CHAPTER FOUR
EXTENSION AND CONSOLIDATION (A.D. 96–193)

The distinctive feature of the Antonine period is the extension of an official ruler cult to the provinces of the Danube region.¹ In Dacia a concilium and a provincial cult, both based on Sarmizegetusa, are attested by the latter half of the second century, each probably instituted soon after Trajan annexed the territory at the turn of the first century, so well before the tripartite division of the province under Hadrian. Similarly a provincial cult of Upper Pannonia with its headquarters possibly located at Savaria appears to date from Trajan’s division of Pannonia into two provinces ca. A.D. 106. Of particular interest in the lower province, where a provincial cult looks likewise to have been founded by Trajan, is that this now appears to have centred on the provincial capital of Aquincum rather than the settlement at Gorsium as previously supposed. No priestly record survives in Upper Moesia, where Remesiana and recently Viminacium have been proposed as the seat of the provincial council, but in Lower Moesia the priesthood of the province is recorded by the mid A.D. 160’s and Oescus has been suggested as the likeliest site of the provincial centre. At what point a provincial cult was instituted in either province is unknown, though it seems likely that responsibility should be assigned to Trajan in light of his foundations is other Danubian provinces. To these can possibly be added Dalmatia, where despite the lack of chronological support the form of worship looks strikingly similar to that of other provincial cults in the region. In all these territories a Trajanic origin looks corroborated by the content of the cult, which focusses uncompromisingly on the living emperor to the exclusion of the divi, with whom Hadrian was principally concerned.

Some notable developments are nevertheless attested by the epigraphic record of provinces in other parts of the Latin west. First and foremost the provincial cult of Tres Galliae underwent a significant modification with the inclusion of deified personages and the

¹ For an earlier provisional outline see Fishwick (1978) 1233–5.
associated construction of a provincial temple; both innovations look attributable to Hadrian, who must have visited Lugdunum in A.D. 121 shortly before he repaired the “Temple of Augustus” at Tarraco. In Hispania citerior the provincial cult itself remained unchanged but there are already signs that enthusiasm for holding provincial office was beginning to wane. In contrast Africa Proconsularis took an unprece-dented step late under Trajan in replacing flamen with sacerdos as the title of the provincial priest—not that this seems to have affected the content of the provincial worship, which to all appearances remained unaltered. A similar shift occurred subsequently in the title of the provincial priest of Sardinia, presumably in response to the lead given by Proconsularis. Beyond these apparently formal changes in Proconsularis and Sardinia, however, there is little to register elsewhere, though it is of interest that a text in Baetica confirms that the provincial flaminica tended the cult of deified females. The overall picture that emerges is of a broadly similar pattern of worship now operative in the older provinces,2 which uniformly paid cult to the deified dead along with the living emperor—and Roma, it should be added, in the Three Gauls and Hither Spain. The newly instituted provincial cults of the Danube region, on the other hand, stand firmly apart from this homogeneous evolution in focusing solely on the reigning Augustus, his worship served by a sacerdos at an altar.

The general background to provincial ruler worship under the Antonines has already been sketched in some detail.3 The hallmark of the era is a movement away from the dominatio of Domitian to a more moderate, conservative outlook, articulated under Trajan by the Augustan themes of his coinage or the sentiments expressed by Pliny in the Panegyricus (2,3; cf. 52, 2 et passim). In contrast to the “republicanism” paraded by the literary sources, Trajan nevertheless deified both his predecessor and in some sense his own father, while in A.D. 112 Marciana became diva cognominata prior to her full-scale consecration early in the next reign. The trend continued under Hadrian, who shifted the focus of the ruler cult to the worship of the divi and divae and transformed the cult of Roma. Emphasis on his “divine parents” and the systematic deification of Matidia, Marciana, Plotina and Sabina strengthened the uncertain credentials of a ruler in search of a respectable

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2 Vol. I, 1, 93.