

Publicum Portorium Illyrici and Mithraism in the Danube Region

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Abstract

The study of Mithraism has been of a great interest to many academics working in a relatively wide range of fields, from archaeobotany to zooarchaeology for quite a long time. The aim of this work was, on the one hand, to supplement, revise and categorize the information that in the long run indicated a link between the *Publicum Portorium Illyrici* and the spread of Mithraism in the Danube region. On the other hand, this effort was used to rework the model of this customs district as it was perceived since the first professional works dealing with this topic. The achievement of these goals was carried out based on the processing of epigraphic inscriptions categorized into datasets, which enabled not only to work with analytical tools such as GIS, but also with tools enabling the visualization of social networks.

The methodology of the work is based on several overlapping steps, each of which focuses on a different aspect of the study. The first step was the extraction of data from online epigraphic databases based on keywords and the subsequent addition of this dataset with already existing written sources, which ensured a higher degree of completion. The result was the creation of several datasets, which not only allowed faster work with the material, but also were mainly used to obtain important analytical outputs. In parallel with this step, a study of historical sources and literature was carried out, which is reflected in the chapter dealing with general historiographical and demographic knowledge of the research area called the Danube region, consisting of 9 provinces: Raetia, Norikum, Superior Pannonia, Inferior Pannonia, Dalmatia, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, Dacia and Regio X Venetia et Histria. Along with these findings, Mithraic artefacts were also processed with an emphasis on the identification of important communities that were determined based on the existence of a Mithraic shrine, or a greater concentration of main cult scenes – the so-called tauroctony. As part of the dissemination of historiographic knowledge,

information on the functioning of the *portorium* collection in the Danube region was also processed.

In order to obtain a relevant connection between the members of the *Publicum Portorium Illyrici* and the cult of the god Mithra, the main emphasis in the work was on individuals and individual localities. This effort is mainly reflected in the important reconstruction of the personnel structure of this customs district thanks to the visualization of its social network.

The reconstruction of the social network, together with other findings and additional GIS analyzes, led to the confirmation of the duality (or tripartism) of this district, at least since the accession of T. Iulia Saturninus dated to 146 AD. The division of the Illyrian Customs District mainly explains the differences between the religious preferences of members in the western region (Noricum, Pannonia Superior and Inferior and at least the northern part of Dalmatia) and the eastern region (Moesia Superior, western part of Moesia Inferior and Dacia). However, at the same time, it helps to determine to which area the Mithraic community of members of *Publicum Portorium Illyrici* could expand. Above all, it emphasizes and explains the important role that the ancient Poetovio played in the spreading of mithraism.