have been a means for military entities to differentiate themselves from the potential two or three other groups stationed in Micia at the same time as they were.<sup>140</sup> While the exact motivation of these soldiers can only be speculated, the presence of group dedications is a significant indication that these divinities were worshipped and recognized by a collective rather than a specific individual. This means that even though there have only been seven dedications found concerning the *Dii Militarii* and Mars, that half of them are made by groups likely means their significance amongst those in the settlement was greater than the small sample size may suggest.

Beginning with the *Dii Militarii*, the epigraphic record shows two dedications to Mithras, two to IOM Dolichenus, and one to *Deus Invictus* (which could be either Mithras or Sol Invictus).<sup>141</sup> Of these five inscriptions, only one can be tied to the military, but it is a significant example. While the name is missing due to fragmentation, the inscription provides the dedicant's position as *praefectus cohortis II Flaviae Commagenorum*.<sup>142</sup> A commanding officer of equestrian rank, this dedicant was not gifting a simple votive inscription but a temple to the god, IOM Dolichenus. Thus, while only one military inscription is within this sample, the dedication of such a significant structure and it being done by a commander of a cohort, signifies the importance of IOM Dolichenus to the cohort as a whole. The fact that it was the Commagenian cohort

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<sup>140</sup> Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 230.

<sup>141</sup> One inscription to Mithras is specifically made to one of his torch-bearers, Cautes. However, since that is literally the only information present and the dedicant is unknown, the inscription is noted but shall not be discussed in detail.

<sup>142</sup> *IDR* III/3, 67.

making such a dedication also signals that IOM Dolichenus may have enjoyed a particularly Commagenian identity in Micia.

The remaining inscriptions to the *Dii Militarii* come presumably from the civilian sphere. None of these inscriptions provide anything beyond the names of the dedicants, thus details concerning their social status can only be inferred. The first inscription, a fragmentary piece of a *tauroctony* relief to Mithras, was dedicated by a man named Aurelius.<sup>143</sup> This likely was not his full name and further detail may have actually been provided, but due to the fragmentary nature of the piece, that information has been lost.<sup>144</sup> The second inscription to IOM Dolichenus was dedicated by a man named Iulius Trophimus.<sup>145</sup> While he does not provide detail concerning himself explicitly, the inclusion of the epithet *Commageno* for IOM Dolichenus signals that Iulius Trophimus was likely a part of the Commagenian community that made its home in Micia.<sup>146</sup> He may have had some connection to the *cohors II Flavia Commagenorum* present at Micia, but without more detail on him specifically, this remains unknown. The final inscription with detail present, and the most interesting of the three, comes from a man named P. Aelius Euphorus.<sup>147</sup>

Similar to the commander discussed previously, the inscription of P. Aelius Euphorus speaks of his dedication of a temple to *Deus Invictus*. The freedman of a

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<sup>143</sup> IDR III/2, 276.

<sup>144</sup> Inferences from the name *Aurelius* alone cannot provide anything conclusive due to the sheer popularity of the name. Five magistrates with *Aurelius* in their names existed in Micia, but so did ordinary men such as three brick-makers. Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 61, 91-93.

<sup>145</sup> IDR III/3, 66.

<sup>146</sup> With both the presence of the *cohors II Flavia Commagenorum* and an archaeologically attested Sanctuary of the Commagenian Group (Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 182), those of Syrian origin, specifically from the Kingdom of Commagene, were a noticeably prominent minority population present in Micia.

<sup>147</sup> IDR III/3, 49.



prominent *conductores* known for many inscriptions of his own, P. Aelius Marus, P. Aelius Euphorus is known for another inscription to Silvanus Domesticus at Micia as well. The dedication of a temple to *Deus Invictus*, who may have been either Mithras or Sol Invictus, is a significant action for any civilian, much less a freedman, to take.<sup>148</sup> A temple signifies the significance of the deity within the civilian community, meaning the *Dii Militarii* likely held as much significance to a civilian in Micia as they did to the military. From the surviving epigraphic examples, it appears that the civilian population may have been more significant in making individual dedications to the *Dii Militarii*, while the military in Micia had fewer inscriptions overall, but the group nature of their dedications speaks to a larger volume of worshippers.

Comparably, the worship of Mars in Micia is starkly military in character. Only two inscriptions have survived, both group dedications from the *ala I Bosporanorum* and the *cohors II Flavia Commagenorum*.<sup>149</sup> As stated previously, group dedications, especially considering neither of these examples list any individual specifically, spoke to the significance of the deity within the entire military entity. Mars, as a god of war and soldiers, appears to have remained primarily in this fashion in Micia. With no civilian dedications, it can be assumed that worship of the deity did not travel far outside of the forts at the settlement.

These inscriptions show that the dedicatory tradition in Micia, while having a number of civilian participants, was primarily dominated by the military. With the one exception of a temple dedication by P. Aelius Euphorus, the votives given by the military

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<sup>148</sup> Adriana Rusu-Pescaru, and Dorin Alicu. *Templele romane din Dacia:(I)*. (Acta Musei Devensis, 2000), 139.

<sup>149</sup> *IDR* III/3, 107; *IDR* III/3, 108.

were the most significant due to the manner in which they were dedicated. To dedicate as a group, or even as the leader of a group, speaks to a significance held not solely by a single dedicant, but an entire group of worshippers.<sup>150</sup>

The natural proclivity of auxiliary regiments to dedicate to gods of their homeland can also be observed in the altar given to IOM Dolichenus.<sup>151</sup> While this inscription contains no explicit reference to Commagenian origin of the divinity, the dedicant's association with the *cohors II Flavia Commagenorum* solidifies the connection. That the only civilian dedicant refers to the god with the epithet, *Commageno*, suggests that Iulius Trophimus could have been either influenced or connected to the cohort (possibly a veteran). This speaks to the cultural influence the cohort held over the community of Micia.

To conclude, while civilian adherents are present in Micia, the collective dedications given by auxiliaries suggest that the military was the more dominant religious agent in regard to the four "military" deities. Their possible influence over one of the only three civilian dedicants present also supports this. Thus Micia stands as a prime example in which a smaller settlement retained a primarily military character in its dedicatory tradition.

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<sup>150</sup> Group dedications are common amongst the auxiliaries of Roman Dacia. While this may suggest a general lack of individual initiative, a collective dedication to any deity would make no sense to create if the deity were not one of significance amongst said collective. Chappell, "Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation", 102.

<sup>151</sup> Ian P. Haynes, "The Romanisation of Religion in the 'Auxilia' of the Roman Imperial Army from Augustus to Septimus Severus." (*Britannia* 24, 1993), 148; Oliver Stoll. "The Religions of the Armies." *A Companion to the Roman Army* (2007), 470.

## The Settlement of Drobeta

The first Roman settlement in all of Roman Dacia, Drobeta was established as a military *vicus* during the Dacian Wars.<sup>152</sup> Springing up around the nearby *castrum* and the famous bridge designed by Apollodorus of Damascus, the town would go on to become the most important town of southern Dacia.<sup>153</sup> It would receive municipal status with *ius Italicum* under Hadrian, and later be given the title of *colonia* under Septimius Severus.<sup>154</sup> The *castrum* would continue to have military units cycled through it, with groups such as the *cohors I sagittariorum* and the *cohors I Antiochensium* attested through the epigraphic record. Beyond this, little is known about the prosperous community of Drobeta due to minimal archaeological excavations and in part, because of the modern town of Turnu Severin located atop it.

## Military Religions and Dedicants in the Archaeological Record

Drobeta is another settlement with a relatively small sample of surviving votive inscriptions. Totalling at 30, only 4 (13.3%) of these inscriptions specifically dedicate to the *Dii Militarii* or Mars.<sup>155</sup> This sample is supplemented by a number of artifacts as well: a bronze statuette fragment of Mithras, a statue head of IOM Dolichenus, and a bronze statuette of Mars. Sol Invictus is not present within the archaeological record of Drobeta. As the dedication to Mithras calls the god, *Sol Invictus Mithras*, it is likely Sol Invictus

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<sup>152</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 238.

<sup>153</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 115.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>155</sup> This estimate was taken from a search in the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021. The specific search criteria were the location “Drobeta” with “*tituli sacri*” selected as the primary search criteria while excluding “*militaria diplomata*” from the results.

was more commonly syncretized in Drobeta than worshipped alone. A *Dolichenium* is also presumed to have existed at the site.<sup>156</sup>

Of the four surviving inscriptions, three contain identification, but only two provide enough information to discuss. These two votives, dedicated to IOM Dolichenus and Mars, can both be connected specifically to the *cohors I Sagittariorum*. Similarly to how Micia appeared to have a specific auxiliary unit most prominent in its inscriptions, Drobeta does as well. The first is a dedication to IOM Dolichenus from Silvanus Flavius and Atennais, two *sacerdotes* of the cohort.<sup>157</sup> The second is a group dedication from the cohort itself to the god Mars.<sup>158</sup> Dedications from *sacerdotes* representing a cohort and the military unit as a whole speak to the significance both of these deities held amongst the men of the cohort.

Currently, no definitive civilian inscriptions have been found at Drobeta concerning the “military” deities. However, civilian dedications may not be absent from the small corpus. A pattern of Mithraic popularity has primarily seen the god worshipped more so by civilians than soldiers in the small communities of Roman Dacia. That the two ambiguous inscriptions both dedicate to Mithras leaves the possibility open for them to have been civilian dedications.

Left with a sample set only containing identifiable military inscriptions, the epigraphic record suggests a military dominance in Drobeta when it came to the worship of the *Dii Militarii* and Mars. The inclusion of a collective dedication bolsters this claim despite the overall lack of epigraphic material available. This pattern could potentially be

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<sup>156</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 187.

<sup>157</sup> *ILD* 53.

<sup>158</sup> *CIL* 03, 6279.

due to the minimal excavations that have been undertaken at the site, but it could also be indicative that the local community itself was largely dominated by the military population. This would not have been inherently unusual for a small township within a frontier province and aligns with what was previously discussed concerning Micia.

### **The Settlement of Porolissum**

Found at the terminus of the military road running through Roman Dacia, Porolissum began as the result of military disposition.<sup>159</sup> Growing out of a prior Dacian site as a military *vicus* in the immediate proximity of an important auxiliary *castrum* and a Roman customs station, the settlement would grow to include two distinct military forts.<sup>160</sup> The larger *castrum* was constructed on the Pomet Hill, while the smaller *castrum* would be built on the Citera Hill.<sup>161</sup> Multiple centers of civilian settlement are thought to be present, but so far the only archaeologically attested location is the *vicus* on Pomet Hill.<sup>162</sup> Porolissum would never gain the title of *colonia*, but it was declared a *municipium* under Septimius Severus.<sup>163</sup> An interesting note concerning the ethnicity of inhabitants is that indigenous Dacians can be attested for at Porolissum. Local Dacian populations are often hard to find through the archaeological record, but with Porolissum growing out of a prior Dacian site, the population was more visible.<sup>164</sup>

As a significant military fort during Roman occupation, many military units garrisoned the settlement and its surrounding area. Epigraphic evidence attests to three in

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<sup>159</sup> Diaconescu, “The Towns of Roman Dacia: An Overview of Recent Research”, 121.

<sup>160</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 241.

<sup>161</sup> Cristian Găzdac, *Porolissum*. Vol. 2. (Cluj-Napoca: Mega Printing House, 2006), 14.

<sup>162</sup> Găzdac, *Porolissum*, 15.

<sup>163</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 130.

<sup>164</sup> Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 31.

particular: the *cohors V Lingonum Antoniniana*, the *cohors I Brittonum*, and the *numerus Palmyrenorum Porolissensium*. Accompanying these military units, vexillations of the *IV Flavia Felix* and the *XIII Gemina* legions were present in the early phases of Roman occupation.<sup>165</sup>

### **Military Religions and Dedicants in the Archaeological Record**

Despite being such a prominent center for the military, the epigraphic record is quite scant when discussing the *Dii Militarii* and Mars. Archaeological excavations of the civilian community have only picked up steam within the last decade, and while many structures have been unearthed, the sample of epigraphy is still relatively low. Amongst the 31 inscriptions that have been found from Porolissum, only a single one refers to one of the military deities.<sup>166</sup> However, both a *Mithraeum* and a *Dolichenium* can be attested to archaeologically, suggesting that the deities were significant and that epigraphy validating this has simply yet to be found.

The single inscription that does survive actually has quite a bit to discuss. Dedicated to IOM Dolichenus, the votive was dedicated by three prominent members of the community.<sup>167</sup> M. Aurelius Italus, a magistrate of the *municipium Septimius* at Porolissum, M. Antonius Maximus, a veteran and decurion, and Aurelius Flavius, a decurion of an unnamed *municipium* (possibly *Septimius* as well), are the three named

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<sup>165</sup> Gazdac, *Porolissum*, 15.

<sup>166</sup> This total was taken from a search in the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021. The specific search criteria were the location “Porolissum” with “*tituli sacri*” selected as the primary search criteria. “*Militaria diplomata*” were excluded.

<sup>167</sup> *ILD* 683.

dedicants.<sup>168</sup> They then continue on to identify themselves further as priests of IOM Dolichenus and the *cohors III Campestris*. It concluded with their votive being identified as a *Dolichenium*. Three prominent men representative of a religious and military community in Porolissum gifting a temple to the community is a lot of information in a single inscription. While a singular inscription is not enough to speak of the community as whole, the mention of the cohort speaks to this being in the same nature as a group dedication. That, in turn, signifies the significance of the military units in Porolissum to the act of dedication in worshipping their gods. As one of the most significant military locations in the province, this pattern should not be inherently surprising.

As stated above, a single inscription makes any conclusive statements concerning the dedicant population difficult. However, from the three prominent men making the dedication, it can be observed that elite members of the community at Porolissum were making weighty votive contributions. Unfortunately, this pattern is not reflected in the extent epigraphic record as a whole, with most identifiable dedicants coming from the average citizens, freedmen, or slaves. Furthermore, with only a single inscription to IOM Dolichenus, it is currently impossible to know whether elite patronage was the norm for the cult in Porolissum.

The presence of an archaeologically attested *Mithraeum* and *Dolichenium* are the strongest surviving indicators of the significance held by the *Dii Militarii* in Porolissum. The *Mithraeum* in particular is able to make up for a lack of surviving epigraphy, as the presence of a temple suggests that his worship was significant to at least a subset of the

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<sup>168</sup> Aurelius Flavius also has the title of *vegesimarius* in this inscription. Likely a corruption of *vicesimarius*, this alternative identification would further connect him to the military as it alludes to a connection between him and the twentieth legion.

community.<sup>169</sup> It can be theorized that perhaps like other smaller settlements, IOM Dolichenus was more popular with the military while Mithras was likely more popular for civilians. Until further epigraphic or archaeological evidence can be found, Porolissum remains in a primarily speculative framework.

### **The Settlement of Romula**

Romula, the largest town in Southern Dacia, began as a walled settlement directly following the conclusion of Trajan's Dacian Wars.<sup>170</sup> Possibly the administrative center for *Dacia Malvensis*, although this is pure speculation, the incredibly fertile area allowed for the community to thrive largely through agricultural enterprise.<sup>171</sup> It likely received the status of *municipium* under Hadrian, and by AD 248 it had attained the status of *colonia*.<sup>172</sup> Two auxiliary units garrisoned the settlement, the *cohors I Flavia Commagenorum* and the *Numerus Surorum Sagittariorum*.<sup>173</sup> With a fertile landscape and a rich crafting scene, Romula remained a prosperous urban center throughout the Roman occupation. Despite this, small quantities of epigraphic material and sporadic archaeological excavations of the settlement leave very little information known to researchers.

### **Military Religions and Dedicants in the Archaeological Record**

The smallest quantity of votive inscriptions in this thesis comes from Romula. Only having 23 votive inscriptions found in the settlement, it is noteworthy that four

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<sup>169</sup> Rusu-Pescaru and Alicu, *Templele romane din Dacia*, 78-79.

<sup>170</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 119.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-121.

<sup>172</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 238.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*



(17.4%) are relevant to the discussion at hand.<sup>174</sup> As all the dedications are to Mithras, as well as there being a *Mithraeum* known to exist in Romula, it is clear that Mithraism was prominent amongst those living in the settlement. Sol Invictus was also rather prominent, although this is not known through epigraphy. Gems, medallions, and lamps that have been found all bear iconographic imagery which can be linked to Sol Invictus.<sup>175</sup> The craft of *intaglio* was a unique and local art to Romula, meaning that having deities portrayed through this medium was a signal that the worship of the deity was heavily ingrained into the community present.<sup>176</sup> Interestingly, IOM Dolichenus does not show up in the current epigraphic record.

Out of the four Mithraic inscriptions, two provide the names of the dedicants, but only one provides information about their social status. The dedication is clearly tied to the army, with the dedicants identifying themselves as *librarii* (military clerks), and an *arctarius* (another clerk) of the *praepositus*, the officer in charge of a *numerus*.<sup>177</sup> A collective dedication from a group of military officers who would have been somewhere about mid-rank is still significant as it shows a variation in the status of the dedicants. Even an *arctarius* would rank above a *librarius*, meaning that this group is indicative of support for the worship of Mithras at multiple levels of the military establishment. Clerks of all levels would have also enjoyed a higher level of pay than the average soldier and were more likely to be literate. This inscription is reflective of patterns in both auxiliary

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<sup>174</sup> This estimate was taken from a search in the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021. The specific search criteria were the location “Romula” with “*tituli sacri*” selected as the primary search criteria while excluding “*militaria diplomata*” from the results.

<sup>175</sup> Due to the often syncretic relationship shared between Sol Invictus and Mithras, there is the potential that some of these may have been dedications to Mithras as well.

<sup>176</sup> Intaglio is the art of carving intricate designs or phrases onto semi-precious stones. MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 122.

<sup>177</sup> *IDR* II, 341.

dedications and Mithraism in general. While not a collective dedication from the entire *numerus*, three clerks dedicating together follows the general tendency concerning the lack of individual initiative amongst low or mid-ranking soldiers of smaller military units.<sup>178</sup> That they are not the most elite of soldiers also supports the general appeal of Mithraism to the “common man”.

The second inscription, dedicated by a slave named Phoebus, refers to Mithras as “*Deo Soli Invicto*.”<sup>179</sup> While normally this would indicate the dedication was made to Sol Invictus, the accompanying *tauroctonos* relief definitively marks this as a case of syncretism between the two. As a slave, Phoebus is not an unusual dedicant for Mithras. However, his presence complicates the discussion as to whether Mithraism was largely civilian or military in character in Romula. As the remaining Mithraic inscriptions bear no discernible demographic information, this places the settlement into a position of equivalency.

Given this epigraphic context, Romula is a difficult settlement to discuss due to the sparse archaeological research so far conducted. With IOM Dolichenus absent and the only inscriptions that have survived dedicated to Mithras, it is clear that at least certain members of the *Dii Militarii* held some significance amongst the population of the settlement. The two inscriptions, one military and one civilian, fit into the generally established adherents found in Mithraism. But they make establishing a sense of dominance from either party difficult in Romula. Due to the minimal set of epigraphic and physical evidence, there is no clear primary agent of worship in Romula.

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<sup>178</sup> Chappell, “Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation”, 102.

<sup>179</sup> *IDR* II, 342.

## The Settlement of Tibiscum

The initial establishment of Tibiscum was distinctly military in origin. As a site important to Trajan during his campaigns in the Dacian Wars, the military *vicus* in the area would remain inhabited long after the conflict's conclusion.<sup>180</sup> As one of the more prominent military *castra*, multiple units were present at one point or another with examples including: the *cohors I Vindelicorum*, *numerus Maurorum Tibiscensium*, *numerus Palmyrenorum Tibiscensium*, and the *cohors I Sagittariorum*.<sup>181</sup> However, the area that would become "Tibiscum" developed near but independently of the prior military establishment.<sup>182</sup> While this settlement never became a *colonia*, inscriptions from the early third century mention a *municipium Tibiscense*. When it was given the status of a municipality is unknown, but it was likely under Septimius Severus or Gallienus.<sup>183</sup> There is little that can currently be discussed concerning the physical infrastructure as the site of the Roman town was only recently discovered and archaeological research is currently underway. However, a decent number of inscriptions and artifacts have been found that can be discussed.

## Military Religions and Dedicants in the Archaeological Record

Despite a small sample size of 32 votive inscriptions and a handful of small physical artifacts, all four of the deities thus far focused on appear in Tibiscum.<sup>184</sup> Three of these inscriptions (9.4%) are dedicated to military gods: one to Mithras, one to IOM

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<sup>180</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 132.

<sup>181</sup> Susan Grace Crane, "Communities of War: Families of Roman Dacia." (PhD diss., 2019), 32.

<sup>182</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 239.

<sup>183</sup> Crane, "Communities of War", 32; Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 239.

<sup>184</sup> This estimate was taken from a search in the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021. The specific search criteria were the location "Tibiscum" with "tituli sacri" selected as the primary search criteria while excluding "militaria diplomata" from the results.

Dolichenus, and the other to Mars. Sol Invictus is accounted for by two terracotta medallions that have been found bearing his iconography. Of these dedications, only two have names and identification accompanying them, both civilian in nature. Due to the small sample size, the discussion to follow will speak of the dedicants collectively and not subdivide them based on the deity their inscriptions reference.

The military were heavily involved in the dedicatory tradition at Tibiscum. However, despite military inscriptions comprising 34% of the total votives, none of these inscriptions dedicate to the “military” deities. The same phenomenon of collective dedications was significant amongst this population, and the proclivity towards their own cultural deities was present as well. However, the dominance of Palmyrene deities is seen in the epigraphic record, likely due to the presence of the *numerus Palmyrenorum Tibiscensium*.<sup>185</sup> This is likely to the detriment of pseudo-Syrian deities that comprise the *Dii Militarii*. Rather, the relevant inscriptions present suggest that the act of dedicating to the *Dii Militarii* was more so the domain of the religious elite.

The first inscription, dedicated by Iulius Valentinus, is to IOM Dolichenus.<sup>186</sup> Identifying himself as a *flamen*, or priest, of the *municipium Tibisci*, this dedicant was a local elite of the civilian community. His inscription also hints at a possible connection to the military forces which would have been stationed near Tibiscum, as Iulius Valentinus includes the term *contubernium* within his inscription. Due to the placement within the text it is unclear whether he was placing the votive on their behalf or if he was a member of the “tent group” which would give his dedication a military context. Regardless, he

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<sup>185</sup> Examples of Palmyrene deities found in Tibiscum include *Deus Sol Ierhaboli* (a solar deity distinct from Sol Invictus), the *Dis Patris* (ancestral gods), and the *Genius* (or divine protector/guardian spirit) of the *numerus* itself. Szabo and Boda, *The Gods of Roman Dacia*, 32-35.

<sup>186</sup> *CIL* 03, 7997.

remains the highest ranking dedicant in regard to social status. The only other inscription which provides identifiable detail is one to Mithras by a man named Hermadio.<sup>187</sup> Another individual serving under P. Aelius Marus as a freedman, Hermadio identifies himself as *actor Turrani Dii*.<sup>188</sup> Possibly holding some type of religious position, or possibly someone prominent in a religious community of Tibiscum, Hermadio's status as a freedman still places him lower within the social hierarchy than Iulius Valentinus. With both of the only identifiable dedicants originating from the civilian population, although possibly having some ties to the military, Tibiscum stand out as largely civilian in its dedicatory practice to the *Dii Militarii*.<sup>189</sup> The last inscription, one to Mars, bears no means of identifying the dedicant.

With a lack of surviving inscriptions from soldiers, the worship of the *Dii Militarii* specifically appears to have been largely the realm of the religious elite of the civilian population. This pattern may not have been wholly unexpected as Tibiscum was the center for customs in the province. Customs posts were largely operated by freedmen and slaves, which meant these groups were present in higher concentrations within the community. These groups have been shown to be prominent in the worship of the "military" deities, especially Mithras. This could have positioned Tibiscum as a significant military establishment with a prevalent civilian community, much like Apulum or Potaissa.

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<sup>187</sup> *IDR* III/1, 145.

<sup>188</sup> The phrase *Turrani Dii* is somewhat confusing. While it can be translated as "agent of the Turranean gods", it is uncertain what group of gods Hermadio is specifically referring to as what he refers to as "Turranean" is unknown.

<sup>189</sup> As Tibiscum is still largely in the process of being excavated, evidence may surface to either complement or dispute this analysis in the future. As with many small communities of Roman Dacia, much remains yet undiscovered due to archaeology only beginning in earnest within the last few decades in many locations.

This does not necessarily mean a complete separation from the military community. The inscription from Iulius Valentinus suggests a connection to the forces stationed in the municipality even if the dedicant himself was a civilian. Having ties to the military as a civilian was likely not unusual in smaller settlements given the prominence of auxiliaries in communities. This potential connection was also seen in Micia (Iulius Trophimus). The close proximity of “civilian” and “military” in smaller settlements creates a more blended realm where civilians are not inherently distinct from their military counterparts, unlike what is seen in more developed urban centers.

Apparent dedication patterns found in Tibiscum could, at least partially, be a result of the minimal excavations that have currently been undertaken on site. Regardless, the existent epigraphic record suggests that the military present in the settlement may simply have preferred their indigenous gods over any others.

### **Other Settlements**

A number of other small settlements can be found scattered throughout the province of Roman Dacia. Most of these settlements have quantities of votive inscriptions either equivalent or less than the twenty-one that were found at Romula. Archaeology favors larger settlements, which means that most, if not all, of these sites have received no significant attention from the academic community.<sup>190</sup> Yet the scattered

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<sup>190</sup> The list of sites where *any* inscription to the *Dii Militarii* or Mars includes: Acidava (2), Bistrita (1), Campu Cetatii (1), Ceanu Mic (1), Certiae (1), Cristesti (1), Drambar (1), Gezmisaza (1), Ilisua (1), Inlaceni (2), Magyarpetard (1), Oarda (1), Pojejena (1), Sacadate (2), Salinae (2), Samum (3), Sancrai (1), Sanpaul (1), Saulesti (1), Sfintesti (1), Sucidava (3), Versec (1), and Voislova (1).

presence of inscriptions to the *Dii Militarii* and Mars does much to speak of their transmission along military networks of the province.

Thirty-one inscriptions come from minor settlements. Many of these areas would have been within the *territorium* of larger sites such as Sarmizegetusa or Apulum. Of this set, twenty-four contain identifiable information about their dedicant. Most interestingly, of the inscriptions where the dedicant can be identified, fourteen are from the military. While nearly half of the inscriptions being from the military is certainly of note in and of itself, the social status of these dedicants makes their votives more significant. Two centurions, a *signifer*, four *praefecti*, a *tribunus*, a *legatus*, three *beneficarii consularii*, and two collective dedications are found within the corpus. The size of their units varied with legions, *alae*, and *cohors* all present. That all of the individual military inscriptions belong to military officials of high status speaks to the significance of the military elite in the physical transmission of the “military” religions across the province. With no surviving dedications from ordinary soldiers, the initiative for this transmission appears almost solely from those of the military elite. If ordinary soldiers were participating in dedications, it was more often in a collective fashion, especially amongst the auxiliaries (as seen in Table 4). IOM Dolichenus and Mars specifically appear to have been spread largely through the dedications of the military elite.

Concerning civilian dedicants, most of those identifiable were either freedmen or slaves. The ten inscriptions show a preference towards Mithras and Sol Invictus. This is not terribly surprising as freedmen and slaves were two of the more prominent types of dedicants in Mithraism. The most notable civilian inscription comes from Sacadate.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *IDR* III/4, 87.

Dedicated by a slave named Fortunatus, the votive given is an *ara*.<sup>192</sup> Likely smaller in size, the presence of a shrine at all in a small rural settlement speaks volumes concerning the significance of Mithraism present. This example is useful to demonstrate that the *Dii Militarii* and Mars were able to not only spread outside of major urban settlements but were able to thrive.

Table 4: Military Dedicants by Rank in Smaller Settlements<sup>193</sup>

<u>A: Legions</u>	
Senior Officers <sup>194</sup>	1
Legionaries with special duty/status <sup>195</sup>	6
Ordinary Soldiers	0
Collective	2
<u>B: Auxiliaries</u>	
Senior Officers <sup>196</sup>	5
Ordinary Soldiers	0
Collective	6

## Conclusions

Archaeological excavations are vital when trying to establish communal identities or practices found in ancient settlements. Unfortunately, larger settlements are often prioritized. That being said, despite minimal excavations at many of the sites discussed, an image of the dedicatory tradition is still visible. In most cases, it supports the initial argument that smaller settlements had a dedicatory tradition more dominated by the

<sup>192</sup> Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 118.

<sup>193</sup> This table also includes the totals from the settlements previously discussed throughout Part II (Micia, Drobeta, Romula, Porolissum, and Tibiscum). Inscriptions with unknown dedicants are not included but are noted here for their potential to be military in character. Most noticeably, ordinary soldiers were not present in this corpus.

<sup>194</sup> Legates and tribunes.

<sup>195</sup> *Beneficiarii consulares, immunes, tesserarii, duplicarii, and librarii*. Due to their small numbers, *centurions, optios, and signifers* are also included in this category if they were present.

<sup>196</sup> *Praefecti, tribunes, decuriones, or centuriones*.



military than the civilian population due to civilians naturally flocking to more prominent urban centers than smaller ones.

Micia, the most thoroughly excavated settlement discussed in this chapter, is the most representative of this group and follows many trends that are common in smaller settlements. Through group dedications, it is clear that the military was the more significant agent of dedication when concerning the four “military” deities. Drobeta and Porolissum, while having received significantly less archaeological attention, also support the argument of the military being the dominant party in dedications. Romula is much closer to a level of equivalence, although this claim must be made cautiously due to only two inscriptions contributing to this general assessment.

Most interestingly is Tibiscum, which despite being one of the most significant military centers in the province was primarily civilian in dedications. Its placement just before Sarmizegetusa within the road network may potentially explain this. Merchants and other civilian colonists may have passed through regularly as a means of travelling to the capital, which may have resulted in some parties choosing to settle in Tibiscum. Its status as a customs post would have also meant it held a sizeable group of freedman and slaves amongst its civilian population. Furthermore, as an officially recognized *municipium*, the settlement would have had a sizeable Roman population, which would have most likely come from civilians moving into the area. This status would have also lent the urban center significance economically. Its distance from any *castra*, despite initially beginning as a military settlement itself, may also have contributed to allowing for civilians to become more dominant in the votive tradition.

While Tibiscum stands as an odd exception, the scattering of inscriptions across the province is perhaps one of the most significant signs of the military's prominence in the worship of *Dii Militarii* and Mars. As discussed previously in Part I, even though the major legionary centers of Apulum and Potaissa would become more civilian in their worship, the initial introduction of the deities relied largely on the legions. This exact trend can be observed when the epigraphic record of scattered settlements is analyzed. The military, whether big entities like the legions or smaller ones like the auxiliaries, were the most significant agent in the importation of the "military" deities into the province. This trend continued even after initial importation, as travelling regiments would further spread the divinities to even the most rural of settlements. Thus, settlements that remained smaller in size and economic status retained the military dominance of their votive tradition.

### Part III: Civilian Settlements

In a frontier province like Roman Dacia, settlements that could be considered purely “civilian” were few in number. Most settlements grew out of or in the vicinity of *castra*, meaning a significant military presence was felt in nearly every urban center. To complicate matters, most urban centers were established along the road network for practical reasons. This meant that even major civilian centers would have experienced relatively frequent contact with soldiers passing through, even if their settlement was not the final destination. The military presence was everywhere in Roman Dacia. This was not harmful. On the contrary, many settlements owed their prosperity to the economic benefits brought in by large military entities.<sup>197</sup> Thus, in order to thrive as a purely “civilian” settlement, those living in it must have a means to allow them to escape the necessity of the military as its economic stimulant. As will be seen in the examples to come, the urban centers that achieved the moniker of “civilian settlements” were those that had been blessed with political and economic advantage as soon as their location was set.

Strategic placement was crucial in order to escape strong military influence. Sarmizegetusa is the prime example of such placement. Established directly in between Apulum and Berzobis, the homes of the province’s first legions, the settlement had access to defensive forces if needed but was largely free to cultivate its socio-cultural environment on its own. Being built for the purpose of acting as the political and legislative center of the entire province also guaranteed the capital city had the full

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<sup>197</sup> Kolbeck, “A Foot in Both Camps”, 3; 7-8.

support of the Empire behind its construction. Easy access to exploitable mining regions certainly did not hurt either.<sup>198</sup> A similar occurrence would take place concerning the settlement of Napoca. While not having the same rich resources available to it as Sarmizegetusa, its distance from legionary fortresses and auxiliary forts as well as its location on a waterway allowed it to prosper with negligible influence from the military.

Even if a legion or auxiliary were present in the area, hubs of economic opportunity often were able to grow into more civilian-based communities. Ampelum falls into this category. While the military would have certainly been present, the rich gold mines found at the site were both the reason for needed defense and for the surge of colonists coming in the hopes of striking it rich. The spa towns of Germisara and Aquae were also able to take their natural resources and turn them into a source of self-sufficiency.<sup>199</sup> Starting as primarily religious centers, the natural springs eventually caused a shift to what could almost be described as a “resort town.”<sup>200</sup> For this reason, despite soldiers often passing through, spa towns were also able to develop largely in the hands of business-savvy civilians.

Despite this civilian prominence, the presence of the *Dii Militarii* and Mars remains quite visible in the epigraphic record. Therefore, this section will differ slightly from the previous two. Patterns of worship concerning the “military” deities in the civilian settlements of Sarmizegetusa and Napoca, as well as the commercial hubs of Ampelum, Aquae, and Germisara will be examined. The argument to follow is not that

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<sup>198</sup> Haynes and Hanson, “An Introduction to Roman Dacia”, 18.

<sup>199</sup> Ad Mediam is another settlement often referred to as a spa town. While known for its bathing complexes, it did not contain natural hot springs nor receive the level of commercialization that the other two did. Thus, it is noted but not included in this discussion.

<sup>200</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 189.

civilians were more significant than the military, this is obvious as these civilian settlements had little to no influence from the military. Rather, it is to show that the “military” deities were significant in *all* major urban settlements of Roman Dacia, and further bolster the claim that civilians of all social standings dominated their worship specifically in large settlements.

### **The Settlement of Sarmizegetusa**

The first settlement in Roman Dacia to receive official status, *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa* was a “green-field” site constructed during the reign of Trajan.<sup>201202</sup> Becoming the home to a host of colonists, primarily legionary veterans during its inception, the settlement was established with the express purpose of acting as the administrative capital of the entire province.<sup>203</sup> Swift growth would allow Sarmizegetusa to become one of the most prosperous sites in Roman Dacia.

Initially dubbed *colonia Dacica* before receiving its full title from Hadrian, the site was largely constructed by legionary vexillations.<sup>204</sup> While soldiers may have built the city initially, their quick departure afterwards meant that Sarmizegetusa had little to no influence from the early military presence. The settlement had never been meant as a major military headquarters, that was for Apulum, Berzobis, and later Potaissa. Rather, the *colonia deducta* was meant to be the political and cultural center of the new province. For this reason, it became home to the seat of the imperial procurator, as well as the

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<sup>201</sup> Haynes and Hanson, “An Introduction to Roman Dacia”, 18.

<sup>202</sup> The settlement was also granted the status of *ius Italicum*, or as having the “rights of an Italian city”, early in its occupation. Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 235.

<sup>203</sup> It’s highly likely that the *colonia* was also intended specifically as a “purpose-founded colonia”, i.e. one that was constructed primarily to give veterans land and status after having been promised such for fighting in the Dacian Wars. Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 350.

<sup>204</sup> Diaconescu, “The Towns of Roman Dacia: An Overview of Recent Research”, 89; 103.

*Aedes Augustalium* (the shrine of the Imperial Cult), and the seat of the *Concilium III Daciarum*, or the Council of the Three Dacias.<sup>205</sup> These inclusions allowed Sarmizegetusa to prosper as the financial, religious, and legislative center of the province. Its influence would wane slightly over time, but the settlement was always lucrative for those in and around it.

The wealth of the settlement can be observed most obviously in the many structures that have been found. A walled city, large structures could be found both in and out of this boundary. The forum within the wall, initially constructed by the *IV Flavia Felix*, contained the *Aedes Augustalium* along with shops, covered porticos, and two structures tied to judiciary actions: a *basilica iudiciaria* and a *tribunalia*.<sup>206</sup> These structures brought together finance, religion, and law in a single space at the center of the settlement. Just as many structures lay beyond the walls including an amphitheater, various temples, villas, an industrial area, and two necropoleis. However, the most amazing detail is that many of these structures can still be viewed, albeit in a fragmentary nature, as Sarmizegetusa is the only urban site of Roman Dacia not covered by a modern town.<sup>207</sup>

### **Military Religions in the Archaeological Record**

Sarmizegetusa enjoys a beautifully rich archaeological and epigraphic profile. Much of this is owed to the efforts of excavators and preservations, along with the sheer luck that most of the site was not built upon by later occupants. The epigraphic record

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<sup>205</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 114.

<sup>206</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 235.

<sup>207</sup> Diaconescu, "The Towns of Roman Dacia: An Overview of Recent Research", 130.

consists of 865 total inscriptions, with 292 of them specifically identified as votive in nature.<sup>208</sup> Ranging from stone reliefs to game pieces, the material within the archaeological record do well to support their epigraphic counterparts. Complementing all of this is a plethora of sanctuaries. Sixteen can be attested for by archaeology, an additional two through epigraphy, and another six are thought to have existed due to surviving related evidence and the wealth of the settlements.<sup>209</sup>

When narrowing this rich corpus specifically to Mithras, Sol Invictus, IOM Dolichenus, and Mars, all are visible to a significant degree. Within the epigraphic record, 31 pieces (10.6%) can be identified as referring to one of the three *Dii Militarii*. Mithras, in particular, accounts for over half of these examples.<sup>210</sup> Mars is evident within the community through multiple inscriptions and physical dedications, even accompanying Mithras in one example. From epigraphy alone, it is evident that all four deities held considerable significance amongst the residents of Sarmizegetusa. To support this even further, amongst the temples found and supposed in the settlement, a *Mithraeum* is attested archaeologically, and an additional *Mithraeum* and a *Dolichenium* are presumed to have existed somewhere in the settlement.<sup>211</sup> For these deities so associated with the military to be visibly present within the archaeological record of a

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<sup>208</sup> Sarmizegetusa and Apulum both have about 33% of their epigraphic total dedicated to votive inscriptions, making them both extremely valuable sites when discussing religious activity within the province. The estimates for Sarmizegetusa were taken from the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021, specifically searching broadly under “Sarmizegetusa”, and the narrowing the search to anything marked as “*tituli sacri*” within that category.

<sup>209</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 183-189.

<sup>210</sup> Additionally, another eight fragmentary inscriptions may be tied to Mithras as they were found in the context of a known *Mithraeum*. Unfortunately, this cannot be definitively stated since they make no mention of the deity the pieces were dedicated to. Their location within a *Mithraeum* cannot be used conclusively for identification due to possible movement of the stones post-Roman occupation by local peasants or later visitors.

<sup>211</sup> There are also four temples attested for archaeologically but currently unidentified. While unlikely a *Mithraeum*, as its tendency to be constructed underground makes it relatively recognizable, these still hold the potential to be to a god such as IOM Dolichenus.

civilian urban center likely speaks to the influence initial legionary veterans had on the importation of religion into the settlement. It is also likely that colonists and merchants of eastern origin were attracted to the prosperous settlement and may have assisted with the importation of the “pseudo-eastern” *Dii Militarii*.

Table 5: Votive Inscriptions to “Military” Gods in Sarmizegetusa

	Military	Civilian	Unknown	Total
Mithras	1	18	8	27
Sol Invictus	0	2	0	2
IOMD	0	3	1	4
Mars	1	1	2	4
Total	2	24	11	37

## The Community of Worshippers and their Dedications

### The Military

Civilians were, not surprisingly, the most evident dedicants in the epigraphic record of Sarmizegetusa. But before jumping into a discussion of civilian demographics, the existent examples hailing from military dedicants will be briefly examined.

Of the 38 votive inscriptions dedicated to the four “military” gods, only two can be identified as military in character. The first inscription is a dual dedication to IOM and Mars. Given by an unknown group, they record that the votive was given on behalf of a praetor, likely the aforementioned legate Iulius Flaccinus, who had been transferred to the *XIII Gemina* (*translati in legionem XIII Geminam*).<sup>212</sup> To make an offering on the behalf of a praetor, a governor, is certainly noteworthy. The exact social status of the dedicants is unknown, but the fact that multiple people were dedicating on behalf of a legate may

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<sup>212</sup> *IDR* III/2, 245.



suggest that the dedicants came from the *XIII Gemina*.<sup>213</sup> Regardless, the motivation for an elite individual tied to a legion to be given a dedication in Sarmizegetusa specifically is up for debate. Most likely, this inscription is odd in this specific corpus because it is following an epigraphically verified tradition of elite officers dedicating specifically to IOM.<sup>214</sup> As IOM was the most popular of the state cults, this pattern was not unusual. For that reason, despite the inclusion of Mars, this example is a noted but likely a bad fit for an examination of the “military” deities.

The other example comes from a veteran named Iulius M(?) Priscus.<sup>215</sup> He chooses to dedicate to Mithras, the most popular “military” deity present in Sarmizegetusa. While known to be a veteran from outside sources, the inscription itself is far too fragmentary to know whether or not he included this status within his dedication.<sup>216</sup> If he chose not to, this might have indicated that he felt far more assimilated into the civilian culture of the settlement. However, it is rare for those of the military *not* to include their status, even as veterans, due to the social prestige and pride associated with the position.<sup>217</sup> However, it could also be that as a Mithraic inscription, social status was not given as it was uncommon to do so in such dedications. From this inscription and the first discussed, it is seen that the military was willing to participate in dedications to the *Dii Militarii* and Mars within Sarmizegetusa. However, it would appear

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<sup>213</sup> Despite not being explicitly named, the presence of multiple dedicants is evident from the plural verb, *posuerunt*. Collective dedications were far more common amongst auxiliaries, but they were not unheard of amongst the legions.

<sup>214</sup> Dedications to IOM from all members of society were common. Three other inscriptions to IOM alone are specifically dedicated by elite officers. *IDR III/2*, 239; *IDR III/2*, 243; *IDR III/2*, 248.

<sup>215</sup> Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 103.

<sup>216</sup> *IDR III/2*, 284.

<sup>217</sup> Stephen Chappell, discussion with author, September 2020.

that it was uncommon, and most soldiers more than likely chose to make such dedications at settlements around the *castra* where they resided.

## Civilians

Of the thirty-five remaining inscriptions, twenty-five contain identifiable names.<sup>218</sup> From this sample, seven (28%) of the remaining inscriptions come from members of the civilian elite. In this case, the category of “civilian elite” includes both the administrative and religious upper class. It would not appear that the elite in Sarmizegetusa favored a specific deity over any others. All four deities appear with relative evenness: three to Mithras, one to Sol Invictus, one to IOM Dolichenus, and three to Mars. The religious elite did appear to have a favorite, as the two inscriptions dedicated by *Augustales* were both to Mithras.<sup>219</sup> Procurators were the most prevalent of the elite dedicants, with three inscriptions coming from men identified as such.<sup>220</sup> One of these men, Q. Axius Aelianus, is also the only dedicant from the corpus to gift a votive to two “military” deities, Mithras and Mars. The remaining two inscriptions both come from decurions, one from Sarmizegetusa and another hailing from the municipality of Apulum II.<sup>221</sup> The dedicant from Apulum, M. Antonius Valentinus, also identifies himself as a priest of the Augustan shrine. This places him as a member of the religious elite as well and adds to his reasoning for making a dedication in Sarmizegetusa, the home of the Imperial cult, instead of Apulum.

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<sup>218</sup> The remaining ten inscriptions are too fragmentary to identify a dedicant. Based on overall patterns, the majority likely came from the civilian population but are unable to be discussed due to their lack of information.

<sup>219</sup> *IDR* III/2, 278; *IDR* III/2, 291.

<sup>220</sup> *IDR* III/2, 246; *ILD* 253; *ILD* 277.

<sup>221</sup> *IDR* III/2, 201, *IDR* III/2, 266.

Civilian elite were significant contributors in Sarmizegetusa. While few in quantity, the dedications of such prominent officials would have served as motivation for others to follow their example. They were also the group most likely to make inscriptions to multiple gods, with IOM, Minerva, Mercury, and Asclepius appearing alongside “military” entities in these inscriptions.<sup>222</sup> This is likely reflective of their connections to imperial administration, as many of these accompanying gods are important to the Roman state as a whole.

Outside of the elite, sixteen inscriptions give identifiable information. The remaining examples concern merchants, citizens, and freedmen primarily. Mars is distinctly absent in these dedications, likely meaning that his worship was maintained primarily by the elite of Sarmizegetusa. On the other hand, Mithras is extremely popular. All but three of the eighteen inscriptions are given specifically to him or one of his torch-bearers.<sup>223</sup> This supports Mithraic trends across the Empire that normal citizens, and particularly freedmen and slaves, were significant social groups in the worship of Mithras.<sup>224</sup> That this trend is present in the capital city of Roman Dacia speaks to the highly Romanized culture present in the province. The quantity also represents the rich dedicatory tradition present amongst the majority of Sarmizegetusa’s population.

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<sup>222</sup> One particular inscription (*IDR* III/2, 246) dedicated by P. Aelius Hammonius takes this to a bit of an extreme as he dedicates not only to Sol Invictus, but also IOM, Juno, Minerva, the Dii Consentes, Salus, Fortuna, Apollo, Diana, Nemesis, Mercury, Hercules, Asclepius, Hygia, and a sweeping “every immortal god and goddess”. The practice of making such sweeping dedications was not uncommon, and the inclusion of a named deity outside of the final “everyone” label speaks to the prominence of such a deity to the individual.

<sup>223</sup> Cautes is not seen in the epigraphic record at Sarmizegetusa, but Cautopates is. It’s likely dedications to Cautes also would have existed as having dedications solely to one member of a divine pair would be extremely unusual.

<sup>224</sup> Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 294.

The lowest class of dedicants provides two dedications within the corpus.<sup>225</sup>

Slaves would have had less means to give votive inscriptions, thus their low number is not inherently unusual. Both dedicants, Hermadio and Maro, chose to make their votives to Mithras.<sup>226</sup> Of the four “military” religions, Mithraism would have been the most accessible for an enslaved man. Thus, their choice of deity is not unusual either. Rather, these two inscriptions complement many of the expected trends in Roman Dacia. Their participation in the dedicatory tradition also signifies that all levels of civilian society were able and willing to do so in Sarmizegetusa.

### Outside Influence

Of particular note are five inscriptions that reveal the influence of cultures foreign to the Romans within the dedicatory tradition.<sup>227</sup> Three votive inscriptions contain explicit reference of eastern origin, specifically Syrian, Greek, and Persian. The first is a dedication to IOM Dolichenus.<sup>228</sup> Dedicated by Gaius Gaianus and Proculus Apollofanes, the two men identify themselves specifically as *suri negotiatores*. Syrian traders have been observed dedicating to the same deity in Roman Dacia’s other great urban center, Apulum.<sup>229</sup> This speaks both to the pseudo-eastern origin of the deity and his appeal to Syrian colonists in particular.

The second inscription comes from a slave named Hermadio. Slaves were often given Greek names regardless of their initial origin, so that alone is not what identifies

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<sup>225</sup> Although freedmen were similar to slaves, as they could also still serve under a higher-ranking individual, their access to occupations and opportunities outside of a servile position is the reason they are discussed separately.

<sup>226</sup> Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 119, 121; *IDR III/2*, 283; *IDR III/2*, 287.

<sup>227</sup> By “foreign”, I mean cultures that did not initially hail from the Italian Peninsula.

<sup>228</sup> *IDR III/2*, 201.

<sup>229</sup> *IDR III/5.1*, 218.

him as Greek. Rather, his choice of *Aniceto*, the Greek word for unconquered, in an otherwise Latin inscription is what identifies him as such. The third inscription is one from a *vicarius* named Protus.<sup>230</sup> In his dedication, he specifically refers to Mithras as, “*Nabarze Deo*”. An extremely rare moniker, the origin of the word *Nabarze* is obscure. However, the title has been seen attributed to Mithras in eastern regions, suggesting it might be a stayover from the Persian cult of *Mitra*, which Mithraism is thought to be based off of.<sup>231</sup> The presence of three identifiably eastern inscriptions is likely significant of the sizeable eastern civilian minority dwelling in Sarmizegetusa.

Western influence can also be seen in two inscriptions.<sup>232</sup> This is visible most plainly through two epithets given to Mars, *Singilis* and *Camulus*. The first, *Mars Singilis*, is a syncretic deity initially originating in Baetica, a province in what is now modern-day Spain.<sup>233</sup> The second, *Mars Camulus*, is a syncretic Celtic deity. Rosmerta, another Celtic deity often accompanying Mercury, is also named in this inscription.<sup>234</sup> While eastern influence is likely tied to eastern merchants or colonists, western influence likely comes from the military. Auxiliaries initially raised in Gaul and Germania were common during the initial occupation of Roman Dacia, which allowed for Celtic deities to spread more easily throughout the Empire.

### **Overall Patterns of Worship of Military Deities in Sarmizegetusa**

Sarmizegetusa, the capital of Roman Dacia, stands tall as a civilian center of administration and religious activity. From even this narrowed epigraphic selection, it is

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<sup>230</sup> *IDR* III/2, 307.

<sup>231</sup> Franz Cumont. *The Mysteries of Mithra*. (Open Court, 1903), 151.

<sup>232</sup> *ILD* 253; *ILD* 277.

<sup>233</sup> Szabo and Boda, *The Gods of Roman Dacia*, 50.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

evident that civilians of all social statuses were able to participate in the dedicatory tradition of the settlement. The epigraphic and archaeological record also does much to speak to the significance of military deities within Sarmizegetusa. While Mithras is indisputably the most prevalent, IOM Dolichenus, Sol Invictus, and Mars all held a level of considerable significance. Mars, in particular, received an especially elite backing as was common for state cults. The cosmopolitan community also produced epigraphy that included foreign elements within the traditional votive structure.

That those living in the settlement chose to make dedications to the four “military” gods despite a lack of military influence, supports the theory that large urban settlements, regardless of their level of association with the military, were civilian-dominated centers of their worship.

### **The Settlement of Napoca**

Napoca began in a similar fashion to Sarmizegetusa as a “green-field” site with no prior occupation in the area.<sup>235</sup> Initially, the settlement grew in the west-central section of what would become the later town.<sup>236</sup> Sharing an inscription with Potaissa upon the *Milliarium of Aiton*, a milestone between the settlements, it is known that Napoca was occupied from as early as AD 108.<sup>237</sup> The town would thrive and eventually receive the status of *municipium* under Hadrian and *colonia* under Marcus Aurelius (or Commodus at the latest).<sup>238</sup> There is speculation that Napoca may have been a significant administrative

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<sup>235</sup> Diaconescu, “The Towns of Roman Dacia: An Overview of Recent Research”, 117.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *CIL* III, 1627.

<sup>238</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 127; Diaconescu, “The Towns of Roman Dacia: An Overview of Recent Research”, 119.

center for southern Dacia, the presence of an inscription from a procurator supports this theory, however there is not enough to state this definitively.<sup>239</sup> Not much is actually known about the settlement, however. Much like many other sites, Napoca has the charming quality of being located directly under a modern city. This has made thorough excavations near impossible, although some minimal efforts have been successfully carried out. However, it is known that the military presence within the community was insignificant.<sup>240</sup>

### **Military Religions and Dedicants in the Archaeological Record**

Napoca's minimal excavations have managed to reveal a respectable epigraphic record. With 119 inscriptions, 53 of which have been identified as votives, a demographic profile of the colony is attainable.<sup>241</sup> This is also how the lack of military participation in the votive tradition of the settlement is known. Of the 53 votive inscriptions, only five can be identified as dedications to one of the *Dii Militarii*. The small proportion may seem insignificant, but the community composition taken with the existent finds makes the presence of both a *Mithraeum* and a *Dolichenium* likely.<sup>242</sup> This would suggest that the significance of at least these two deities was noteworthy within the community.

Mars is completely absent in both the epigraphic and archaeological record. As the god has often been associated with either the civilian or military elite, it could be that since Napoca was possibly neither an administrative nor a significant *castrum*, those that

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<sup>239</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 58.

<sup>240</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 241.

<sup>241</sup> These estimates were taken from the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021, specifically searching broadly under "Napoca", and the narrowing the search to anything marked as "*tituli sacri*" but not "*diplomata militaria*".

<sup>242</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 187.

would normally dedicate to Mars simply did so elsewhere. More likely is that it could also be the result of limited excavation.

Of the five inscriptions, only two provide the names of their dedicants. The remaining three inscriptions are too fragmentary for any viable identification.<sup>243</sup> Of the two where the dedicants are known, one comes from a member of the civilian elite and the other comes from a Roman citizen.

The first inscription is one to *Deo Sol Invictus*.<sup>244</sup> It was dedicated by M. Cocceius Genialis, who identifies himself as the procurator of Dacia Porolissensis. As an equestrian appointed by the Emperor to administer the finances of the region, this position would have been one of considerable prestige. The second inscription comes from two men, Ulpus Paternus and Ulpus Iustinus.<sup>245</sup> Both identifiable as Roman citizens, their votive was dedicated to IOM Dolichenus.<sup>246</sup> This pair of inscriptions shows that the upper elite and normal citizens were both involved in the dedicatory tradition, but the sparseness of the record makes it unknown if the lowest classes (slaves) may have participated as well. Unidentifiable dedications to Mithras leave this open as a possibility, but it cannot currently be known.

Due to the lack of archaeological excavation and the small sample size, making definitive claims about the dedicative community involved with the *Dii Militarii* or Mars needs to be done with caution. All three of the *Dii Militarii* are accounted for in the epigraphic record, but Mars is absent. From the few examples bearing identification, it can also be known that the civilian elite and normal citizens were participants in the

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<sup>243</sup> AE 2010, 1369; CIL 03, 7659; CIL 03, 14466.

<sup>244</sup> CIL 03, 7662.

<sup>245</sup> CIL 03, 7660.

<sup>246</sup> Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 110.



dedicatory tradition to some extent. The lack of any inscriptions coming from the military also means that Napoca supports the argument that “military” deities could still be present and significant in communities without soldiers. Unfortunately, excavation is required to be able to expand further on this dedicatory community.

### **The Settlement of Ampelum**

Ampelum was a prosperous settlement in Roman Dacia, owing much of its growth to its gold mines. Likened to a “gold rush town”, the site would become the seat of the *procuratores aurarium*, or the imperial procurator for the gold mines.<sup>247</sup> While it is unknown whether it ever went on to receive the status of *colonia*, although this is unlikely, it was likely given the status of *municipium* by at least AD 200.<sup>248</sup> Evidence from inscriptions that have been found on site shows that several members of the municipal aristocracy of Sarmizegetusa left votive dedications in Ampelum.<sup>249</sup> This suggests the presence of lucrative economic opportunities, which would make sense given the gold mining prevalent in the community. Beyond this brief bit of information, little more can be said for the settlement. The entire site was destroyed in the 1980s by modern development, thus many questions may now be impossible to answer.

### **Military Religions and Dedicants in the Archaeological Record**

Despite its complete destruction, the epigraphic record recovered from Ampelum is still considerable. With sixty votive inscriptions having survived, the epigraphy

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<sup>247</sup> MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak*, 132.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> Byros, *Reconstructing Identities in Roman Dacia*, 240.

dedicated to gods associated with the military totals at seven (11.7 %).<sup>250</sup> Interestingly, *all* of these inscriptions only refer to a single deity: IOM Dolichenus. Mithras, Sol Invictus, and Mars are completely absent from the epigraphic record at Ampelum. This dominance is likely due in part to the Commagenian merchants present within the community. When these traders implanted themselves and their business within Roman Dacia, they made a conscious effort to establish the worship of IOM Dolichenus within their new communities.<sup>251</sup> Ampelum was one of these sites. By establishing the Cult of IOM Dolichenus within Ampelum and a complementary settlement, Apulum, the merchants were able to both maintain a communal identity and establish a uniquely Commagenian economic network within the province.<sup>252</sup> Based off of the epigraphic evidence present in Ampelum, it is reasonable to say that these colonists were quite successful.

Returning to the surviving physical evidence, of the six inscriptions which provide identifiable descriptions of their dedicants, only one comes from the military. Aurelius Gaius, a *beneficiarius consularis*, made a dedication to IOM Dolichenus.<sup>253</sup> As the only military dedication, it is likely that the military presence in Ampelum's dedicatory tradition was negligible. A mining town would not have required a *castrum* to be established within it, but the need for the defense of such a lucrative location would have meant soldiers *passed through* with relative frequency. Thus, while military

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<sup>250</sup> These estimates were taken from the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021, specifically searching broadly under "Ampelum", and the narrowing the search to anything marked as "*tituli sacri*" while excluding "*diplomata militaria*".

<sup>251</sup> Szabo, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia*, 67; 163.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>253</sup> *IDR* III/3, 297; Interestingly, another dedication from Aurelius Gaius appears in Potaissa in which he is identified as a *sacerdos*, or priest. However, it is unclear whether this is the same individual as there is little detail about him in general.

dedications may have been present, they were insignificant in the epigraphic record. This is supported by the fact that military dedications only make up ten percent of the total number of votive inscriptions.

On the civilian side, or more accurately the religious side, three dedications come from individuals identifying themselves as *sacerdotes*, or priests, of IOM Dolichenus. M. Marianus Bassus and a trio of dedicants, Aurelius Marinus, Adde Barsemei, and Oceanus Socratis, all identify themselves as such.<sup>254</sup> Another inscription also has the dedicant identifying themselves as a priest, although their name is not provided.<sup>255</sup> The first two inscriptions do well to represent the Commagenian identity of their dedicants. M. Marianus Bassus includes a number of epithets for IOM Dolichenus, one of which is *Commagenorum*. The trio of dedicants dedicate to IOM Dolichenus alongside *deo Commagenorum*, the Commagenian gods. A fourth inscription, albeit one with no identification, also gives IOM Dolichenus the same epithet.<sup>256</sup> The inclusion of such a moniker for the deity in so many inscriptions from Ampelum does well to reflect the prominent minority that was the colonists from Commagene.

Two further inscriptions include the names of their dedicants. The first, from a man named Apollonius(?), unfortunately is rather fragmentary in nature.<sup>257</sup> However, it includes the identification of *Augustalis coloniae*, marking the dedicant as a priest of the Imperial Cult. While *augustales* were dedicated to the imperial cult primarily, it was not unusual for them to dedicate to other gods as well. As Ampelum was never given the title of *colonia*, he likely was traveling from a nearby settlement, such as Sarmizegetusa or

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<sup>254</sup> *CIL* 03, 7834; *CIL* 03, 7835.

<sup>255</sup> *IDR* III/3, 299a.

<sup>256</sup> *CIL* 03, 7832.

<sup>257</sup> *IDR* III/3, 333.

Apulum. Making a dedication may have been a sign of respect to the considerably prevalent Cult of IOM Dolichenus at Ampelum. The final inscription, from a man named Modestius, contains very little information.<sup>258</sup> Likely a slave or a freedman, his participation shows that members of lesser standing within the civilian community were also participating in the worship of IOM Dolichenus in Ampelum.

Ampelum stands out as distinct due to its discussed epigraphy being comprised entirely of dedications to IOM Dolichenus. This is owed primarily to the efforts of Commagenian merchants present within the community. It is odd that even a deity like Mithras, who enjoyed a high degree of popularity across the province, is *completely* absent. Likely if his worship did take place here, any evidence was lost when the site was destroyed by modern construction.

Yet the stark paucity of military dedications in Ampelum is reflective of a civilian dominance in this manner of worship. While the military certainly passed through and were stationed in relative proximity, the gold mining industry meant that Ampelum was perhaps amongst the most industrial towns of Roman Dacia. This would have attracted far more merchants and wealthy visitors to the settlement, who would have been more able to dominate the epigraphic record due to their monetary earnings.

### **Spa Settlements**

Not much is known concerning the exact origins of Germisara and Aquae. It is likely that due to the presence of natural hot springs, the sites began as religious centers.<sup>259</sup> This tradition may have been carried over from the time prior to Roman

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<sup>258</sup> *CIL* 03, 1302.

<sup>259</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 189.

occupation, with many of the nymphs associated with the springs by the Romans likely beginning as local spirits.<sup>260</sup> This makes spa towns one of the few locations where religious activity prior to Roman occupation is more evident in its adapted continuation. As time went on, the communities began to monetize the hot springs. This, in turn, created more complex settlements that were basically “resort towns” built around their main attractions.<sup>261</sup> Thus, locals were often civilians and merchants, making money off of the many people who would pass through in order to use the springs.

Concerning the archaeological record, not much has been done at either of these sites. The natural hot springs remained important even after Roman occupation came to a close. For this reason, neither settlement was ever completely abandoned. Continuous occupation meant that former Roman buildings were often recycled and reused to construct newer ones, leaving little remaining for archaeologists to find. Modern construction likely buried anything else. In both locations, the springs themselves (and in the case of Germisara, some of the construction around them) have been cordoned off and remain accessible to visitors.

### **Military Religions and Dedicants in the Archaeological Record**

Germisara actually has quite a rich epigraphic record with 78 inscriptions, with 43 being votive inscriptions. Dedications to nymphs are extremely common, comprising 30% of the votive inscriptions. Aquae has a far smaller sample with 45 inscriptions, with

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<sup>260</sup> Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonization and Romanization*, 111.

<sup>261</sup> The term “resort” is used here as a comparison to a modern concept, but the actual composition of these towns in this respect is still debatable. In particular, housing accommodations for travelers and the means they were created (if they did at all) remains largely unknown. Ioana Oltean, e-mail correspondence with author, April 10, 2021.

nearly half being votives.<sup>262</sup> Between the two settlements, all four deities are accounted for. Aquae has two dedications, one to Mithras and the other to Mars. Germisara also has two dedications, but to Sol Invictus and IOM Dolichenus. No temples to any of these deities are thought to have been present, as quite frankly, it makes no sense for them to be located at spa sites.

Within the four dedications, three contain the names of their dedicants. All likely civilians, only one gives further detail about his social status. Lucius Grattius, a *decurio coloniae*, makes a dedication to Mars in Aquae.<sup>263</sup> Neither of these settlements were ever granted the status of *colonia*, meaning Lucius Grattius must have been a visitor hailing from a different urban center. The other named dedicants, C. Antonius Iulianus and Aelius Iulius, are identifiable as citizens but it is unclear whether they too were visitors or residents of Aquae and Germisara.<sup>264</sup>

From these named dedicants it can be seen that civilians were the primary dedicants of votives to the “military” deities in the two spa towns. However, these gods appear in such low frequencies that these settlements would normally not be discussed at even this length. Their inclusion is meant to serve as a comparison to the other “economic hot spot” that was Ampelum. From this, it can be seen that while their positions as prosperous economic centers did create a dedicatory environment dominated by civilians, this did not necessarily mean that “military” deities would be popular within.

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<sup>262</sup> The estimates for both Germisara and Aquae were taken from the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* in March 2021, specifically searching broadly under “Germisara” and “Aquae” respectively. Then the search was narrowed further to anything marked as “*tituli sacri*” but not “*diplomata militaria*”.

<sup>263</sup> *CIL* 03, 12577.

<sup>264</sup> Mihailescu-Birliba, *Ex Toto Orbe Romano*, 84-6.

In this case, it largely comes down to function. Ampelum was a gold mining settlement that saw frequent visitors from all walks of life. However, its prominence as a center for IOM Dolichenus came down almost entirely to its Commagenian community. Meanwhile, Germisara and Aquae are spa towns. None of the “military” deities truly fit this landscape and the decision to dedicate to them in such locations would be somewhat strange. Gods associated with springs such as Nymphs would be far more likely and prove to be so from the epigraphic record.

## Conclusions

From the major civilian settlements of Sarmizegetusa and Napoca, the archaeological and epigraphic record reveals that even without the influence of any military entity, the urban centers were still significant contributors to the dedicatory tradition concerning the *Dii Militarii* and Mars. Ampelum reveals that the dedicatory tradition of economic sites, largely dominated by civilians due to the prospect of monetary gain, were also significant centers of worship.<sup>265</sup> However, the spa towns of Germisara and Aquae reveal that civilian-run economic sites were not always such. At this type of site in particular, function remains most important in the gods chosen for dedications. While the *Dii Militarii* and Mars would not be unusual in a gold-mining center, they would be odd inclusions for a spa town.

The gods themselves appear in varying degrees. Mithras emerges as the most popular. While this is a similar trait of military settlements, the proportion of Mithraic

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<sup>265</sup> Previous discussion of Tibiscum could also be brought up in this context. Similarly to Ampelum, the settlement had an ever-present military presence but grew a sizeable civilian population due to its position as a customs post. However, while similar, Tibiscum was kept in Part II due to its more frequent interaction with the military and the more significant involvement of the military in its initial establishment.

inscriptions to the other three deities discussed far outweighs that found at Apulum or Micia. IOM Dolichenus was most prevalent at Ampelum, although his presence in Sarmizegetusa and Napoca was also significant. Sol Invictus and Mars appear in similar quantities. This general division of popularity is reflected in other major settlements as well.

This chapter was not meant to prove civilians were more prevalent than the military in Sarmizegetusa, Napoca, Ampelum, or even Germisara and Aquae. Rather, this section shows that “military deities” were significant to civilians in these settlements even without a legion or auxiliary present. Furthermore, large urban settlements stand as the most significant civilian centers of worship for the *Dii Militarii* and Mars.



## Conclusion

While it cannot be denied that the military was significant in both the importation and initial establishment of a variety of cults in the new province, this work endeavored to show that the growth of large urban centers created a transition to a more civilian-dominated religious community. This was done by taking “military” gods (Mithras, Sol Invictus, IOM Dolichenus, and Mars) specifically and examining their significance amongst the many socio-cultural groups found in Roman Dacia.

The legionary settlements of Apulum and Potaissa developed rapidly throughout Roman occupation of the province. With this development, civilian dedicants became more prominent in the epigraphic record, surpassing the military in dedications in Apulum and reaching an equivalent status in Potaissa. This development is paralleled in the major civilian urban centers of the province, where despite no lingering military presence, the “military” gods were still worshipped and considered significant amongst the populace. Sarmizegetusa shows the importance of these deities most clearly in its well-preserved archaeological record. “Economic hubs” also held the potential to follow this pattern, as their prosperity attracted many investors and merchants to the area. Albeit the popularity of the *Dii Militarii* and Mars relied largely on the community and the function of the site itself. This is why Ampelum was able to maintain a strong Cult of IOM Dolichenus, but the spa towns of Germisara and Aquae witnessed very little activity related to the “military” gods.

Smaller settlements, meanwhile, retained their primarily military character in regard to their dedicatory tradition. With the exception of Tibiscum, all of the smaller settlements generally followed this trajectory. Their lack of growth when compared to

major sites such as Apulum or Sarmizegetusa left these communities more dependent on the military presence for economic reasons, which resulted in fewer civilian dedicants due simply to a smaller civilian population. These locations also contained larger numbers of collective dedications, especially from auxiliary units. Individual dedications came entirely from high-ranking officers within both legions and *auxilia*. However, it is important to note that smaller sites have also received far less archaeological attention than larger ones, so this must be kept in mind while making any evaluations concerning the archaeological and epigraphic records.

The deities themselves enjoyed varying levels of popularity amongst civilian and military dedicants, although most of the visible patterns complement those understood throughout the Empire. Mithras was the most obvious divinity in the epigraphic record, enjoying considerable popularity in nearly every community of Roman Dacia. Dedications from the local elite were present, most prominently in Apulum, but the majority of dedications to Mithras came from normal citizens, freedmen, or slaves. His appeal to these groups of men makes him the most “civilian” deity discussed, and his popularity amongst both soldiers and civilians allowed his worship to reach levels of prominence not seen in the other cults. Sol Invictus is often overshadowed by Mithras or simply syncretized with him. However, his individual worship, especially in legionary settlements, was significant within the province. Roman Dacia was one of the largest centers for the worship of Sol Invictus, which may also be a product of the era the province was assimilated.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> An increased popularity of Sol Invictus took place in the third century, spurred largely by the Emperors Elagabalus and Aurelian. This was also the initial time frame in which Roman Dacia was brought into the collective Roman Empire.

IOM Dolichenus was unique in that his worship retained the most identifiable eastern influence. While his syncretization with IOM had stripped his worship of many of its more “foreign” qualities, this “pseudo-eastern” cult still proved attractive to many colonists originally hailing from eastern regions. This is seen in multiple dedications from *suri negotiatores* (Syrian merchants) and Commagenian communities. The settlements of Apulum, Ampelum, and Micia are where this is most plainly visible due to the eastern populations present in the civilian and military populations. Mars, as the only official state cult discussed, enjoyed a primarily elite patronage in the settlements of Roman Dacia. Whether these elite hailed from the military or the civilian sphere relied primarily on the settlement in question.

Through these four deities, the initial transmission of their worship throughout the province can be observed primarily in the hands of the military elite. Once settled within communities, the level of prosperity a settlement came to enjoy was a significant factor in determining whether their patronage would be primarily civilian or militaristic. Large urban centers, both civilian and legionary, worshipped these divinities prominently. Through their economic development and the subsequent attraction of a larger civilian population, these communities witnessed a transition from a military dedicatory tradition to one dominated by civilians. Smaller communities, with less economic means, retained their military character. Roman Dacia was a province with a significant military presence, but over time, civilians became the more prominent party in the dedicatory tradition, even for so-called “military” deities.

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