

# 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;<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> This paradigm has conditioned the study of rural religion in *Hispania* until quite recently,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> In this context, cult centers are a

- 1 M. Tarradell, "Cuevas sagradas o cuevas santuario: un aspecto poco valorado de la religión ibérica," *Mem. Inst. Arq. Prehist. Univ. Barcelona* 1973, 25-40; id., "Santuaries ibèrics i ibero-romans a llocs alts," *ibid.* 1979, 35-45.
- 2 New perspectives: J. North, "Religion and rusticity," in T. J. Cornell and K. Lomas (edd.), *Urban society in Roman Italy* (London 1995) 135-50; W. van Andringa, "Religion and the integration of cities in the empire in the second century AD: the creation of a common religious language," in J. Rüpke (ed.), *A companion to Roman religion* (Oxford 2006) 83-95; T. D. Stek, *Cult places and cultural change in Republican Italy* (Amsterdam 2009); cf. P. van Dommelen, "Cultural imaginings, Punic tradition, and local identity in Roman Republican Sardinia," in S. J. Keay and N. Terrenato (edd.), *Italy and the West. Comparative issues in Romanization* (London 2001) especially 72-74 and 78-79.
- 3 V. Revilla, "Santuarios, élites y comunidades cívicas: consideraciones sobre la religión rural en el conventus Tarraconensis," in F. Marco, F. Pina and J. Remesal (edd.), *Religión y propaganda política en el mundo romano* (Barcelona 2002) 189-226.
- 4 F. Marco, "Integración, interpretatio y resistencia religiosa en el Occidente del Imperio," in J. Alvar and J. M. Blázquez (edd.), *La romanización en Occidente* (Madrid 1996) 858-69; F. Marco, "Romanización y aculturación religiosa: los santuarios rurales," in S. Reboresca and P. López Barja (edd.), *A cidade e o mundo: romanización e cambio social* (Xinzo de Limia 1996) 83-100; F. Díaz de Velasco, "Religión provincial romana en la Península Ibérica: reflexiones teóricas y metodológicas," in J. M. Blázquez and R. Ramos (edd.), *Religión y magia en la Antigüedad*, 1997 (Valencia 1999) 89-102.
- 5 S. Alfayé and F. Marco, "Religion, language and identity in Hispania: Celtiberian and Lusitanian rock inscriptions," in R. Häussler (ed.), *Romanisation et épigraphie. Études interdisciplinaires sur l'acculturation et l'identité dans l'Empire romain* (Montagnac 2008) 281-305; iid., "Las formas de memoria en Celtiberia y el ámbito vacceo," in T. Tortosa (ed.), *Diálogo de identidades. Bajo el prisma de las manifestaciones religiosas en el ámbito mediterráneo (s.III a.C.–I d.C.)* (Madrid 2014) 169-82; F. Marco and S. Alfayé, "El santuario de Peñalba de Villastar (Teruel) y la romanización religiosa en la Hispania indoeuropea," *Saturnia Tellus: definizioni dello spazio consacrato in ambiente etrusco, italico, fenicio-punico, iberico e celtico* (Rome 2008) 507-25; F. Marco, "Ritual y