Rural religion, religious places and local identities in *Hispania*: the sanctuary at Can Modolell (Cabrera de Mar, Barcelona)

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Rural cults are an aspect of the religion and culture of Roman *Hispania* that it is especially difficult to analyze given the paucity of epigraphic and archaeological evidence. This is quite a recent area of research; in addition, we are dealing with often modest religious practices that are difficult to identify in the archaeological record. Particularly problematic is the lack of information regarding cult places, despite the contribution made by some pioneering studies; yet the main problem has been the dominance of a paradigm that defines rural religion as a marginal space for social life, one that followed its own evolutionary rhythm influenced by a resistance to change. According to this paradigm, rural cults seem to comprise an unsystematic accumulation of traditional ritual practices whose preferred sphere of action would have been private. This paradigm has conditioned the study of rural religion in *Hispania* until quite recently, but archaeological work in the last decades has led to the identification and analysis of a number of cult sites in the peninsula, and this has coincided with a revolution in the way religion is studied, as an area particularly sensitive to cultural change. Various studies have underlined the rôle of beliefs and rituals in the construction of mechanisms of integration, social communication, and in the definition of individual and communal identities. In this context, cult centers are a

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