

LA RECEPCIÓN DE MITRA EN TRANSILVANIA
EN LOS SIGLOS XVIII-XIX

The reception of Roman Mithras in Transylvania in the 18th-19th century*

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Abstract

Transylvania became part of the Habsburg Empire in the late 17th century. Between 1686 and 1848, the region's urban landscape was radically altered by several large-scale infrastructural and architectural projects that also uncovered a substantial amount of archaeological material from its Roman past. Construction of the Vauban fort and other major urban projects in Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár, Karlsburg) after 1711 contributed to the creation of the city's first archaeological collection, established

Resumen

Transilvania pasó a formar parte del Imperio Habsburgo a finales del siglo XVII. Entre 1686 y 1848, el paisaje urbano de la región cambia radicalmente por varios proyectos importantes de infraestructura y arquitectura, que revelarán una cantidad significativa de material arqueológico del pasado de Transilvania. La construcción del fuerte de Vauban y los grandes proyectos urbanísticos posteriores a 1711 en Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár, Karlsburg) contribuyeron a la formación de la

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by Ignatius Batthyány in the late 18th century. This paper focuses on the first Mithraic finds from Alba Iulia, the Batthyaneum Library's valuable collection and the role of Mithraic finds from Apulum in the history of Mithraic studies.

Key words

Transylvania, Alba Iulia, Batthyaneum, Mithras, Roman Dacia.

primera colección arqueológica de la ciudad establecida por Ignatius Batthyány a finales del siglo XVIII. Este artículo se centrará en los primeros hallazgos mitraicos de Alba Iulia, en la rica colección de la biblioteca Batthyaneum y en el impacto de los hallazgos mitraicos de Apulum para la historia de los llamados estudios mitraicos.

Palabras clave

Transilvania, Alba Iulia, Batthyaneum, Mitra, Dacia romana.

THE HISTORY OF ANTIQUARIANISM IN TRANSYLVANIA has its roots in the medieval urbanization of the region when the prehistoric, Roman, and early-medieval monuments were looted and reused in the first monumental building-projects of the Saxon and Hungarian cities¹. Although numerous local legends and toponyms from urban and even rural environments suggest that accidental archaeological finds were made throughout the medieval period in the Transylvanian area of the Hungarian Kingdom, their origins and historical background can no longer be reconstructed². From the 14th century onwards, many medieval chronicles and literary sources allude in passing to the ruins of important urban settlements (Óbuda – Aquincum, Gyulafehérvár-Alba Iulia – Apulum), suggesting that the Roman past of these cities was familiar enough. In few cases, recently-discovered archaeological contexts attest to the heavy looting of Roman settlements for building materials in the 11-13th centuries³.

During the age of János Hunyadi and Matthias Corvinus (1458-1490), the first collections of Roman monuments were established at the royal court of the latter in Vajdahunyad and Buda, followed by numerous collections assembled by bishops and the high elite of the local aristocracy during the Renaissance⁴. Special mention should be made here of the collections of the bishops of Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár), most notably László Geréb (1452-1502), and the rich fieldwork of the first epigraphists and travellers at this time⁵. Geréb's assemblage of epigraphic material in the garden of his palace was the first archaeological collection in Alba Iulia, and among the very first in the former medieval kingdom of Hungary. Although there are no surviving contemporary descriptions of the original collection, it is possible that

1. Csaba Szabó, "Histories of archaeology in Transylvania. A short overview" in Csaba Szabó, Viorica Rusu-Bolindet, Gabriel Rustoiu and Mihai Gligor (eds.), *Adalbert Cserni and his contemporaries. The pioneers of archaeology in Alba Iulia and beyond*, Cluj-Napoca, 2017, 373-400.

2. The Renaissance name of Cluj (Claudiopolis) can probably be associated with a pseudo-historical legend or a possible archaeological discovery before the 16th century. It was considered false already by Szamosközy.

3. Matthew MacCarty, Mariana Egri, Aurel Rustoiu, "The archaeology of ancient cult: from foundation deposits to religion in Roman Mithraism", *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 39, 2019, 279-312.

4. Jolán Balogh, *Az erdélyi renaissance*, Kolozsvár, 1943.

5. On the activity of the Renaissance epigraphists see: András Bodor, "Erdély ókori történetének kutatása a XIX. század közepéig", *Erdélyi Múzeum*, 57/3-4, 1995, 56-81; Mihai Bărbulescu, *Inscriptiile din castrul legionar de la Potaissa. The Inscriptions of the Legionary Fortress at Potaissa*, București, 2012, 5-15.

some of the items were later transferred to the Batthyaneum collection. Today, there are several Roman votive and funeral inscriptions and anepigraphic monuments in the garden of the archbishop of Alba Iulia, many of them still unpublished⁶.

The activity of Antonio Bonfini (1427-1502), János Megyericsei (Mezerzius – 1470-1517), Stephanus Stieröchsel (Taurinus 1485-1519), Antal Verancsics (1504-1573), Wolfgang Lazius (1514-1565), Michael Siegler (1535-1585), Jacques Bongars (Bongarsius – 1554-1612), István Szamosközy (Zamosius – 1570-1612), Georgius Reichersdorffer, Pierre Lescalopier, Martin Opitz (1597-1639), Fridericus Monavius (1592-1659), Johannes Francisci, Johannes Tröster (1640-1670) and Luigi F. Marsigli (1658-1730) marked the first age of antiquarian research in the 15th and 17th centuries in Transylvania⁷. This age was dominated mostly by Italian, German and Hungarian scholars, whose major contribution was to document for the first time the ruins of the Roman and early medieval sites of the region and to establish the first epigraphic corpora, materials that were rapidly picked up by antiquarians and humanists in other part of Europe. This generation of scholars was formed in Italy or Germany and their work is rather descriptive, synthetic and ethnographic, presenting the archaeological sites of Transylvania mainly from a topographic and geographic point of view, drawing upon Latin and Greek literary and cartographic sources. The first maps of Roman Dacia were indeed drawn up in this period⁸. Although, there is no comprehensive study of the itineraries and networks of these scholars from the 15-18th centuries, their bibliographic references and *peregrinationes* hint at a complex academic network, with relatively frequent exchanges between western and central / eastern Europe⁹. Moreover, the Roman past and the cultural memory of Roman Dacia were used as political propaganda in contemporary royal and aristocratic genealogies and titles¹⁰.

The rediscovery of the Roman past and its materiality in Transylvania – especially the large Roman settlements beneath Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár), the former *colonia Aurelia Apulensis* and the conurbation around the fortress of the XIII Gemina legion¹¹ – led inter alia to research into the Roman cult of Mithras, one of the best-attested Roman divinities in the

6. See also: IDR III/5, 4, 11, 64, 134, 571.

7. See Szabó, “Histories of archaeology in Transylvania...”, *op. cit.* 375.

8. Florin Fodorean, *Pannonia, Dacia și Moesia în izvoarele geografice antice*, Cluj-Napoca 2014.

9. Many of the writers from this period kept abreast of the latest humanistic and antiquarian publications from Italy, the Netherlands, the German states and even England. On medieval scholarly networks and mobility see Sándor, Tonk, *Erdélyiek egyetemjárása a középkorban*, Kolozsvár 1979. See also Papp Júlia, “Collecting antiquities and curiosities in eighteenth-century Transylvania: the Saxon Lutheran pastor Laurentius Weidenfelder and his network”, *Journal of the History of Collections*, 25/3, 2013, 373–389.

10. On the problematic notion of ‘Re di Dacia’ see: Ioan Aurel Pop, “Matthias Corvinus, Re de Ungaria, de Dacia etc., in 1462”, *Transylvanian Review*, 29, supplement nr. 1, 2020, 41-52.

11. A detailed presentation of the research history and Roman material evidence discovered in Apulum will be found in Csaba Szabó, “Discovering the Gods in Apulum: historiography and new perspectives”, *Revista Doctoranzilor de Istoria Veche si Arheologie* 2, 2014, 53–82; Csaba Szabó, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. Materiality and Religious Experience*, Oxford, 2018, 11-128.

former province of Dacia¹². A brief sketch of the history of Mithraic discoveries in the ruins of Apulum prior to the foundation of the Batthyaneum in 1798 will help to understand the significance of this event for the history of Mithraic scholarship.

Rediscovering Mithras in Apulum in the 15-18th centuries

The Roman conurbation of Apulum was slowly abandoned after 270 AD and became a ruined city constantly reused as stone quarry or temporary settlement of various groups living in Transylvania in the 4-11th centuries¹³. Many of the most prominent Roman buildings were looted already in this period, as the recent archaeological excavations proved in the territory of the fort and the palace of the governors too¹⁴. After the Hungarian conquest, the ruins of Apulum were even more intensively reused not only in the territory of the fortress of the XIII Gemina legion, but also in the area of the *municipium Septimium Apulense*, where the earliest medieval settlement grew up. One of the sanctuaries of Mithras on the *extra-muros* territory of the *municipium Septimium Apulense* was reused for domestic purposes in this period¹⁵. The absence of figurative material (reliefs, statues) from the archaeological material discovered in this mithraeum suggests that this part of the inventory may have been reused in other parts of the medieval city¹⁶.

After 1541 Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) became the political and cultural centre of the new Transylvanian principate. The new political elite also radically changed the urban landscape, creating a new visual and architectural narrative within the medieval fort, which was built on the ruins of the Roman fortress. Gianmichele Bruto (1517-1592) mentioned that János Zsigmond, the Principe of Transylvania, enlarged the bishop's palace with fine new extensions decorated with numerous looted Roman inscriptions¹⁷. In one of these Renaissance buildings built by the Principe, Verancsics Antal (Antun Vrančić) saw a large Roman relief

12. For a comprehensive list of Mithraic finds from Dacia, see Csaba Szabó, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. Materiality and Religious Experience*, Oxford, 2018, 325-357.

13. The period between the Roman and medieval Hungarian period is one of the most problematic topics in Romanian and Hungarian historiographies, creating numerous, often conflicting, metahistories.

14. Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț, Teodor Muntean, Rada Varga, Ioan Strimbu and George Bounegru, *Palatul Guvernatorului Daciei romane de la Apulum. O redescoperire a patrimoniului*, Cluj-Napoca, 2011; Radu Ota, "O locuință din epoca post-romană descoperită la Apulum/ A Post-Roman dwelling found at Apulum", *Acta Musei Apulensis* 57/1, 2020, 307-316.

15. Matthew MacCarty, Mariana Egri, Aurel Rustoiu, "The archaeology of ancient cult...", *op. cit.* 285.

16. A much more significant, but poorly documented discovery of a mithraeum from the same territory (on the so-called field of Oancea) had also a rich figurative material which indicates that this area of the city was not equally affected by medieval looting: Szabó, "Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia..." *op. cit.*, 106-110.

17. András Kovács, "Fejedelmi építkezések Erdélyben", *Korunk* 3, 2013, 71. See also: András Kovács, "Humanista epigráfusok adalékai Gyulafehérvár középkor- és koraiújkor helyrajzához" in István Szamosközy, *Analecta Lapidum. 1593. Inscriptiones Romanae, 1598*, Szeged, 1992, 25-36.

with an almost completely preserved inscription¹⁸. The inscription was also described by Jacques Bongars (Bongarsius) in 1585, who added an account of the relief: «*Subtus exprimitur vir, chlamyde reducta sub brachium, tauri iacentis tergum premit genu dextro, pede sinistro eius pedem manu dextra complectitur rictum tauri, sinistram admovet parazonio. Canis erectus invadit taurinam gulam; serpens ventrem*»¹⁹. Unfortunately, the inscription is missing today, but it clearly is the first Mithraic inscription attested in Apulum²⁰. An inscription to Cautes was described in the 17th century as mounted in a wall of the Collegium Academicum (*in pariete domus collegii*)²¹.

Numerous Roman buildings, bases with inscriptions (sometimes with statues on them) were discovered and destroyed between 1721-1722 when the Vauban fort was built on the territory of the Roman fortress and the *canabae (municipium Septimium Apulense)*²². One of the monuments discovered during this period and described by G. Ariosti was a Mithraic inscription dedicated by the famous Roman Senator and *legatus* of the XIII Gemina, Marcus Valerius Maximianus (180-182 AD)²³.

These monuments discovered in the 16-18th centuries suggest that some of the Mithraic sanctuaries had already been looted and their material reused in buildings of the Renaissance and Baroque city. Some of them – such as the relief from the palace of the Principe – became almost as well known as the famous Mithraic inscriptions known from Rome in the 17-18th century²⁴.

The creation of the archaeological collection of the Batthyaneum and the early history of Mithraic studies

Prior to the establishment of Habsburg power in Transylvania, regard for the material evidence of the Roman past was confined to the private collections of bishops and the political elite (the aristocracy and the Principe). In early and exclusively private collections, the Roman material heritage served to furnish domestic or garden decoration, evoke memories of an imperial past

18. CIL III 1122 = IDR III/5, 285 with further bibliography.

19. Bongarsius' description was copied by several authors in the 18th and 19th century too: Antonius Van Dale, *Dissertationes Ix Antiquitatibus, Quin Et Marmoribus: Cum Romanis, Tum Potissimum Graecis, Illustrandis Inservientes: Cum Figuris Aeneis*, Amsterdam, 1702, 39; Jan Gruterus, *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbis Romani*, Amsterdam, 1707, 34, nr. 10; Heinrich Seel, *Die Mithrageheimnisse während der vor- und urchristlichen Zeit*, Aarau, 1823, 305. See also: CIMRM 1992-93.

20. Another Mithraic inscription reused in the palace of bishop G. Martinuzzi in the 16th century might come from Apulum too: IDR III/5, 275.

21. CIL III 994 with further bibliography. See also: Kovács, "Humanista epigráfusok adalékai...", *op. cit.*, 26.

22. Toma Goronea, *Fortificația bastionară de tip Vauban de la Alba Iulia: (prima jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea)*, Aeternitas, Alba Iulia, 2007.

23. IDR III/5, 286. See also: Ioan Piso, *Fasti provinciae Daciae I, Die senatorischen Amtsträger*, Bonn 1993, 225.

24. Gruterus, *Inscriptiones antiquae...*, *op. cit.*, 34 cites the Mithraic inscriptions from Rome, Alvinc and Alba Iulia on the same page.

or signal aspiration to humanistic learning. This slowly changed at the end of the 18th century, when we find the first catalogued and well-documented archaeological collections in Transylvania. The Habsburg Empire not only transformed the medieval cityscape but also impacted the natural environment, thus radically increasing the number of archaeological discoveries. The ruins of the double city of Apulum (*colonia Aurelia Apulensis, municipium Septimum Apulense et castra legionis XIII Geminae*) were intensively looted after the port of the city in the south (Portus, today Marospartos, Partoș) were modernised²⁵. On the basis of the military plans from 1761 and 1792 we can trace the rapid expansion of the river-port; but they also provide evidence of a rectangular anomaly which may well reflect the shape of the Roman city and its walls²⁶. Several important archaeological discoveries were made in the territory of the *colonia Aurelia Apulensis* after 1760 which gave rise to the first catalogued archaeological collection in Alba Iulia. Sylvester Joseph von Hohenhausen (1735-1814), an Austrian officer, who visited numerous archaeological sites in Transylvania in the 18th century reports that in 1767 two important mosaics were discovered in the ruins of Apulum, though the exact location of the discovery and the dimensions of the finds are unknown²⁷. György Aranka (1737-1817), the founder of the first Literary Association in Transylvania, mentioned in 1796 that the large mosaics discovered in 1766-1767 were transported to Vienna²⁸.

Shortly after this, in 1780-81, Ignatius Batthyány (1741-1798) became bishop of Alba Iulia. Well-known already in the 1770's in Rome as the librarian of the *Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum*, Batthyány was an *uomo universale*, a formidably intellectual cleric, who had been educated in Buda, Nagyszombat, Esztergom and Rome²⁹. The omnipresence of antiquity and the booming field of intellectual antiquarianism in 18th century Rome certainly had a personal impact on him³⁰. In the very first years of his term of office, in 1782 (or 1783) a fragmentary, but large, Roman mosaic was discovered in a small, rectangular room³¹. Aranka

25. Gheorghe Fleșer, *Portul Mureșului la Alba Iulia*, Alba Iulia, 2015.

26. Csaba Szabó, "Mapping Apulum. Reconstructing a Roman city" in Alpár Dobos, Zsolt Molnár and Szilámér Pánczél (eds.), *Archaeologia Transylvanica. Studia in honorem Stephani Bajusz*, Cluj – Napoca, 2015, 118.

27. Sylvester Joseph von Hohenhausen, *Die Alterthümer Daciens in dem heutigen Siebenbürgen: Aus den Zeiten, als dieses schöne Land die Römer regierten*, Wien, 1775, 146-148. See also: Ion Berciu, "Mozaicurile romane din Apulum", *Apulum* 4, 1961, 172-173.

28. György Aranka, *A Magyar Nyelv-mivelő Társaság munkáinak első darabja*, Szeben, 1796, 149. Aranka mentions a large size, beautiful mosaic from the time of András Hadik discovered in Apulum in 1766, however it is not sure that this one is identical with the one described by Hohenhausen.

29. Doina Biro-Hendre, 'Batthyány Ignác le fondateur de la Bibliothèque Batthyaneum à Alba Iulia. Sur ses projets scientifiques et culturels et sur les models religieux', in Éva Pohánka, Mariann, Szilágyi (eds.), *Klimo György püspök és kora - Egyház, művelődés, kultúra a 18. században*, Pécs, 2011, 41.

30. On his life and intellectual correspondance see: Zsigmond, Jakó, "Batthyány Ignác, a tudós és a tudományszervező", *Erdélyi Múzeum* 53, nr. 1, 1991, 76-99.

31. Hane and Aranka disagree as to the date: Aranka, *A Magyar Nyelv-mivelő Társaság...*, *op. cit.*, 149-150; Franz Xaver Hene, *Beyträge zur dacischen Geschichte*, Hermannstadt, 1836, 175-201. See also: Berciu, "Mozaicurile romane din Apulum...", *op. cit.*, 174-175.

also mentions that at the entrance of this room two, «bull-shaped figures were represented»³². Batthyány had the mosaic at any rate drawn and later sent by ship in Vienna, but unfortunately its later history is unknown³³. From his correspondence, we know that he was enthused by the richness of the archaeological heritage of Alba Iulia and the latest discoveries³⁴. In 1785 he tried to initiate a Scientific Society, one of the first of its kind in Transylvania, which would have promoted scientific research, publications and the general study of the material heritage of Transylvania³⁵. Unfortunately, his plan was unsuccessful, since Transylvania, on the extreme periphery of the Habsburg and Hungarian intellectual milieux, was simply too provincial to sustain such an enterprise³⁶.

The first documented Mithraic discovery was made in the end of the 1780's (before 1787) and can be considered as the beginning of Mithraic studies in Transylvania. The story of the discovery was mentioned in detail by Antonius Bartalis (Bartalis Antal, *1749, † before 1802)³⁷. Together with Simon Peter Weber, Bartalis published a general account of Roman Dacia, in the vein of the solid tradition of such histories³⁸, but also included some specific aspects of the history of *Colonia Aurelia Apulensis*.³⁹ The book is important not only because of many new details and perceptive remarks on new inscriptions, but also because it contains the first mention of three Mithraic monuments discovered at about that time,⁴⁰ together with a short summary of the cult⁴¹. Bartalis provides a detailed analysis of the inscription and the iconography of the statue. The sources he draws upon and the overall presentation bear witness to his genuine interest in the cult, and he is capable of citing some of the most important

32. Aranka, *A Magyar Nyelv-mivelő Társaság, op. cit.*, 149.

33. Szabó, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia...*, *op. cit.*, 122-123.

34. Dumitru Snagov, *Monumenta Romaniae Vaticana: manuscrise, documente, harti: Catalogul expozitiei istorice de la Muzeul National Cotroceni: doua milenii de crestinism romanesc*, București-Roma 1996, 45. The author claims to identify Christian iconography in the mosaic, and links it to a putative Christian community. The book collects material evidence of “two millennia of Romanian Christianity” to serve as propaganda in the lead-up to John Paul II's visit to Romania in 1999.

35. Jakó, “Batthyány Ignác...”, *op. cit.*, 96-97.

36. How far Batthyány was in advance of his time is shown by the fact that a Transylvanian Museum Society was only established in 1859 by Imre Mikó: Csaba, Szabó, *Béla Cserni and the beginnings of urban archaeology in Alba Iulia*, Cluj-Napoca, 2016, 152-153.

37. For a detailed account of the discovery see: Csaba Szabó, “The Mithraic statue of Secundinus from Apulum”, *Revista Doctoranzilor in Istoria Veche* I, 2013, 45-65.

38. On the historiography of Roman studies in Transylvania, see András Bodor, “Erdély ókori történetének kutatása a XIX. század közepéig”, *Erdélyi Múzeum*, 57/3-4, 1995, 56-81.

39. Bartalis Antonius, *Ortus et occasus Imperii Romanorum in Dacia Mediterranea*, Posonium [Pressburg/Poszony/Bratislava], 1787. The sub-title is *cui accedunt nonnullae de monumento quodam e rudibus coloniae Apulensis eruto opiniones*.

40. These are: the fragmentary statue dedicated by Secundinus (CIMRM 1947 = IDR III.5, 284 with photo); and the two monuments dedicated by Euthyces: CIMRM 1935 = IDR III.5, 280 (relief in three registers), and CIMRM 1937 = IDR III.5, 281 with photo + drawing (inscribed statue base).

41. Bartalis, *Ortus et occasus...*, *op. cit.*, 81.

and relevant ancient authors known in his day⁴². In addition, he quotes some foreign scholars, such as Lorenzo Pignoria (1571-1631), Bernard de Montfaucon's (1655 – 1741) *Diarium Italicum*⁴³, and Friedrich Eberhard Boysen (1720-1800)⁴⁴. He also consulted the work of Antonius Verantius (Antun Vrančić, 1504-1573) and Stephanus Zamosius (Szamosközy István, 1570-1612) in order to discuss some inscriptions that had been discovered earlier.⁴⁵ From his reading of Western European authors, he knew that some Mithraic images had been painted⁴⁶. His section on the cult of Mithras fits perfectly with the enthusiasm of Renaissance and Enlightenment scholars in the rest of Europe. Almost in the same time, the painter and antiquarian Robert Fagan (1761-1816) in Ostia discovered an important mithraeum, which unfortunately can no longer be identified with certainty.⁴⁷

In the present connection, Bartalis' most valuable contribution might have been his information about the discovery of the fragmentary statue in white marble (CIMRM 1947). Unfortunately, what he has to say is brief and ambiguous:

«Gaudemus hic iam nobis, quod venerandis his Daciae nostrae saxis monimentum, cui simile in terris hisce videre contigit hactenus nemini, adiciere possimus, cuius typum fronti opusculi huius habes Lector praefixum. Effossum illud non ita propidem est e ruderebus Coloniae Apulensis ad Portum Marusii in Area spectabilis D. Francisci Kastal, Salis, ut dicere amant, Ponderum Magistri. Subinde nobis dono oblatum et a Charissimo Nepote nostro Iosepho Kastal Cibinium, ubi Curati munere fungimur, deuectum»⁴⁸.

The statue was given to Bartalis as a gift, presumably by Francis Kastal) and transported by his nephew to Cibinium (Hermannstadt, Nagyszeben, Sibiu), where Bartalis was a curate. Since both men are named Kastal, it seems likely that Francis was a relative of Joseph Kastal. It is possible that the statue and possibly the two other objects were found together. If so, a complex relief and a statue-base dedicated by the same man, together with a free-standing statue (*signum*), together suggest the existence of a *mithraeum*, which would

42. E.g. Macrobius, *Saturnalia* [who notoriously does not mention Mithras], Lactantius Placidus, *In Statii Thebaida commentum*; Porphyry, *De antro nympharum*; Jerome, *Epist. ad Laetam*, 107. All these sources, and indeed many others, had been known to antiquarian scholarship since the compilations of G. Giraldi, *De deis gentium* (1548 and often reprinted), and V. Cartari, *Le imagini de I dei de gli antichi* (1556 and often reprinted/-edited).

43. Bartalis, *Ortus et occasus...*, *op. cit.*, 67.

44. Bartalis, *Ortus et occasus...*, *op. cit.*, 78-81.

45. Bartalis, *Ortus et occasus...*, *op. cit.*, 76.

46. Bartalis, *Ortus et occasus...*, *op. cit.*, 81.

47. Ilaria Bignamini, "British excavations in the Papal States during the 18th century: written and visual sources" in Ilaria Bignamini (ed.), *Essays on the history of archaeological excavations in Rome and Southern Italy from the Renaissance to the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford, 2004, 94; Francesca Granieri, "Gli scavi nel mitreo Fagan ad Ostia" in Palma Beatrice Venetucci (ed.), *Culti Orientali – tra scavo e collezionismo*, Roma, 2008, 209-220.

48. Bartalis, *Ortus et occasus...*, *op. cit.*, 60-61.



- ◀ Fig.1. The Mithraic statue of Secundinus (CIMRM 1947) discovered in Alba Iulia in the 1780's and now in the Brukenthal Museum, Sibiu. Photo: Ortolf Harl, lupa 17291. (Reproduced by permission from Szabó 2013, 56, pl. I.)

have been the very first documented sanctuary of Mithras discovered in Alba Iulia⁴⁹. He not only described and analysed the find but published the first representation of the statue too (fig.1.). The statue of Secundinus became a well-known Mithraic find, cited already in the early 19th century Europe; The book, where the statue was published for the first time was acquired by Ignatius Batthyány soon after its publication in 1787. After this, the bishop became even more enthusiastic about the archaeological heritage of Apulum, especially as regards sculptural, epigraphic and numismatic materials⁵⁰. Batthyány also acquired other remarkable archaeological finds from Transylvania, such as one of the earliest wax tablets discovered in 1786 in the Roman mines of Alburnus Maior (Verespatak)⁵¹. One of the most beautifully carved Roman altars discovered in the territory of Apulum (IDR III/5, 301) in the 1780's also entered the collection, together with several other Roman inscriptions discovered in *colonia Aurelia Apulensis*⁵². From 1781 until 1794, the archaeological collection was kept in various places, both in the garden (continuing the collection of Geréb from the 15th century) and in the palace itself next to the cathedral.

The major change came in 1794, when, after long negotiations, the former church of the Trinitarians in Alba Iulia was transformed into a temple of science, wisdom and knowledge dedicated to Urania⁵³, which came to house one of the most important libraries of Transylvania in the 18th century with several exceptional works, such as the 8th/9th-century Codex

49. A detailed analysis of the archaeological material will be found in Szabó, *Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia...*, *op. cit.*, 100-102.

50. For his letter to cardinal Stefano Borgia (1731-1804), see Vasile Moga, "Considerations on some artefacts of Roman Period from the collection of the Batthyaneum Library" |in Doina Hende-Biro (ed.), *Batthyaneum, omagiu fondatorului Ignatius Sallestius de Batthyan (1741-1798)*, București, 2011, 235-236.

51. IDR III/1, Tab. Cer.D IV with the 19th-century literature. See also Volker Wollmann, "Eine römische Wachstafel (tabula cerata) in der archäologischen Sammlung der "Batthyaneum"-Bibliothek", *Nemus*, 5 2010, 22-31.

52. Aranka, *A Magyar Nyelv-mivelő Társaság...*, *op. cit.*, 148.

53. Ion Dârja, "Din istoria Bibliotecii "Batthyaneum". Etapa I: 1798-1826 (De l'histoire de la Bibliotheque Batthyaneum)", *Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis*, 1997, 341.

Aureus⁵⁴, the most complete astronomical observatory of Transylvania⁵⁵ and a rich numismatic collection including the Roman coins discovered in Apulum (986 coins from various historical periods)⁵⁶. Unfortunately, the sudden death of the bishop in 1798 prevented him from completing this temple of science, where every corner and even the inner decoration has a strong visual narrative, reflecting the Age of Enlightenment, the triumph of science and knowledge through classical mythological figures and divinities⁵⁷. The second catalogue of the library established in March 1821 contains a detailed account on the treasures kept there in this period⁵⁸. In the section called *Museo Phisico*, a collection dedicated to the materiality of the past in the manner of the 16-17th century cabinets of curiosities⁵⁹, Batthyány and his followers organised eleven different cabinets for geological, numismatic and numerous other groups of objects. Just few years later after the shell collection of Martin Lister, the founder of arachnology⁶⁰, the library acquired a rich collection of shells and «various antiquities» (*Colectio conchiliorum et aliarum antiquitatum*)⁶¹. Unfortunately, there is no detailed catalogue of this collection of antiquities from the period between 1798 and 1821.

The Mithraic finds of Roman Dacia were quite rapidly taken up into later literature on the cult. It is true that the first major work on Mithras in the early 19th century, *Die Mithrageheimnisse* by the senior Bavarian administrator Heinrich Seel⁶², fails to mention Bartalis and the Mithraic finds from Dacia discovered up to the end of the 18th century⁶³. Yet in the very same year the Mithraic material of the Batthyaneum was included in a youthful paper by the famous German-Russian geographer and traveller Peter von Köppen

54. Zsigmond Jakó, “A Batthyaneum-könyvtár történetéből. I. A Migazzi-gyűjtemény megszerzése”, *Könyvtári Szemle*, 13, 1969, 125-129; Ibolya Sipos, Csongor Vass, “A Batthyaneum könyvtár rövid története”, in Doina Hendre-Biro (ed.), *Batthyaneum. Omagiu fondatorului Ignatius Sallestius de Batthyan (1741-1798)*, București, 2011, 41-50.

55. András Kovács, “Observatorul astronomic Batthyaneum de la Alba Iulia. Un program decorativ puțin cunoscut”, *Ars Transylvanica*, 2, 1992, 29-48.

56. Judit Winkler, “Colecția monetară a Bibliotecii Batthyaneum”, *Apulum*, 13, 1975, 35-48.

57. Cristian Mladin, “Observatorul institutului batthyánian invita Minerva. În jurul unei recenzii critice de epocă la *Initia Astronomica*”, *Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis* 56, 2019, 139-157. During the 19th century it was renamed the Batthyaneum, by which it is still known.

58. Dârja, *Din istoria Bibliotecii „Batthyaneum”... op. cit.*, 350-353.

59. Arthur MacGregor, Oliver Impey, *The Origins of Museums*, Oxford, 1985.

60. Anna Marie Ross, “The Art of Science: The *Historiae Conchyliorum* And The *Historia Piscium*” in A. M. Ross, *Web of Nature: Martin Lister (1639-1712), the First Arachnologist*, Leiden, 2011, 281-332.

61. Dârja, *Din istoria Bibliotecii „Batthyaneum”... op. cit.*, 352.

62. Heinrich Seel, *Die Mithrageheimnisse während der vor- und urchristlichen Zeit*, Aarau, 1823.

63. In the introduction he mentions that he used the major corpora and Mithraic studies of the 17th-18th century in establishing his new catalogue. He dedicates a separate chapter to Persepolis and the Persian origins of Mithras, opening a century long tradition in this direction: Nicole Belayche, “Introduction historiographique. I. L’homme de Mithra”, in Nicole Belayche, Attilio Mastrocinque (eds.), *Rédition critique de F. Cumont, Les Mystères de Mithra, Bibliotheca Cumontiana, Scripta maiora* 3, Rome, 2013, XIII-LXVIII.

(1793-1864)⁶⁴. Von Köppen combined a passion for the languages and dialects of Transylvania with an interest in the lesser-known iconographic material of the past⁶⁵. Among his notes on various ancient, medieval, Iranian and Islamic monuments he had encountered during his travels in the Austrian Empire, he devotes a section to Mithras, including some Mithraic finds from Apulum (Alba Iulia) which had not hitherto been noticed, even by the bestselling guide of Domenico Sestini (1750-1832). He mentions four Mithraic finds (nos. VI-IX) from the «Batthyaneum Museum» (*Batthyani'sches Museum*): two reliefs, one very small, in three registers, a large relief showing only the main scene, and a 'torso', in fact a Rockbirth⁶⁶. All the finds are mentioned as «discovered in the ruins of the ancient Apulum», but without a precise context or date of the discovery.

It is indeed very odd that there is no report in the local literature of the period of the discovery of any of these items (figs. 2-3)⁶⁷. Antal Bartalis makes no reference to them in his book of 1787, although he lists many Mithraic finds and inscriptions from western Europe, while the relief discovered together with the statue dedicated by Secundinus presents the same iconography as one of the large anepigraphic reliefs described by von Köppen, which would have been an obvious comparandum⁶⁸. His omission might well imply that they were only found after 1790 or even in the early 19th century. To von Köppen we also owe the first detailed drawing of the relief with three registers dedicated by Euthyces (CIMRM 1935). His account of the material heritage of the Roman cult of Mithras in Transylvania, written in the vernacular (German) and published in a major journal in Vienna, turned out to be decisive for the process whereby the Mithraic monuments of Apulum became well-known in Europe, serving in part as schoolbook examples of Mithraic art and iconography in the 19th century and even beyond.

Another visitor to the Battyaneum was the Austrian orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856), whose account of the Mithraic collection is more detailed still⁶⁹. Like

64. Peter van Köppen, "Nachricht von einigen in Ungern, Siebenbürgen und Polen befindlichen, und bisher nur wenig oder gar nicht bekannten Alterthümern", *Jahrbücher der Literatur (Anzeigebblatt)* 24, 1823, 4-40.

65. Peter van Köppen, "Die dreygestaltete Hekate und ihre Rolle in den Mysterien. Nach einem Standbilde im Baron Bruckenthalischen Musaeum zu Hermanstadt in Siebenbürgen", *Archiv für Geschichte, Statistik, Literatur und Kunst* 14, Wien, 1823, 17-24.

66. Köppen, *Nachricht von einigen in Ungern*, *op. cit.*, 9-15. These are resp. CIMRM 1972 (v. Köppen p.10-13, no. VII, pl. 1); 1975 (p. 14, no. VIII [Vermaseren by a misprint gives XIII]); 1973 (p. 9-10, no. VI); 1991 (p.14-15 no. IX).

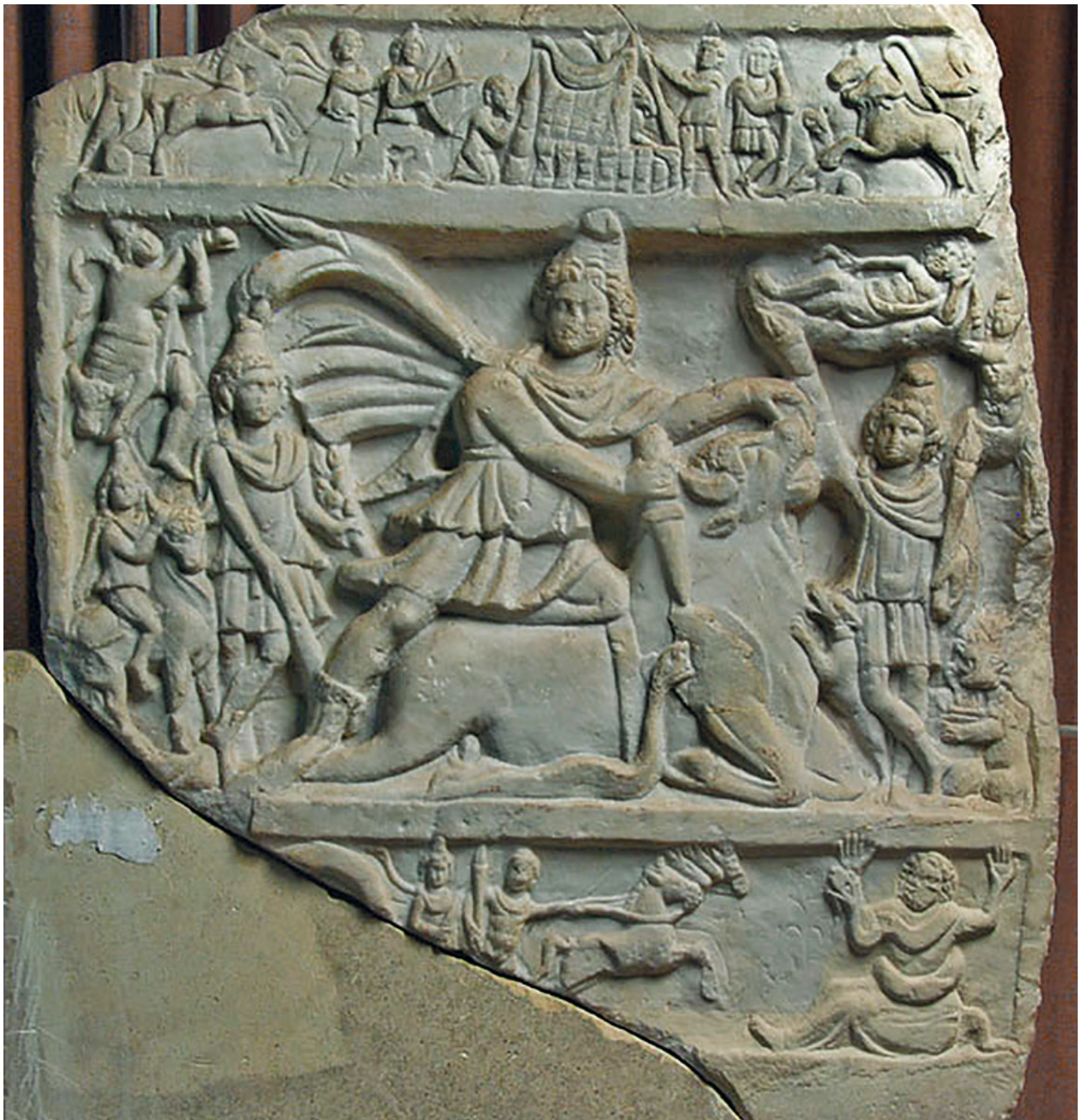
67. György Aranka mentions two representations of "bulls protecting the entrance of a room with a large mosaic" in the territory of Colonia Aurelia Apulensis (Maros-Portus), however it is not clear whether he meant reliefs or mosaics: Aranka, *A Magyar Nyelv-mivelő Társaság...*, *op. cit.*, 147-148.

68. On the iconographic types of Mithraic reliefs in Dacia see: Gabriel Sicoe, *Die mithräischen Steindenkmäler aus Dakien*, Cluj-Napoca, 2014.

69. Wilhelm Bietak, *Gottes ist der Orient, Gottes ist der Okzident eine Studie über Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall*, Zürich-Wien, 1948.



▲ Fig.2. Mithraic relief with a series of key symbols over the arch, discovered in the ruins of ancient Apulum and formerly in the Batthanyeum (CIMRM 1973). Photo: Ortolf Harl, lupa 19656. (By permission of the director of the National Museum of Union Alba Iulia.)



▲ Fig.3. Mithraic relief with three registers from Apulum formerly in the Bathaneum (CIMRM 1972). Photo: Ortolf Harl, lupa 19314. (By permission of the director of the National Museum of Union Alba Iulia.)

Seel, he provides a continuous if fanciful history of Mithras from Persia to the Roman Empire⁷⁰. though his complex historical analysis recalls the sophisticated treatment of the Dane Zoega (whose work appeared in German translation only in 1817). Hammer-Purgstall lists all the known Mithraic monuments from Transylvania and offers his own interpretation, based on the work of Bartalis and von Köppen. He also published several drawings of monuments in the archaeological collection of the Batthyaneum. One of the most interesting items is a torchbearer with a bucranium⁷¹. It is unclear whether this statuette was in the Batthyaneum or elsewhere⁷². Von Köppen knew it only from a drawing, which is also reproduced by Hammer-Purgstall. It seems later to have been broken and built into one of the late-medieval buildings on the street next to the Batthyaneum, in the inner courtyard of the Catholic seminary. At any rate I managed to identify a fragmentary statue of Cautes with bucranium built into a wall there.⁷³

In the same year of 1833 another work on Mithras was published by Nikolaus (Niklas) Müller (1770-1851), a German artist and well-educated antiquarian, who founded the Altertumsverein in his home city of Mainz. In his book, Müller presents the supposed evolution of the cult from the Indian Veda and in an appendix provides a 'gallery' of twenty lithographed monuments⁷⁴. Six items from Apulum are described on the basis of von Köppen's observations and drawings, though Müller follows him in the erroneous belief that some at least derived from Sarmizegetusa.⁷⁵ Others of his lithographs Müller owed to an early work on the famous Mithraic relief formerly in the Borghese collection by Félix Lajard (1783-1858),⁷⁶ who became the foremost albeit deeply misguided authority on the cult of Mithras well into the second half of the 19th century.

Lajard was the first scholar to dedicate much of his career to research on the cult of Roman Mithras. One of his major works was dedicated to an explication of the reliefs discovered in Apulum and more generally Transylvania⁷⁷. He published this as an addendum to the

70. Joseph Hammer-Purgstall, *Mithraica; Ou, Les Mithriaques: Mémoire Académique sur le Culte Solaire de Mithra*, Paris, 1833.

71. Hammer-Purgstall, *Mithraica...* *op. cit.*, 103, cat. Nr. LVI. See also: CIMRM 2185.

72. Köppen, *Die dreygestaltete Hekate*, *op. cit.*, 20, cat. Nr. XIV.

73. Csaba Szabó, "Notes on a new Cautes statue from Apulum", *Archaeologische Korrespondenzblatt* 2, 2015, 237-247.

74. Niklas Müller, *Mithras: Eine vergleichende Uebersicht der berühmteren mithrischen Denkmäler und Erklärung des Ursprungs und der Sinndeute Ihrer Symbole mit besondere Beziehung auf reiche Ausbeute des Mithräums von Heddernheim, und mit einer erläuternden lithographirten Mithrasgalerie*, Wiesbaden, 1833; the pull-out plates are to be found after page 153. Cumont again dismissed the work as largely a compilation that simply cites the conflicting opinions of his predecessors (Franz Cumont, *Textes et monuments relatifs au culte de Mithra*, 1, Bruxelles, 1898-9, xxv).

75. Müller, *Mithras: Eine vergleichende Uebersicht...*, *op. cit.*, 19-24 nos. 20-25. These comprise resp. CIMRM 1973; 1935; 1975; 1972; 1947; and probably 2185.

76. Felix Lajard, *Observations sur le grand bas-relief Mithriaque de la collection Borgèse, actuellement au musée royal de Paris*, Paris, 1828 on CIMRM 415.

77. Felix Lajard, *Mémoire sur deux bas-reliefs Mithriaques qui ont été découverts en Transylvanie*, in *Mémoires de l'Académie royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, 14.2, Paris, 1840, 54-185. Although the work

work of von Köppen, giving a more precise iconographic description and historical-religious contextualisation of the Mithraic material from Apulum. Although it represents the most detailed account ever made of the reliefs from Apulum in the collection of the Batthyaneum and the Brukenthal museums, it was fatally influenced by contemporary metahistorical theories of orientalism and Persianism.⁷⁸ Like many other scholars of his age, Lajard also made use of contemporary literature by European travellers and of scholarly works on Zoroastrianism and Iranian religions⁷⁹. He was moreover deeply affected by his own experiences in Persia as the secretary of the French ambassador (1807-1808), followed by an Oriental tour⁸⁰. In 1823 – the same year in which von Köppen and Seel published their contributions – the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres offered a prize for a scientific work on the Zoroastrian origins of Mithras, its evolution from Persia to Rome, and the literary, archaeological and epigraphic evidence for the cult⁸¹. Lajard won the prize with a general dissertation that remained unpublished. Based on his research from this period, however, he published numerous studies and books on Mithras, whose credulous eclecticism was sharply criticized by Franz Cumont⁸². The European sources of Mithras, made it clear for Lajard that the cult of Mithras of the Roman Empire and the Iranian-Persian god Mithra are two different divine entities with linguistic and cultural interconnectivities⁸³. Lajard spent years preparing the first comprehensive atlas of all Mithraic finds in 1847, but never completed his major work, part of which, again focusing on the differences between Mithras in the Roman world and the Orient, was published posthumously with a catalogue of the major iconographic sources in lithograph⁸⁴. Here again we find emphasis laid on the reliefs from the Batthyaneum.

In 1836, Franz Xaver Hene, bishop of Dulcinea and curator of the newly formed Batthyaneum, included the archaeological collection of the Batthyaneum in his *History of*

was published only in 1840, he finished the manuscript on 8th October 1830.

78. For the background to such essentially Romantic arguments, especially in Germany, see Josine Blok, “Quests for a Scientific Mythology: F. Creuzer and K.O. Müller”, *History and Theory*, 33.4, 1994, 26-52; George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche*, Chicago, 2004; Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, Washington, 2009, 28-37, 66-71, 131-133.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 94, fn. 1 for example.

80. Henri Dehérain, “La mission de Félix Lajard en Perse (1807-1809) et ses conséquences scientifiques”, *Journal des Savants* 9, (1929), 401-411.

81. *Ibid.* pp. 406-407. The arrival in Paris of the Borghese relief, thanks to Napoleon’s readiness to buy the entire collection of his financially embarrassed brother-in-law, Prince Camillo Borghese, had caused a sensation in 1808.

82. See Cumont’s withering remarks on Lajard (Cumont, *Textes et monuments I*, *op. cit.*, xxvi); Götz König, ‘Iranisches im römischen Mithraskult: Iranische Wörter’, in Richard Faber and Achim Lichtenberger, (eds.), *Ein pluriverses Universum: Zivilisationen und Religionen im antiken Mittelmeerraum*, Leiden, 2015, 301-302.

83. Lajard, *Mémoire sur deux bas-reliefs Mithriaques*, *op. cit.*

84. Felix Lajard, *Recherches sur le culte public et les mystères de Mithra en Orient et en Occident*, Paris, 1867. Many of the illustrations in Cumont 1894-96 are taken from the latter publication.

*Dacia*⁸⁵. A few pages are devoted to the material evidence of the cult of Mithras, with descriptions of the museum's three reliefs from Apulum, accompanied by speculative interpretations⁸⁶. His drawings are also among the first representations of the two larger reliefs in the collection (fig.4-5.). Among his confusions, Hene linked the cult of Mithras to that of Bonus Puer⁸⁷, an oddity pursued even by M. J. Vermaseren⁸⁸. Unfortunately, Hene failed to update his catalogue of the Mithraic material of the Batthyaneum, which evidently increased in the early 19th century thanks to new finds. This failure was made good by the first detailed catalogue of all the archaeological material in the Batthyaneum, by Dr. Johann Daniel Ferdinand Neugebauer (1783-1866), who incorporated Hene's illustrations⁸⁹. This prolific German writer, traveller and lawyer published numerous works based on his journeys in Central-East Europe, one of the last being this monumental archaeological catalogue⁹⁰, which was to be the last major corpus before the first volume of CIL edited by Theodor Mommsen, who himself visited Transylvania (Siebenbürgen) in 1857⁹¹. Neugebauer presents 351 epigraphic and figurative monuments (inscribed altars, statue bases, statues, reliefs, statuettes and many other, anepigraphic, finds) from Apulum (Alba Iulia).⁹² At any rate in the 1840's there were 26 archaeological items – most of them lacking inscription – in the Batthyaneum, mainly in the library⁹³. Among these finds Neugebauer mentions, apart from the three Mithraic reliefs,⁹⁴ a good-quality funerary statue of a woman in the observatory, probably the one mentioned by György Aranka⁹⁵, a torso of an emperor (probably the one associated later with Pertinax hosted by the building, but not the library), a small bronze statuette of Mercury, a statuette of Diana likewise in bronze, a small bronze foot, and a number of other marble, terracotta and stone objects. He also claims that the statue of Se-

85. Hene, *Beyträge zur dacischen Geschichte*, *op. cit.*

86. *Idem*, 134-158.

87. *Idem*, 151.

88. See CIMRM 1995/6 and 1997.

89. Friedrich Ratzel, „Johann Daniel Ferdinand Neugebauer“, in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie (ADB)*, Band 23, Leipzig 1886, 404-405.

90. Johann Daniel Ferdinand Neugebauer, *Dacien aus den Ueberresten des klassischen Alterthums mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Siebenbürgen*, Kronstadt, 1851.

91. Márton, Szilágyi, „Theodor Mommsen és Eötvös József ismeretsége“, *Aetas*, 20/3, 2005, pp. 123-139. On Mommsen's letters home reporting his experiences in the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1857, see Köck 2021. He visited Alba Iulia/Karlsberg between 27th September-1st October, and thus had little time to make his own notes, but he certainly himself viewed Euthyces' two monuments (CIL III 1110-111). He did not care much for the town: „ein abscheuliches zwischen großen ungepflasteten Plätzen verzetteltes Häuserbündel“: Julian Köck, „Theodor Mommsen als Reiseschriftsteller. Über die Forschungsreise durch das Kaisertum Österreich und seine Domänen“, *History of Classical Scholarship* 3, 2021, 340.

92. The Mithras relief of Euthyces, for example, is listed on p.38-39 no.112, taken from Lajard: it is not clear whether Neugebauer had actually seen it.

93. Neugebauer, *Dacien*, *op. cit.*, 163, cat. nos. 282-308.

94. *Idem*, 163 nos.285-287.

95. Aranka, *A Magyar Nyelv-mivelő Társaság...*, *op. cit.*, 148.



▲ Fig.4. Drawing of the Mithraic relief from Apulum with symbol-sequences arrayed over the cave (CIMRM 1973), reproduced from Hene 1836, pl. 3 fig.5. (By permission of the director of the Brukenthal Museum, Sibiu.)

cundinus discovered by Kastal and published by Bartalis in 1787 was there too, but in fact it had been taken to the Brukenthal Museum in Hermannstadt/Sibiu already by the end of the 18th century⁹⁶. Numerous other entries (cat. nos. 134-173) are noted as being scattered around Alba Iulia, such as the old 15th century collection in the garden of the bishop's palace, the garden of the Catholic school and many private properties too.

⁹⁶ Neigeaur, Dacien, *op. cit.*, 157, cat. no. 241. This error is not the only indication that much of the material was taken from older catalogues, especially Seivert 1773.



◀ Fig.5. Drawing of the Mithraic relief with three registers from Apulum (CIMRM 1972), reproduced from Hene 1836, pl. 4., fig.7. (By permission of the director of the Brukenthal Museum, Sibiu)

The foundation of a new museum and the beginnings of modern archaeological research

The large number of archaeological finds discovered in the years after 1722, when the Vau-ban fort was built and the new Habsburg port established in Maros-Portus, stimulated the demand for a large institution to house them. The discovery of another important Mithraic context with two, or possibly three, Mithraic inscriptions and their transportation to the Brukenthal Museum in 1852, a distance of 83 km by road, clearly suggests that there was no more space in the Batthyaneum for larger archaeological finds⁹⁷.

The need for a museum in Alba Iulia became even more urgent after 1867 when the building of railway tracks irretrievably destroyed a large part of the territory of *colonia Aurelia Apulensis* (especially the northern part of the Maros-Portus area)⁹⁸. The scholarly activity of Béla Cserni (1842-1916) and the foundation of the Historical and Natural Historical Association of Alba County was not merely the first step towards the foundation of a local museum but also towards institutionalising and secularising heritage studies and research, hitherto dominated by the clergy and the Transylvanian aristocracy⁹⁹. After almost two years of preparation, the first public museum of Alba Iulia was founded in 1888 by Béla Cserni and his team in a small building with just a few rooms.

We must remember that the Batthyaneum was installed in Church property. This necessarily involved delicate negotiations with the local Catholic hierarchy. The Association's aim of moving the archaeological collection of the Batthyaneum to the new museum must have been formulated already in 1892. A letter written by the provost Ferenc Barta and Simon Kovács dated 16th January 1893 suggests, that the conflict between the Association and the Church persisted and even worsened¹⁰⁰. Cserni played an important role in negotiating

97. Csaba Szabó, Imola Boda, Calin Timoc, Victor Bunoiu, "Notes on a new Mithraic inscription from Dacia", in Radu Ardevan, (ed.), *Mensa Rotunda Epigraphica*, Cluj Napoca, 2016, 91-104; Csaba Szabó, "Sanctuaries in Roman Dacia. A catalogue of sacralised places in shared and secondary spaces", in *Jahrbuch der Römisch-Germanisches Museum*, 62, 2015 (2020), 255-340 at 318, cat. Nr. III.14.

98. Csaba Szabó, "Karl Gooss and the temple of Jupiter from Apulum", *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology*, 2/4, 2015, 136-144.

99. Szabó, *Béla Cserni...*, *op. cit.*, 154-164.

100. Szabó, *Béla Cserni...*, *op. cit.*, 160-163.

between the two institutions¹⁰¹. His humble nature and personal connections helped the two institutions to collaborate to ensure the protection of the archaeological heritage of the city. Béla Cserni was among the few persons – if not the first – who was allowed personally on 11th September 1901 to examine, and even borrow, objects from the Batthyaneum for a short period. This was the first step towards drawing up a contract between the museum and the Batthyaneum in 1902, which stated that a large part of the archaeological collection (but not all) should be held in the custody of the museum, but not belong to it¹⁰². The decision was duly confirmed by Gusztáv Majláth, bishop of Transylvania (ordinance no. 3316) and the contract signed by four persons on 31st March 1903. All this was largely due to Cserni's negotiating talents.

Meanwhile a new, larger museum building had been opened in 1900, thus creating a more prestigious and safer place for the artifacts. The contract enabled the museum to acquire some of the most valuable items ever discovered in Apulum: the beautifully carved altar of Bonus Puer¹⁰³, altars¹⁰⁴, reliefs¹⁰⁵ as well as the well-known Mithraic monuments we have been following¹⁰⁶. The text of the contract clearly states that the 76 artifacts¹⁰⁷ constitute the *inalienable property of the Battyáni-Institute*¹⁰⁸ and that the museum took the artifacts on permanent loan for the purpose of exhibition¹⁰⁹. The contract fails to mention the number of artifacts that remained in the Batthyaneum and are still owned by it¹¹⁰.

101. Wosinsky and Pósta played also an important role in the negotiation between the Association and the Batthyaneum: Zoltán, Vincze, *A kolozsvári régészeti iskola a Pósta Béla korszakban (1899-1919)*, Kolozsvár 2014, 331, footnote nr. 1447.

102. The exact date of the deposition is not sure. A letter of Cserni sent to Gusztáv Majláth, bishop of Transylvania in 16th June, 1902 mentions that the artifacts are now in the new museum: Szabó, *Béla Cserni...*, *op. cit.*, 165.

103. IDR III/5, 301 = CIMRM 1996.

104. IDR III/5, 30.

105. IDR III/5, 33.

106. IDR III/5, 274, CIMRM 1972, 1973.

107. The identification of each of these objects would be very hard today, the description of them is very short and not always clear. No representations of photographs were made about their original deposition and placement in the Batthyaneum.

108. M.b.B.1887-1895, fond IX. nr. 36238, 26. See: Szabó, Szabó, *Béla Cserni...*, *op. cit.*, 163.

109. Cserni's first catalogue and inventory of the 76 items was completed on 20th April 1903.

110. A complete list of these has never been published, though some of the finest pieces are mentioned briefly in Moga, *Considerations...*, *op. cit.*

Conclusion

The Batthyaneum is one of the most iconic cultural institutes of Transylvania. It represents a temple of science, built expressly to preserve the finest examples of the cultural heritage of Transylvania and beyond. It is the most valuable legacy of Ignatius Batthyány, the scholar-bishop of Transylvania, whose library still contains the finest collection of medieval manuscripts, incunabula and rare books of the 16-18th century in Romania. However, in its first century (1794-1903), the Batthyaneum was not only a rich library but also the home of many figural monuments discovered in the ruins of Apulum, including those relating to the cult of Mithras. The Mithraic finds of the Batthyaneum and the Brukenthal collection served as one of the iconographic resources of the pioneers of Mithraic studies and Roman religious studies in Europe, attracting several scholars to this prestigious institution. Although a large part of the archaeological material was moved to the new museum, the Batthyaneum remained an important research facility even today, despite its problematic history during the 20th century. And thanks to the new museum, the Mithraic heritage of Apulum has attracted the attention of international scholars continually even after 1903, as the correspondence between Franz Cumont and Béla Cserni, and Maarten J. Vermaseren's visit in Alba Iulia in the 1950's, show¹¹¹.

Abbreviations

CIMRM – *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae* I-II., ed. M. J. Vermaseren, The Hague, Martinus Nihoff, 1956-1960.

IDR – *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae* I-III/1-5. Paris-Bucuresti, 1977 – 2001.

111. Csaba, Szabó, “The material evidence of the Roman cult of Mithras in Dacia. CIMRM Supplementum of the province”, *Acta Antiqua*, 58, nr. 1-2, 2018, 325-326.