
WHO'S WHO IN THE SYSTEM OF THE ISIAIC CULTS ON THE BLACK SEA COAST: PROSOPOGRAPHIC AND ANTHROPONYMIC ANALYSIS OF THE ADHERENTS FROM THE DANUBE DELTA TO CALLATIS

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ABSTRACT:

The conquests of the Roman state and the subsequent peace of Augustus ultimately changed the historical and cultural map of the Mediterranean. Included in the provincial system, the population of three continents establishes contacts to a much greater degree, which facilitates the exchange of ideas, points of view and values. It is not necessary to dwell on the processes that followed, but it was the penetration of Egyptian cults into the European landscape and their diffusion to the margins of the Pax Romana one of the most significant markers of their scale. The Balkans, in particular the western coast of the Black Sea and southern Thrace, are distinguished by an area favoring their penetration. It is hardly possible to point to a single factor for the situation in the region. By analyzing the data, we partly understand the processes favoring their appearance. Obviously, they are much more complex and require an in-depth study of data with certain characteristics, interpretation methods, different techniques and a different vision. This gave me a reason for a new approach that focuses specifically on people. After all, they are both the initiators and the "end product" that caused cultural and religious diversity along the western Black Sea coast.

According to the conducted study, several traits distinguishes well in the epigraphic habit of the population. First of all, it should be noted that the Tomis inscriptions mostly date from the Imperial era. This may be an indicator of the flow of inhabitants from the Orient towards the supposed main center of the province for the period. It seems that this flow is of great help in maintaining religious diversity and at the same time favors the diffusion of deities foreign to Thrace. The arriving population determines the diversity of the settlement, so that the participation of a heterogeneous cultural element in Egyptian religious practices seems justified. Indeed, by looking at the inscriptions we cannot tell what exactly a person's place in the established order or their ethnic origin is. Nevertheless, from the character of the dedications and the nomenclature extracted from the inscriptions, a general idea of belonging to the Hellenistic East is created. Of course, some of them are descendants of individual settlers or entire groups. The evidence appears in anthroponymy, a sign of the stability of onomastic traditions in the family. Secondly, we must rethink the role of people from unfree circles and former slaves in the system of religious practices. Onomastics are not able to fully trace their path through the religious system, but in fact the nature of naming and some anthroponyms suggest the participation of people of the mentioned echelon. Glimpses of their manifestation in the epigraphic fund can be traced in Tomis.

ABSTRAIT: QUI EST QUI DANS LE SYSTÈME DES CULTES ISIAQUES SUR LA CÔTE DE LA MER NOIRE: ANALYSE PROSOPOGRAPHIQUE ET ANTHROPONYMIQUE DES ADEPTES DU DELTA DU DANUBE À CALLATIS

Les conquêtes de l'État romain et la paix ultérieure d'Auguste ont finalement changé la carte historique et culturelle de la Méditerranée. Incluse dans le système provincial, la population des trois continents noue des contacts à un degré beaucoup plus élevé, ce qui facilite l'échange d'idées, de point de vue et de valeurs. Il n'est pas nécessaire de s'étendre sur les processus qui suivirent, mais ce fut la pénétration des cultes égyptiens dans le paysage européen et leur diffusion aux marges de la Pax Romana l'un des marqueurs les plus marquants de leur ampleur. Les Balkans, en particulier la côte occidentale de la mer Noire et la Thrace méridionale, se distinguent par une zone favorisant leur pénétration. Il n'est guère possible d'indiquer un seul facteur pour la situation dans la région. En analysant les données, nous comprenons en partie les processus favorisant leur apparition. De toute évidence, ils sont beaucoup plus complexes et nécessitent une étude approfondie des données avec certaines caractéristiques, des méthodes d'interprétation, des techniques différentes et une vision différente. Cela m'a donné une raison pour une nouvelle approche qui se concentre spécifiquement sur les gens. Après tout, ils sont à la fois les initiateurs et le « produit final » qui ont causé la diversité culturelle et religieuse le long de la côte occidentale de la mer Noire.

Selon la revue, plusieurs lignées se distinguent dans l'habitude épigraphique de la population. Tout d'abord, il convient de noter que les inscriptions de *Tomis* datent pour la plupart de l'époque impériale. Cela peut être un

indicateur du flux d'habitants de l'Orient vers le centre principal supposé de la province pour la période. Il est d'une grande aide pour le maintien de la diversité religieuse et favorise en même temps la diffusion de divinités étrangères à la Thrace. Le flux constant de population détermine la diversité d'un peuplement, de sorte que la participation d'un élément culturel hétérogène aux pratiques cultuelles égyptiennes semble justifiée. En effet, en regardant les inscriptions on ne peut dire quelle est exactement la place d'une personne dans l'ordre établi ou son origine ethnique. Néanmoins, à partir du caractère des dédicaces et de la nomenclature extraite des inscriptions, une idée générale d'appartenance à l'Orient hellénistique se crée. Bien sûr, certains d'entre eux sont des descendants de colons individuels ou de groupes entiers. L'évidence apparaît dans l'anthroponymie, signe de la stabilité des traditions onomastiques dans la famille. Deuxièmement, il faut repenser le rôle des personnes issues des couches non libres et des anciens esclaves dans le système des pratiques sectaires. Les onomastiques ne sont pas en mesure de tracer pleinement leur cheminement dans le système religieux, mais en fait la manière de nommer et certains anthroponymes suggèrent la participation de personnes de l'échelon mentionné. Des aperçus de leur manifestation dans le fonds épigraphique sont perceptibles chez *Tomis*.

MOTS-CLÉS: prosopographie, anthroponymie, divinités égyptiennes, *Moesia Inferior*, côte occidentale de la mer Noire

KEYWORDS: prosopography, anthroponymy, Egyptian deities, *Moesia Inferior*, Western Black Sea coast

Introduction

The conquests of the Roman state and the subsequent peace of Augustus changed forever the historical and cultural map of the Mediterranean. After this moment, the population of three continents, as they are included within the borders of the Roman provincial system, started to make contacts to a much higher degree, which facilitates the exchange of ideas, views and values. It is not necessary to go into the processes that followed at length, but one of the most striking markers of the scale was the penetration of the Egyptian deities into the European landscape and their spread to the fringes of the *Pax Romana*¹. On the other hand, the adoption of deities such as Isis, Serapis, Harpocrates, and Anubis by the population during the Roman era followed its natural course, judging by the finds from Southeastern Europe. According to archaeological and textual materials from Greece², the Aegean Islands³, Sicily and Southern Italy⁴, from the 3rd – 2nd century BC onwards, they were already adopted by some of the local inhabitants. Among the mentioned lands the Western Black Sea coast and Southern Thrace in this chronological section stand out as a zone favoring their spread. It is hardly possible to point out a single factor for the situation in the region. The available information makes it possible to partly understand the processes favoring their appearance. By all accounts, these processes are much more complex and require careful study of the data with certain characteristics, methods of interpretation, different techniques and a different viewpoint. This is a reason for a new approach that focuses specifically on people. After all they are the ones who give the push that has caused the cultural and religious diversity along the Western Black Sea coast. In order to answer the questions “who?”, “when”, “where” and “how” – essential for the clarification of the ethnic and social character of their adherents⁵, it is necessary to conduct a study of the epigraphic material. Fortunately, The Black Sea coast is famous as a region with a well-developed epigraphic culture. From the moment of its establishment, the population in the

¹ Rüpke 2007, 3; Andringa 2007, 84-88; Leppin 2007, 97; Rizakis 2007, 319; Gasparro 2018, 78-79.

² The cult of Zeus-Amon was established somewhere at the beginning of the 6th century BC in Thebes and Laconia. It is not entirely clear to what extent the Egyptian aspect of worship was adopted, as it is represented with the horns of a ram – apparently under Egyptian influence. On that matter – see: Farnell 2010, 87,95. The penetration of Egyptian deities into mainland Greece is a rather delicate subject. Data on the primary infiltration are scarce, and in some places it is difficult to prove whether it is a matter of actual worship of the deity, of “Egyptianization” of a local cultic practice, i.e. adopting elements of the Nile Valley religious system, or for “Hellenized” cults. It is important to pay attention to these concepts because they will clarify the very character of the worshiped deity: Andringa 2007, 88.

³ The islands of the Aegean basin, and especially Delos and Rhodes, proved to be the most active distributor of Egyptian religious influence in the Eastern Mediterranean: Bricault 2007, 248.

⁴ The Greek colonies in the area acted as a medium for the adoption of various customs and practices as early as the 8th – 7th century BC. According to the studies, however, the cultural exchange with the Orient took place only in the 3rd – 2nd century BC: Rüpke 2007, 3. Moreover, by the time Sarapis and Isis entered Rome (around 1st century BC) they were highly Hellenized: Beard et al. 1998, 160-161. More on the Greco-Roman cult of Sarapis and Isis – see: Harrison 2012, 213-236.

⁵ Maurin 1982, 824-826.

πόλεις erected inscriptions that mark an important event for a particular person or in general for the community. Therefore, they are an indispensable source for tracing the life and culture of these places.

Two are the indicators that contribute to the adoption of such a model that separates the cities along the shore of *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia* from the rest in the interior: the cultural-historical condition in these settlements and the political situation in recent periods. For the first one, it is logical to accept the notion that the population, being generally Hellenic and Hellenophonic, was the main dominant cultural element. The second indicator is the independence of the ἀποικία. Since they were initially a state entity with their own governing institutions and structures, they played an important role in the political conjuncture during the Classic and Hellenistic age⁶. This independence was recognized by the Roman authorities, who considered that the preservation of governing bodies after their incorporation into the province of *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia* was vital for the influence of Rome in the Eastern Balkans.⁷ Therefore, “zoning” – at first, an outdated method for examining the monuments –, is appropriate and justified in this case. In fact, its benefits cannot be denied. Its application is particularly useful for drawing up a more accurate picture in areas with a specific ethnic and cultural profile, as already shown by a number of studies, the purpose of which is to determine the merit of a specific social *stratum* for the appearance of Egyptian deities in different parts of Europe, Asia and Africa.⁸

A functional approach

Accepting inscriptions as a form of “self-expression” – a physical result of the cultural-historical changes⁹, which does not bypass the interior of the Thracian lands, we are presented with the perfect opportunity to examine an important aspect of the system of cult practices. The challenges in applying this method, however, are several. First of all, the naming typology varies according to the cultural parameters of a given area, or to put it simply – the naming depends on the cultural affiliation of a certain region. For example, a purely Roman nomenclature in a Greek inscription that is the result of intergenerational transmission on the territory of the Black Sea cities hardly can be found, which of course is expected¹⁰. Secondly, there are limitations regarding the state of the epigraphic fund. The available database is not always able to provide the necessary information to clarify the ethnic and social profile of the person. Sometimes the fragmentary texts prevent the restoration of the complete nomenclature and leave us with a number of options that give the bearer of a given name an inaccurate or even wrong interpretation. By overcoming these obstacles, there is a better chance to look more deeply into the lives of the inhabitants of the ἀποικία and the surrounding areas, who turn in their devotions to exotic deities, such as Isis, Sarapis, Harpocrates and Anubis. They may be from the “social lowlands” of the Hellenic πόλις or from the “prestige stratum” of its society.

Yet again, things with the Western Black Sea coast are not so simple. The social structure and ethnic diversity depend on the political situation in the region. For example, in the 4th – 3rd centuries BC the new autocratic Hellenistic rulers intervened directly in their affairs. Perfect example for this is Lysimachus. It is not clear how he exercised his control over them after his military intervention in 313/312 BC¹¹, but it wouldn't be wrong to think that he placed garrisons commanded by a certain figure with specific military and administrative functions. In this way a new element to the privileged “πόλις”-echelon, is added with potential to influence even the cultic practices.

⁶ Avram 2003, 284-297; Krastev 2013, 11-48

⁷ Jones 1940, 43; Gerov 1988, 13-16; 34-35. In fact, this is nothing new. Such a role was assigned to all Hellenistic poleis with their elites in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Roman age. Most details are summarized by Rizakis 2007, 317-330; Schuler 2015, 250-273.

⁸ Such, for example, is the Roman limes. An observation on its “European” section was made by S. A. Takács, according to which “The epigraphical data from the areas along the Rhine and the Danube show that dedicators who named Isis and Sarapis in their inscriptions were to a large degree administrative employees and military officials. These men were delegated from the center of the empire to carry out Roman rule and exercise control in the periphery of Roman-held territory and functioned as carriers of Romanization. They were the active, living link between the center and the periphery” (Takács 1995, 6). The case in Continental Greece is more special. In Boeotia, worship was done by the elites and most of the wealthy and influential people of the area. Cult practices, however, are highly Hellenized and it is difficult to clarify to what extent they can be defined as “Egyptian” (Schachter 2007, 364-391). A similar picture is presented by the material from Athens. Some of the prestigious cultural-religious positions in the cult of Sarapis (for example παιανιστᾶι (= ὑμνοδοί?) are taken by people from the upper *stratum* of society (Aleshire 1991, 38-39), while most of the worshipers of the deity are from different layers, some even are slaves (Veymiers 2018, 33). In spite of that, Isis was much more popular. The official status of the cult determined that its worshipers are mainly citizens of Athens (Pakkanen 1996, 54). More on that – see: Mora 1990a and 1990b.

⁹ MacMullen 1982, 239, 244-249.

¹⁰ Stoev 2017b, 162-165.

¹¹ Diod. 19.73.1-10; Oldfather 1954, 32-35; Delev 2004, 146.

As for the echelon itself, as in most places in the Hellenistic world, was represented by the administrative and religious elite. To the administration belong members of the council and the people (ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος; ἡ ἐκκλησία), magistrates (often mentioned as archonts (ἄρχοντες) gymnasiarchs (γυμνασιάρχαι), agoranomoi (ἀγορανόμοι), senior financial officials responsible for the treasury (ταμίεις), financial managers (μερισταί), managers (οἰκονόμοι), hegemon (ηγεμόνεις, responsible for the publication of the decrees), managers of the port or market (ἄρχοντες ἐν τῷ λιμένι, known in *Tomis*), and etc. It is appropriate to add judges to them (οἱ δικάστες), and the strategoi in the case of *Mesambria Pontica* (οἱ στρατηγοί)¹². The religious elite is represented by the leaders and members of the cultural and religious associations (σπεῖραι, θίασοι, στέμματα) and especially those from West Pontic (κοινὸν τῆς Ἑξαπόλεως probably until 193 AD, and after that κοινὸν τῆς Πενταπόλεως) and Thracian koinon (κοινὸν τῶν Θρακῶν) – caregivers of the Emperors cult: Pontarchs (ποντάρχαι), Thracarchs (τρακάρχαι = ἀρχιερεῖς τῶν Θρακῶν τῆς ἐπαρχείας = ἀρχιερεῖς τῷ κοινῷ τῆς ἐπαρχείας (?), Archpriests (ἀρχιερεῖς), Priests (ιερεῖς), Ephebarchs (ἐφήβαρχοι, responsible for the younglings (οἱ ἐφήβοι) and youths (οἱ νέοι)¹³. A proper place deserves the members of the uncommon for the Black Sea gerusia (γερουσία), which according to the studies at this day is a functioning organ in *Histria* and *Callatis*, and perhaps in *Mesambria Pontica*¹⁴. Due to the limited role of this institution in the administration of the cities during the Imperial Age, it should hardly be regarded as a significant governing body. However, undoubtedly, the established people in it enjoy special prestige. With the members of cultural and religious associations, they together are responsible and have leading roles in the Emperor's cult. In the same time participate in the organization of various sports competitions and games¹⁵. The members of the other commercial and production societies leave no behind in this matter. Unfortunately, there are no generalizing studies of their activities on the territory of modern day Bulgaria.

Actually, if one is to speak of elites as a factor in the adoption and spread of Egyptian deities, one must have in mind above all the situation in the later periods. It was radically different after the application of Roman legislative law, and especially in the appearance of the Roman citizens. New Philae arose in the cities, the purpose of which was to serve their interests, and this meant that the seemingly untouched social structure in the Greek πόλις underwent serious changes¹⁶. This question is worth studying thoroughly, since it is the pursued policy that dictates how this society will “stand” in the Hellenic city. For example, a person may be a member of the *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia humiliores*¹⁷, but as a Roman citizen (*civis Romanus*) he can take on various duties and hold a post in the provincial and municipal magistracies, *ergo* he belongs to the prestigious class of the provincial society. At the same time, the population in Greek cities and their χώρα are ordinary inhabitants (*cives*, πολῖται) and occupy an important place only in the municipal (i.e. πόλις) society, if they succeed to any of the leading positions of the native πόλις¹⁸. At the same time, however, the cities along the coastline are higher in the “urbanization hierarchy” than the Greek-type πόλις founded in the 2nd century in the interior of the province, such as *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, *Marcianopolis*, *Augusta Traiana* and *Hadrianopolis*¹⁹. On the other hand, the stratification shouldn't be taken so seriously. As Chr. Schuler points out “Wealth was the key requirement to wield influence, and there were social niches that offered particular opportunities”²⁰. This wealth is held by bankers, merchants, sailors, producers, some of whom are foreigners (ξένοι) belonging to the structure of another settlement and had ties with its population. Therefore, it is not necessary that the Western Pontic urban elites perform the role of a conductor, an active “cult agents of change”, facilitating the spread and perception of Egyptian deities by ordinary residents in the Hellenic ἀποικία²¹.

¹² Avram 2003, 298-299; Preshlenov 2003, 171; Damyanov 2007, 6; Sharankov 2011, 307; Buzoianu and Bărbulescu 2012, 139-140; Slavova 2013, 20-58; Schuler 2015, 250-264; Slavova 2016, 499-508.

¹³ Mirchev 1955, 229-231; Tacheva 2004, 181-197; Sharankov 2007, 518-519; Slavova 2013, 25-58; Slavova 2016, 496-508.

¹⁴ Ruscu 2014, 480.

¹⁵ For them – see: Oliver 1941; Oliver 1958, 472-496; Slavova 2002, 137-149; Slavova 2013, 1-70; Slavova 2016, 488-511.

¹⁶ Tacheva 2004, 48; Damyanov 2007, 4; Buzoianu and Bărbulescu 2012, 139; Schuler 2015, 255. According to earlier research, the influence of *cives Romani* in cities along the West Pontic coast is felt in the time of and after the *Flavii*: Gerov 1948/1949, 58-59. As the analysis of a statue base of Apollonius, priest for life of Emperor Claudius, shows (Sharankov 2011, 303-309, Nr. 1-3), It is more plausible to speak of a smooth and uneven Romanisation in these places already with the final inclusion of the region in its sphere of influence after the campaigns of Crassus in 29 – 28 BC.

¹⁷ For the terms *honestiores/humiliores* in the early Roman empire – see: Alföldy 1988, 106 et seq. For the lands south of the Danube, such consideration was made only for *Moesia Inferior* from Stoev 2017a, 159-206. Based on an honorary inscription from Pizos in 202 AD, B. Gerov suggests the presence of the same “general social groups” in *Thracia*: IGB III.2, 1690; Gerov 1980, 136-137; Gerov 1988, 187;

¹⁸ The social aspect of Roman history with overall terminology is well covered in Alföldy 1988. Special attention to the Thracian lands was paid by Gerov 1980; Gerov 1988.

¹⁹ Gerov 1980, 15; Gerov 1988, 15.

²⁰ Schuler 2015, 260.

²¹ Alvar 2018, 223-247; Veymiers 2018, 33; Rüpke 2018, 63-64, 72-73.

Inscriptions from the Black Sea coast: from the Danube Delta to Callatis

Before diving in the main problem, a curtain note deserves to be made. The thematic framework of the topic and the cultural-historical specifics of the eastern shores of *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia* allow the entire coast from the Danube Delta to Byzantium to be studied as a whole. However, looking closely at the region, the fact that in some places Romanization developed more intensively cannot be ignored. Here especially stands out *Histria*, *Tomis*, *Callatis* and their territories. The proximity to the Lower Danube Limes is the factor that made the Roman authorities pay more attention to them. Based on the mentioned cultural features, the focus of this work will fall precisely on these settlements, or in other words – on the section of the future *Scythia Minor* (except *Dionysopolis*). In fact, here it will be interesting to explore the essence of the Hellenic urban elite and its ratio to the other Romanized elements, expressed in Roman citizens and army men (active-duty military and veterans) and peregrines from the lower *stratum*.

1. Dedication to Sarapis according to a dream towards the end of 2nd – the beginning of 1st century BC²²:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Σεράπιδ[ι–] | |
| | ος Πολυδώ[ρου] | “To Sarapis [– –]os, son of Polydorus, from Sinope, |
| 3 | κατὰ ὄναρ Σινωπεύς. | (set up) according to a dream”. |

Similar problems appear when looking at the dedication of [– –]ος Πολυδώρου. The early chronology of his inscription hints at whether he is directly responsible for the penetration of Egyptian deities. But not so much the state of the inscription, as its very character prevents clarifying its place in society, or even less its belonging to a certain ethnic stratum. Only the patronymic from his nomenclature is preserved, which does not have any social and ethnic indicators. Its spread in any point in the Mediterranean and in the interior of Europe, Asia and Africa during the Roman age – an observation with the help of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*²³ – supports this very character. This feature hinders in every way the prosopographic and anthroponymic analysis. Therefore, the “key” does not always lie in the nomenclature, but in the information from the text itself. If he had not mentioned his hometown in his dedication to Serapis, he can easily be defined as a “native” inhabitant of the ἀποικία, or in general, of the Western Pontus region, so the adepts of Egyptian deities should be viewed more cautiously. As for the circumstances that prompted him to appear in this important city near the Danube Delta, not much can be said. Sinope is known to be a rich commercial center that offers a number of opportunities for development thanks to its key location. Its influence can easily be traced through the amphora stamps. The production of this city is judged by the finds in the registered necropolises from the 4th – 3rd century BC in Thracian and Greek settlements, such as *Histria*, *Callatis* and *Odessos*. Separately, it supports trade with other centers in Asia Minor, the Caucasus and the Levant²⁴. In this regard, a hypothesis can be built according to which [– –]ος Πολυδώρου is a wealthy Sinopean resident with some economic stability due to maritime trade. On the other hand, the region is famous for its craftsmen, and this suggests that the performer of the act is a specialist in processing some kind of product. He can be of both types. At this stage, there is not enough information to refine the details, but in any case we have a migrant or a person who temporarily found himself in the territory of *Tomis* with the potential to influence the cultural-religious practices.

2. Dedication to the Great God Sarapis, Isis and Anubis in the end of 2nd century – 1st century BC (Fig. 1)²⁵:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | [Ἀγαθῆι] τύχηι· Διονύσιος Ἡδύλου ἐκ τῶν
[ιδίων κ]ατεσκεύασεν διὰ τοῦ ἱε[ρέως τ]οῦ(?)
[– –]σιδ[ώ]ρου τοῦ καὶ Θεα[–]N[–] . [– –]I τῶι
[– – – –] καὶ Σαράπιδι καὶ Εἰσιδὶ καὶ
5 [Ἀνού]βιδι καὶ θεοῖς πᾶσιν. |
|---|---|

²² Pipidi 1964, 106 = SIRIS, 706 = Tacheva-Hitova 1982, 26-27, Nr. 15 = Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 11, Nr. 15 = ISM II, 152 = Takács 1995, 187 = RICIS II, 618/1003.

²³ Chaniotis 1989, 78.

²⁴ Lazarov 1978, 14-25; Stoyanov 2010, 410-415; Dobrev 2018, 309-321.

²⁵ Todorov 1928, 227, Nr. 560 = Pipidi 1964, 107, fig. 2 = SIRIS, 705 = ISM II, 154 = SEG 24,1064 = Tacheva-Hitova 1982, 24-26, Nr. 14 = Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 10-11, Nr. 14 = Takács 1995, 187-188 = RICIS II, 618/1002 = ISM VI.2, 154 = RICIS Suppl. III, 618/1002.

“Good Fortune! Dionysios, son of Hedylos, on his own expence dedicated (this monument) with the help of [– – Isi]doros, also known as Thea[–]n[–] . [– –], to Sarapis and Isis and Anubis and to the all other gods (living in the same sanctuary)”.

The onomastic discourse again is not clear in the famous inscription of Διονύσιος Ἡδύλου. Specifying the ethnicity of this person at this stage is impossible: his personal name was one of the most popular in Hellenistic, Hellenophonic and even Romanized circles in antiquity. In the eastern part of the Mediterranean – where it should be detected more often – there is no spread similar to Διονύσιος. However, on the Black Sea coast it is actively used by the population, judging by the number of registered examples in *Tomis*, *Dionysopolis*²⁶ and *Histria*²⁷. The only satisfactory conclusion is that this is a person belonging to the Greek-speaking layer of population. Much more interesting is his position in society and especially the relationship with the other person in the inscription. In clarifying this question, however, the same obstacle appears as with the previous monuments related to their condition, and because of this several assumptions have been expressed. According to the earlier interpretation of S. Takács Διονύσιος Ἡδύλου set aside part of his own funds for the construction of a temple of the aforementioned deities. The whole process is mediated by Ἰσίδωρος, priest of Zeus, and another man, from whose nomenclature only the first three letters are preserved: Θεα[.]²⁸. This is an interesting hypothesis that offers a logical explanation of the overall situation: a prominent person with economic opportunities demonstrates its euergetic choice by building a temple for the Egyptian deities. This practice is not unusual and fully fits into the cultural life of the Hellenistic πόλεις. The approach taken is probably influenced by some of the migrant circles of the Nile Delta, which, as has already become clear, are known to exist in this section of the Thracian lands²⁹. From Ἰσίδωρος we can have some idea about the extent of his connections with the mentioned circles. The theophoric name reflects the anthroponymic choice of his parents, who decided to introduce this type of naming into the family under the influence of religious tendencies towards Isis³⁰. On the other hand, the fact that he was a priest of Zeus and took part in such an act requires a closer look at the case. If the main members of the family had a role in the cult practices of Isis (and Sarapis?), then the realization of Ἰσίδωρος in the religious institutions of the πόλις means that this family was able to connect with the other layers of *Tomis*’s society. In fact, such a development is acceptable regarding the polytheistic system of the ancient πόλεις. Parallels are rediscovered in the infamous Ἀκορνίων Διονυσίου from *Dionysopolis*, priest to the Great God = Dionysus (?), Sarapis and the Great Gods³¹. As for the second person, the acceptable name is Θεαγένης, reconstructed as per the free space in the inscription and the anthroponymic database from north and south of *Haemus*³².

A radically different interpretation is reasonable if we consider the reading of L. Bricault. According to him, the inscription is not about the construction of a temple. Instead, it is a dedication with the mediation of a dream interpreter (ὄνειροκριτής) named Ἀρτεμίδωρος, also known as (ὁ καὶ) Θεα[.....]³³. Thus, it appears as second evidence of the practice of incubation



Fig. 1. Dedication to the Great God Sarapis towards the end of 2nd – the beginning of 1st century BC by Dionysios, son of Hedylos (after RICIS Suppl. III, 618/1002).

²⁶ Fraser, Matthews 2005, 151, Nr. 2, 3, 6.

²⁷ Coja 1979, 49, Nr. 61.

²⁸ Takács 1995, 187-188.

²⁹ Ruscu 2021, 22-23. The Egyptian element in the region is much more noticeable if we accept K. Stoev’s proposed theory of the well-known *Lai consistentes* from *vicus Secundini* in *regio Histria*. According to him, the term refers to *Laoi* – an Egyptian population that is forbidden to enter the Roman legions, but probably plays an important role as maritime units: Stoev 2017a, 195.

³⁰ Takács 1995, 188. The appearance of Ἰσίδωρος should not surprise us. Purely anthroponymically, we observe one of the most commonly used combinations. According to the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, the number of Ἰσίδωρος-names for all periods is over 650, which is impressive given the other theophoric names: Parker 2000, 74; Clarysse 2018, 199, 201-220.

³¹ IGB I², 13.

³² LGPN IV, 161, Nr. 15-20, 27-35.

³³ RICIS II, 618/1002.

in *Tomis*.³⁴ With this the identification marker indicating Διονύσιος Ἡδύλου as a wealthy person due to the investment capital for the construction of a temple is understated. Instead, we have an ordinary person who turns to the deities for advice and support in future affairs. The case with the priest of Zeus, however, looks differently. His personal name is again theophoric, but quite usual and almost “conventional” for the Black Sea region. In general, both Ἀρτεμίδωρος and Θεαγένης with their variations are among the most widespread anthroponyms in the Mediterranean. Therefore, the only certain conclusion is that he is a person who is known among the different communities with a certain name.

3. Honorary decree with the so-called Charmousyna feasts (τοῖς καλουμένοις Χαρμοσύνοις)³⁵:

	[-----]	
1	[...]λι[-----] [...]σδρο[-----] [π?]ρώτου [τῆς] Ἰσι- δος τοῖς [καλου]-	
5	μένοις χα[ρμο]- σύνοις ἀρε[τῆς] ἔνεκεν καὶ σω- φροσύνης· τὴν δὲ	
10	ἐπιμέλειαν τῆς ἀναγορεύσεως τοῦ στεφάνου ποι- εῖσθαι τοὺς προσ- [ε]δρεύοντας τῷ ἱ- ερῷ· τὸ δὲ ψήφισ-	“...from the first (?) of Isis (?) because of (his) virtues and temperance at the so-called feasts of Charmousyna. Those who preside over the temple have to take care for the proclamation of the wreath. The decree shall be engraved on a stele of marble and placed in the sanctuary of Sarapis”.
15	μα ἐνγραφῆνα[ι] εἰς τελαμῶνα λευκοῦ λίθου καὶ ἀνατεθῆναι εἰς τ[ὸ] ἱερὸν τοῦ Σαρά-	
20	πιδος.	

The current inscription contains expression (the so-called *Charmousyna feasts*, τοῖς καλουμένοις Χαρμοσύνοις) that underlies the dilemma of the official character of the cult of Isis. The focus of the present study, however, is on the people – who are not mentioned in the current inscription. Clearly, the person, whose name is not preserved, is a man of prestige. He has done something for the community in *Tomis*, which in turn honors him with a crown for his “virtues and moderation”. The performance of this act by the Sarapists and the placing of the decree in the sanctuary of their worshiped deity speaks at least of its relations with certain cultural and religious layers of the population. It is not impossible that the current inscription marks the beginning of a religious holiday, which is still some indicator of the growing influence of people devoted to this type of cult practices. The problem of growing influence comes from the inability to determine exactly when it happens. Earlier studies date back the monument to the second half of the 1st century BC – first half of the 1st century AD. Recent studies, however, attempt to date it earlier – toward the beginning of the 1st century BC³⁶.

³⁴ However, there is some skepticism in the scientific circles about the adoption of the proposed hypothesis based on the proposed reading – see: Renberg 2017, 718.

³⁵ Todorov 1928, 228, Nr. 564 = Pipidi 1964, 107, fig. 1 = SIRIS, 704 = Tacheva Hitova 1982, 22-24, Nr. 13 = Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 8-9, Nr. 13 = ISM II, 7 = Takács 1995, 188 = RICIS II, 618/1001.

³⁶ A brief review of the bibliography is provided by D. Deac, who offers a detailed overview of the various opinions on the dating – see: Deac 2013, 176-177.

4. Honorary inscription dedicated to Agrippina around the middle of the 1st century AD (Fig. 2)³⁷:

Τύχ[η] ἀγαθῇ
 [ὕπερ] θεᾶς Ἀγριπ[πεινας] ----
 [. . .]ενος ΕΚΤΗΠΙΑ[-----]
 [. . .]τικῆς ἐπιμε[λουμένου] ----
 5 [Ἀντ(?)]ωνίου Ἀρχ[--- ιερέως Σα]-
 [ράπι]δος καὶ Ἰσιδ[ος] -----
 [--- δ]ιακειμεν[-----]
 [--- πα]τρίδα φιλ[-----]
 [-----] θεοῖς [-----]
 10 [--- ε] <κ>(?) τῶν [ιδίων κατέσθησεν (?)].

Good fortune! For the divine Agrippina [---]
 through the care of Antonius Arch[---], priest of
 Sarapis and Isis [---], toward the homeland [---],
 to the gods [---] he erected (this monument)
 from his own wealth.

The wife of the emperor Claudius and mother of Nero is worshiped as a goddess (θεά Ἀγριππεινά) which gives an interesting nuance to the cultic practices on the territory of Tomis. Unfortunately, nothing can be seen from the nomenclature of the person responsible for the placement of the monument in the local sanctuary (?), except for the suffix -ωνίου, which leaves us with numerous choices for reconstruction, as it may refer to a number of Roman and Greek names: Ἀντωνίου³⁸, Ἀπολλωνίου, Ποσειδωνίου³⁹, Σητωνίου and even the “Egyptian” Ἀμμωνίου. The genitive case categorizes it as a patronymic, but it is not impossible that it participates in the overall construction of the sentence. This assumption is based on the next three letters APX, which can serve as the basis of a patronymic or even cognomen. Given that *gens Antonia* was responsible for the Romanization of part of the population in the eastern provinces⁴⁰, gradually one gets the impression that this person’s origins are from the mentioned geographic latitudes. And yet we are referring to the early chronological horizons of the history of the province, and the foreign origin of the priest of Isis and Sarapis seems more likely. A stimulating indicator here turns out to be the base Ἀρχ-, which is not so actively presented in anthroponymic database from the Thracian lands. Perhaps future epigraphic discoveries will shed more light on the context of the inscription, helping to clarify its meaning and the role it implies.



Fig. 2. Dedication to Sarapis and Isis for the welfare of divine Agrippina from the archpriest (?) Antonius (?) in the middle of 1st century AD (after ISM II, 445, Pl. 37(3)).

5. Dedication of [. . .]ανθήμιος (?) from 2nd century AD⁴¹:

1 Ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ
 Κυρίῳ θεῷ μεγάλῳ Σεράπιδι κα[ὶ]
 μ[υρ]ιονίμῳ Εἰσιδι καὶ Ἀνούβιδι καὶ [τοῖς]
 συννάοις ἐπηκόοις [θεοῖς]
 5 [..]ανθήμιος εὐχαρ[ιστήριον]
 [ἀ]νέθηκε[εν].

“Good Fortune! To the Lord, the Great God Sarapis, and to the One-thousand-named Isis and Anubis and to the all-hearing deities [As] antheios (?) dedicated thank-offering”.

It was found in *Tomis* in 1985, in the area of the Maritimes Command building and the old Genoese lighthouse (Fig. 3). According to research, the name befits to be reconstructed as Ἀσάνθεος. The basis for this hypothesis is a catalogue of *collegia* from nearby *Tomis*, where the same name is recorded. However, the inscription is not

³⁷ ISM II, 37.

³⁸ According to Todorov 1928, 227, Nr. 561; SIRIS, 707; Tacheva-Hitova 1982, 27-28, Nr. 16 = Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 12, Nr. 16; ISM II, 37; Takács 1995, 189 = RICIS II, 618/1004.

³⁹ Are considered more likely by A. Avram and D. Hălmagi despite the use of Ἀντωνίου in their reconstructed text – see: Avram and Hălmagi 2019, 65-66.

⁴⁰ MacMullen 2000, 12.

⁴¹ SEG 56,855 = AE 2006, 1217 = Bărbulescu and Căteia 2006, 209-217, Nr. 5, Fig. 5 = RICIS Suppl. II, 618/1008.

a reliable source, since only the first three letters of the suggested Ἀσά[νθεος]⁴² are preserved. This is why it is not entirely impossible the anthroponym to be restored as Ἀσά[νδρος] – an unpopular name for the territory on both sides of *Haemus* and the Lower Danube, but all too common in the Southern Balkans⁴³. If one has to cite examples of its circulation in the region, it is rediscovered on the Northern shores of the Black Sea and it is about Assander, father of the Bosporan king Aspurg⁴⁴. The sparse “distribution” of Ἀσάνθεος perhaps indicates that it is better to reconsider its case.

The main problem comes from the lack of a basis for comparison in the Thracian and Dacian territory. Quite expectedly *-ανθεος* is found in the anthroponymic database from mainland Greece, but the absence of whatsoever examples of Ἀσά- from the reviewed texts is unordinary. Instead, names like Εὐάνθεος, which is typical for Peloponnese, stand out⁴⁵. However, the form

is a patronymic in *genetivus* in the nomenclature of the people of the mentioned inscriptions. It is clear that for the name is used ἄνθος (from ἄνθος, εος, τό – flower, blossom; *figurative* glitter, bloom; ornament) – a compound, which is more common for Arcadia in the Roman era, which means that in *nominativus* this name is Εὐάνθος⁴⁶.

Perhaps the base Ἀσ(σ)ά- is the key indicator. It is inherent in Asia Minor and, in view of the data from the migration waves from the mentioned region, it is logical to consider it as a “foreign”⁴⁷. However, the results of the examined epigraphic material are not entirely encouraging. In fact, the situation is similar with the sources from Syria and the Hellenistic East as a whole. In this case there is no choice but to admit that its about a *hapax*. A whole new view is revealed if this anthroponym is not subject to “fragmentation” for the search of parallels. For example, it is possible that emphasis is placed here on the etymological meaning of the Greek adjective ἄσαντος 2 (*lit.* inexorable, hard), which serves as the basis of Ἀσάνθεος. This is an interesting revelation. It offers social connotations, since as a rule these types of names, aimed at highlighting and emphasizing the physical qualities of a person, are distinctive for slaves and persons originating in non-free circles⁴⁸. Here it is even appropriate to accept Ἀσανθήιος from the text itself as correct. At first glance, it seems a corrupt form of the Greek word or just a confused name from the stonemason when typing the text. But it is right to ask whether he himself is not so named by people whose knowledge of the Greek language is not so good. The Latin equivalent of the anthroponym is *Firmus*, *Firminus*, *Firmianus* – one of the most common *cognomina* in the provinces, along with other names such as *Longinus*, *Rufus*, *Crescens*, *Valens*, *Celer*, *Clemens*.⁴⁹ This detail supports the belief that this is an *imitatio* of romanness. Also the endings with -ήιος/-είος are detected elsewhere in the province. The interesting thing in this case is that the examples are from the Black Sea coast: Αὐρ(ήλιος) Φαρσουλέιος Μητροδώρου⁵⁰, Σουλπίκιος Φαρσουλήιος⁵¹, Φαρσουλήιος Ἐρμῆς⁵². It also has a Roman equivalent (-*eius*) and it is detected in names such as *Abeius*, *Acceius*, *Appieus*, etc⁵³. – again uncharacteristic of *Moesia Inferior*. The mention of Ἀσανθήιος in the text with *nomen nudum* seems to suggest a *servus* or *libertus*, the naming of which is the work of a “Hellenizing” family. However, the onomastic approach here is unusual. Given that a “more patterned” model is used in the countryside, this probably is an indicator of foreign origin. In view of the evidence attached, such a judgment does not seem far-fetched. After all, *Tomis* is the largest port and center for importing slaves on the Western Black Sea coast⁵⁴.



Fig. 3. Dedication to Sarapis, One-thousand-named Isis, Anubis, and to the all-hearing deities from Asantheios (?) from Tomis, 2nd century AD (after Bărbulescu and Câteia 2006, 217, Fig. 5)

⁴² ISM II, 33; Bărbulescu and Câteia 2006, 212.

⁴³ Tataki 1988, 336-339, 344.

⁴⁴ Popova 2010, 244.

⁴⁵ IG IV². 1, 216, 221, 224, 667, 649, 654, 656, 658.

⁴⁶ Davies 2000, 28.

⁴⁷ Zgusta 1964, 104; Cursach 2018, 146; Sasseville 2018, 303.

⁴⁸ Bruun 2013, 21-22.

⁴⁹ Stoev 2017a, 81. For “cognomina relating to the human body and mind” – see: Kajanto 1982, 62-69. Regarding the system of slave names – see: Bruun 2013, 19-42.

⁵⁰ IGB I², 47.

⁵¹ IGB I², 255 = IGB V, 5075.

⁵² IGB I², 87. The Grecised *nomen gentile* of *Pompeius* has a similar spelling.

⁵³ Salomies 2016, 624.

⁵⁴ Tacheva-Hitova 1972, 23.

His inscription also presents a very interesting aspect of addressing the worshipped deities. If Ἀσανθήιος (?) is really from the lowest *stratum* of society, his dedication should be at the initiative of the masters, because, undoubtedly, slaves and dependants, especially in Isiac family, given their social situation, would have been compelled to appropriate a worship not as a gesture of their own “agency”, but as a normal behaviour⁵⁵. Therefore, the thank-offering to the Lord, the Great God Sarapis, the ten-thousand-named Isis, Anubis and “all-hearing gods”, residing in the same sanctuary was made at the will of his patrons. On the other hand, we should not rely entirely on logical inferences. The proposed interpretation cannot be accepted unconditionally, knowing that the text is fragmented. It is quite possible that the visible part of the nomenclature of this person is its patronymic with the typical for Thessaly ending in -ήιος for *genetivus*⁵⁶. Assuming that this is the case, nothing precludes [– (?)] Ἀσανθήιος from being a full member of one of the cultural and religious associations, including the community of Alexandrians (οἶκος τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων) – a conclusion made when the inscription was published by M. Bărbulescu and A. Câteia⁵⁷.

6. Honorary inscription of Hadrianus to Zeus Helios Sarapis from the community of Alexandrian merchants (οἶκος τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων), dated in March 27, 160 AD⁵⁸:

[Διὶ Ἥλιῳ μεγάλῳ Σαράπιδι]
 [καὶ τοῖς συνναοῖς καὶ]
 Αὐτοκράτορι Τίτῳ Αἰλίῳ Ἀδριανῷ
 Ἀντωνεῖνῳ Σεβαστῷ Εὐσεβίῳ
 5 καὶ Μάρκῳ Αὐρηλίῳ Οὐέρῳ Καίσα-
 ρι, Καρπίων Ἀνουβίου
 τῷ οἴκῳ τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέ-
 ων τὸν βωμὸν ἐκ τῶν ἰδί-
 ων ἀνέθηκεν ἔτους κγ´
 10 Φαρμουθιά ἐπιέρων
 [Κ]ορνούτου τοῦ καὶ Σαραπίωνος
 [Πολύ]μνου τοῦ καὶ Λον[γείνου]
 [-----] τοῦ Ἀρ[-----]
 [-----].

“To Zeus Helios Sarapis and the other gods (shearing temple with them) and Emperor Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus, Pious Augustus, and Caesar Marcus Aurelius Verus Karpion, son of Anubion, set up this altar on behalf of the association of the Alexandrians on his own expense in the 23rd year on the first day of the month Pharmouthi, during the priesthood of Karnoutos, Sarapion, [– –]mnos, and Longinos, [– –] to Ar[– –].”

The appearance of Alexandrians in the so-called North at this time is very much like a “trading diaspora” – a remote but inseparable community whose purpose was to coordinate and assist members in the common enterprise of maritime trade. These communities are mostly registered in the Eastern Mediterranean, in inscriptions usually mentioned with the formula “ethnic group-*qui* location-*negotiantur*”⁵⁹. This is why finding them in this place should not be of any surprise. The area has a convenient for mooring gulfs that facilitates the disposal of goods and this feature is a well-recognized aspect of the settlement’s history, leading to the suggestion that an *emporium* existed on the site prior to its transformation into a πόλις. From its establishment this early settlement started to support connections with others in its vicinity to the north and south. Its location against the flow of the Danube in the East-West direction is an additional stimulus for its development. Its current facilitates the access to the other sections to the west along the river. It is these circumstances that attract people from other city-states along the West Pontic region and the Northern Black Sea coast and this commercial potential stood out mostly during the Roman era⁶⁰.

Since the formula in the inscription from *Tomis* does not specify the commercial aspect of their work, but simply mentions the presence of a group of people from *Alexandria*, it is possible that the practiced professions of the

⁵⁵ Alvar 2018, 244.

⁵⁶ Davies 2000, 17, 20. However, such names are present on the territory of Asia Minor, where anthroponyms such as Πρευος in *genetivus* are written as Πρευας: Brixhe 1965, 617.

⁵⁷ Bărbulescu and Câteia 2006, 212.

⁵⁸ Todorov 1928, 222, Nr. 563 = SIRIS, 708 = Tacheva-Hitova 1982, 28-29, Nr. 17 = Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 12-13, Nr. 17 = ISM II, 153 = Takács 1995, 189 = RICIS II, 618/1005 = ISM VI.2, 153.

⁵⁹ Rice 2016, 104-105.

⁶⁰ Matei 1995, 183-188.

Egyptian community are in a much wider spectrum⁶¹. And this conclusion is logical considering the movement of a population from the Nile Delta to this Lower Danube section⁶². It is interesting, however, how the altar with the honorary inscription “goes hand in hand” with onomastic data: the name of the responsible for its making is Καρπίων Ἀνουβίου. The patronymic derived by the name of the Egyptian god Anubis fits relatively well into the overall analysis. This, of course, does not mean that he is from Egypt, because the inscription itself is relatively late – during the rule of the Antonines⁶³. During this period, anthroponymic traditions have already progressed, and it is not entirely impossible that he is local⁶⁴ or a successor of settlers who express their connection to the Egyptian landscape by imparting a certain anthroponym.

His personal name has interesting indicators. At first sight, Καρπίων is a simple Greek name. Carefully reviewing the inscriptions to the north and south of the Danube, it becomes clear that it is absent from the onomastic fund of the population. Quite unexpectedly, its spread is pretty much limited to the Greek world. The concentration of names with the suffix Καρπ- and -καρπ in the Aegean islands and Cyprus is noteworthy⁶⁵. The latter is implied by the fact that at the northeastern end of the island lies Καρπάσεια – an important hub for the Mediterranean trade and transport. Therefore, it becomes a great example of how a “local” name from a specific region, which is located in the center of a busy trade route, spreads through maritime contacts in different parts of the Mediterranean, making its way among different ethnic and social layers. It is these curious details about its discovery tip the scales in favor of the theory of its alien origin. However, nothing significant can be said about the belonging of Καρπίων Ἀνουβίου to a specific social stratum. He can be an ordinary inhabitant, as well a person from the circles of the slaves or freedman. Nevertheless, he managed to become visible in the local society, investing part of his own funds for honorary inscription of Antoninus Pius addressing Sarapis and all the other deities in the same sanctuary.

The information in the inscription itself does not conclude with the mentioned deed. In the bottom lines are listed the names of people during whose lifetime the monument was made. Unfortunately, the reconstruction of their nomenclature presents a real challenge due to the violations of the text. Therefore, in the process of cataloging of this initiation in the corpora and monographs of couple of scientist, different points of view are presented:

According to Y. Todorov, it was made during the time or priests with *agnomen*: Κορνούτος ὁ καὶ Σαραπίωνος and Πόλυμνος ὁ καὶ Λονγείνος (*sic*)⁶⁶. It is a relatively interesting reading that has been adopted among some more recent studies, such as that of R. K. Sherk for the eponymous officials of Greek cities⁶⁷;

More cautious and at the same time brave in his interpretation turns out to be L. Vidman. He accepts the nomenclature of the first person, but after him in the lower part of the text he sees the names of two more: [. . .]υ[. . .]μνος ὁ καὶ Λονγείνος (*sic*) and [.] ὁ καὶ Ἀρ[. . .]υ⁶⁸;

M. Tacheva-Hitova agrees with the reading of L. Vidman, and meanwhile suggests among the listed the presence of a fourth person⁶⁹;

To some extent, the views and opinions of these researchers have an influence in later scientific developments. For example, S. Takács believes that there are three people with *nomen nudum* and one with a personal name and patronymic: Κορνούτος, Σαραπίωνος, Πόλυμνος and Λονγείνος Ἀρ[. . .]υ⁷⁰;

L. Bricault proposes a compromise solution in which the first two are with *agnomen*: Κορνούτος ὁ καὶ Σαραπίωνος, [. . .]μνος ὁ καὶ Λονγείνος, while the third one has a personal name and patronymic: [— —] Ἀρ[. . .]υ⁷¹;

Last on the subject speaks Ș. Cristea, according to whom it is quite possible the names of only two people are inscribed, one of them bearing an Isiac theophoric name, Σαραπίωνος⁷².

From the presented options, it is clear that there is a whole palette of hypotheses and diverse opinions, according to which it is possible to make a prosopographic and anthroponymic analysis. However, the answer to the “problem” is only one. So, how can one proceed in a case like this? In fact, considered separately, the names are able to

⁶¹ Partly, this suggestion overlaps with the assumption made by M. Tacheva-Hitova that this is not a professional *collegia*, but a unification of an ethno-religious principle – see: Tacheva-Hitova 1982, 29; Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 13.

⁶² Ruscu 2021, 22-23.

⁶³ Tacheva-Hitova 1972, 23, Nr. 15.

⁶⁴ Avram and Hálmagi 2019, 65.

⁶⁵ Bechtel 1917, 234; Scarpanti 2014, 38, 100, 104.

⁶⁶ Todorov 1928, 222, Nr. 563.

⁶⁷ Sherk 1992, 251-252, Nr. 187.

⁶⁸ SIRIS, 708.

⁶⁹ Tacheva-Hitova 1982, 28-29, Nr. 17; Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 12-13, Nr. 17.

⁷⁰ Takács 1995, 189.

⁷¹ RICIS II, 618/1005.

⁷² Recent analyses of this inscription highlight its reflection of civic, ethnic, and imperial identities via syncretic devotion — see: Cristea 2024, 135-136.

present more curious details about the development and personality of the listed people. For example, a careful examination of the nomenclature of the first one (?) – Κορνούτος ὁ καὶ Σαραπίωνος, the combination of a Roman + theophoric name is rather curious, whether or not referring to the same person. M Tacheva-Hitova accepts the second as undeniable evidence of its origin from *Alexandria*⁷³. The main focus here, however, falls on Κορνούτος. It is one of the rarest names not only for *Moesia Inferior*, but for the Empire in general. Its sporadic manifestation in the epigraphic fund of the provinces is a really impressive phenomenon, so the appearance of *Curnutus* in the mentioned section is a real mystery. Hardly its bearer is “seduced” by the etymological meaning of “horned”. On the other hand, this is an interesting and particularly tempting theory, since in this way it corresponds to Σαραπίωνος – a name derived from a deity known iconographically with its depiction and representation from the ancient authors from the 4th – 3rd century BC as a bull, and horns become its main attribute⁷⁴. Therefore, we have a truly dedicated member of the religious-cultural community with roots or direct origins in Egyptian lands. However, the anthroponymic choice itself is too strange. Given that the Nile Delta for the period was heavily Hellenized, and in general Greek dominated the eastern half of the Empire, it is logical to ask the question why he did not choose the Greek equivalent (derived from words such as κέρας, κεραστίς, κερασφόρος)? It seems that this onomastic situation should be looked in a different way. Recent studies in the field of prosopography and anthroponymic traditions point to *Carnutus* as *cognomen*, which is specific to *ordo senatorius*. It was actively present in the nomenclature of *Sulpicii Camerini* in the Early Republican era, and in the Imperial age it was registered in the *nomina romana* of two women of the same caste⁷⁵. This information set the direction to look for a representative of *honestiores* within *Moesia Inferior*. The only person with such *cognomen* in the province was *Quintus Fuficius Cornutus*, provincial governor in 156 – 157⁷⁶, but it is not impossible that his term refers to the period 148 – 151⁷⁷. Considering the data from all studies, a more plausible theory can be created, in which the priest Κορνούτος is a former slave of the same governor or to belonged to a member of his family. The reason to think this way is the time range. The appearance of such a rare *cognomen* within the mentioned chronological and territorial frameworks, only a few years after the mandate of *Quintus Fuficius Cornutus*, is too obvious to be accidental. An eloquent confirmation of the hypothesis is found not just anywhere, but again in *Tomis*. It is a bilingual tombstone, the work of a freedwoman (her name is not readable) of *Cornutus*⁷⁸. The monument dates back to the 2nd century AD, but it is hardly an exaggeration to say that representatives of the family or even its freedmen settled in the city and the region and developed agricultural, production and/or commercial activities. The nomenclature of a *legatus Augusti pro praetore* opens a number of doors, but in this case the priesthood for Κορνούτος is a classic way of integration into society because of the limited possibilities for the advance of the former slaves. Perhaps true to this achievement he found his place in the provincial landscape, infiltrating one of the main structures of *Tomis*’s society.

Probably with a different *cursus* is his colleague (or colleagues in plural depending on the point of view) [. . .] υμνος ὁ καὶ (?) Λονγείνος, from whose nomenclature no such amount of information can be extracted. The last letters from the first name seems to belong to a Greek name of the type Σκύμνος, Μήθυμνος, Πόλυμνος. Due to its condition it is impossible to be reconstructed completely. More attention attracts the second name (of his?). It is one of the most common and conventional cognomen in the Empire. Its appearance in the Greek-speaking section of the province of *Moesia Inferior* is fully justified with regard to the Romanized layers in the vicinity of *Tomis* and the city itself⁷⁹. It would hardly be a mistake to assume that he is human, who is well known among the inhabitants of the πόλις, decides to prove himself through one of the main institutions – that of the priesthood.

It remains to address the last riddle at the bottom of the inscription – the letters AP[. . .] (?). The possible recreations of the name are too many, and in general it is difficult to accept that they refer to a “person”. It is possible that this is about some other designation (for example, a position in the local structures). Otherwise, it can be restored as Ἀρίσταρχος, as actually rediscovered in another inscription from *Tomis*, which will be discussed later.

So, what is the proper conclusion for this inscription? According to the available information, the preparation of the monument is at the time of the priesthood of at least two people. It cannot yet be ascertained whether the dedication itself happened at the end of the tenure of one man and the beginning of the other. The text allows the development of such a scenario. What is impressive in the inscription, however, is the active presence of a

⁷³ Tacheva-Hitova 1972, 23, Nr. 39.

⁷⁴ Clarysse, Paganini 2009, 69-70; Atanasova 2019, 420-421.

⁷⁵ Nuorluoto 2021, 139.

⁷⁶ Stein 1940, 71-72.

⁷⁷ Vasileva 2018, 416-418, Tab. 1.

⁷⁸ Bărbulescu, Buzoianu 2009, 393-394, Fig. 2 a-b.

⁷⁹ They are expressed mostly in the presence of veterans and their heirs – see: Feryanchich 2002, 173-174; Boyanov 2008, 167-174; Ferjančić 2015, 223-228.

Roman name. On the other hand, given its date, it would have been more surprising if there was not one. Due to the possession of different ethnic and social indicators of the examined anthroponyms so far it can be concluded that the community in the Hellenic πόλις is quite cohesive, and this circumstance is facilitated by the conducting of cult practices to the Egyptian deities.

7. Honorary inscription from the 2nd – 3rd century with an address to Sarapis by ἱεροναῦται of Isis⁸⁰:

	[-----]	
1	[-----] φιλ[ον-----]	
	[-- Μενε(?)κ)ράτου[ς--]	
	[πατέρα π]αστοφόρω[ν σὺν]	
	γυναῖκα δὲ α[ὐτοῦ ἱ]-	
5	εροναῦται ἀν[δράσι(?)]	
	ἐκ τῶν ιδίων [ἐτίμησαν]	
	[π]ροστατοῦντος [τοῦ κοινοῦ]	
	[Ἀρισ]τάρχου Ἰ[-----]	
	[-----]	

“[– – –] beloved (?) [– – –] to Menekrates (?) [– – –] of the pastophoroi, and (his?) wife A[– – –?]. The hieronautai have dedicated (this) from their own expens [– – –] in the time of the leadership of [– – –] Aris]tarchos, [son of I[– – –(?)].”

Unfortunately, the nomenclature of the honored man and woman relies only on the last six letters of the name of the head of the family: -κράτους, which is not enough to draw up a comprehensive profile of his personality. However, the text emphasizes its leading role or even that of the couple in the cult practices. It is not entirely clear whether he is part of the mentioned ἱεροναῦται, but it is quite possible in view of the act carried out on their own initiative. The inscription reports the name of another *collegium* – that of παστοφόροι. Recently, another reading was made by A. Avram, according to whom the leading role was taken by a woman called “mother of the pastophoroi” similar to the πατήρ and μήτηρ δένδροφόρων, and the inscription itself was erected by the ἱεροναῦται of Isis⁸¹. The peculiarity of this case is its “maritime” aspect⁸². Trough it we get closer to the idea of the importance of these deities for seafarers and probably fishermen. The head of the association is precisely the previously mentioned Ἀρίσταρχος, during whose time the inscription was erected. In onomastic terms, his name is one of the most popular in the Greek-speaking world⁸³, therefore, like other typical Greek names, it is impossible to elucidate its ethnic origin. However, the inscription introduces us to a person who occupies an honorary title that brings him prestige.

After examining the situation in one of the main centers on the Western Black Sea coast, it is appropriate to pay attention to the other ἀποικία to the north and south of it. Even at the initial examination of the material, it is noticeable that it does not manage to provide us with such an abundant amount of information about the adherents, unlike *Tomis*. In this regard, *Histria* stands out. The city “holds on” to its cultural and religious traditions at the expense of Egyptian cults. A strong proof for this statement is a Greek inscription from the 3rd century BC, the text of which informs us of the city’s delegation to *Chalcedon*. Its purpose is to inquire of the oracle of Apollo whether the cult of Sarapis should be recognized as official. The lack of dedications to him or to other deities of the same pantheon in *Histria* leads scholars to think that the oracle gives a negative answer after all⁸⁴.

The circumstances in *Callatis* are also not clear. According to some studies, Alexandrians settled in the 3rd century BC in the ἀποικία, and together with this the cultic practices honoring the Egyptian deities began⁸⁵.

Conclusion

If the analyzes in the present paper are correct, it suggests several interconnected observations of broad interest.

First of all, it is noteworthy that the inscriptions from *Tomis* are mostly from the Imperial age. This may be some indicator of the inhabitant’s flow from the Orient to the supposed main center of the province for the period.

⁸⁰ Tacheva-Hitova 1982, 29-30, Nr. 18 = Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 13-14, Nr. 18 = SEG 24,1054 = ISM II, 98 = Takács 1995, 190-191 = RICIS II, 618/1007 = Mora 1990a, 467, Nr. 15+ = ISM VI.2, 98 = SEG 24,1054 = Avram, Hálmagi 2019, 63.

⁸¹ Avram 2018, 121-125.

⁸² Bricault 2007, 253.

⁸³ Ramón 2007, 33.

⁸⁴ Pipidi 1964, 108-109, Fig. 3 = SIRIS, 709a = Tacheva-Hitova 1982, 32-33, Nr. 22 = Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 15-16, Nr. 22 = SEG 45,885 = ISM I, 5 = Takács 1995, 190 = RICIS II, 618/1101 = Avram 2007, 82-83, Nr. 5.

⁸⁵ Bricault 2007, 248, *infra*, cit. 10.

Perhaps this flow facilitates the maintenance of religious diversity and at the same time encourages the spread of deities foreign to Thrace. Still, the location of the city, as mentioned at the beginning of the study, plays a key role in its economic prosperity. Its position definitely boosts commercial, economic and production capabilities of the settlement, which automatically gave it a proper place in Rome's political intentions. At the same time, the interests of the different ethnic and social groups in the Mediterranean are growing. The constant flow of population determines the diversity of a settlement, and the participation of a heterogeneous cultural element in Egyptian cult practices seems justified. Indeed, looking at the inscriptions it is hard to say what exactly is the place of a person in the established order or his ethnic origin. Nevertheless, from the character of the dedications and from the extracted nomenclature from the inscriptions, a general idea of belonging to the Hellenistic East is created. Of course, some of them are descendants of individual settlers or whole groups. The evidence appears in the anthroponymy, which is a sign of the stability of the onomastic traditions in the family. While earlier inscriptions give little information about this, the culmination of the Imperial age is clearly perceptible and it is expressed in the presence of Alexandrian settlers. It is hardly farfetched to conclude that their principal livelihood is maritime commerce. It provides a much-needed financial basis for staying at a remote point like *Tomis*. Also, in the earlier texts of the city stands out the private, the personal character, while a few centuries later we already observe the presence of organized religious and cultural life (ιεροναῦται, παστοφόροι), which is at least evidence of consolidation and cohesion of the people residing in the Hellenic ἀποικία. In this way relations are strengthened and the community and its future generation united.

The analysis of the city is perhaps applicable to the rest of the Black Sea πόλεις, whose inscriptions do not provide us with such information. It is impossible to say that they are not located on an important thoroughfare ensuring and facilitating trade and economic exchange: *Callatis* supports the connection of the Mediterranean and the exchange of goods with Dobrudzha, and *Histria* – with the other settlements in the future *Scythia Minor* and the Roman limes. But in general, there are other important factors here, and beyond that it is impossible to make bolder assumptions, given that information from other types of finds must be taken into account. Perhaps it is more appropriate to raise the question of their connection with the territory of Asia Minor. It is clear that the most of texts does not present this side so clearly, but it is logical to look at it from such an angle in view of the constant contacts between the cities in the region overall, which are clearly traceable archaeologically and with the written sources. The individual from *Sinope*, or the sacred delegation sent to *Chalcedon*, therefore appear as an aspect of these relationships, assisting or not (in the case of *Histria*) the spread of the beliefs towards the Egyptian deities on local soil. In any case, however, the geographical horizons of Asia Minor appear both as a mediator for the appearance of gods foreign to the territory of Thrace, and as main driver of these processes.

Secondly, it is necessary to rethink the role of people from non-free layers and former slaves in the system of cultic practices. Onomastics are not able to fully outline their path in the religious system, but in fact the way of naming and some anthroponyms suggest the participation of people from the mentioned echelon. Glimpses of their manifestation in the epigraphic fund are noticeable in *Tomis*.

The analyzes here should not be seen as definitive. Rather, they represent important notes – a starting point for a larger study to incorporate information from other finds.

Abbreviations

ACSS – Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia. Laiden: Brill.

AE – L'Année épigraphique. Revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité romaine, ed. Cagnat, R., Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, 1888.

AJP – The American Journal of Philology. Texas Technical University.

APvG – Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete

CCDJ – Cultură și civilizație la Dunărea de Jos

ED – Ephemeris Dacoromana

EPRO – Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire roman

IG IV². 1 – Inscriptiones Argolidis. 2nd Edition. Fasc. 1: Inscriptiones Epidauri, ed. von Gaertringen, F. H. De Gruyter: Berlin, 1929.

IGB I² – Inscriptiones graecae in Bulgaria repertae. Volumen: I: Inscriptiones orae Ponti Euxini (editio altera emendata), ed. Mihailov, G. In aedibus typographicis Academiae Litterarum Bulgaricae: Serdicae, 1970.

IGB III.2 – Inscriptiones graecae in Bulgariae repertae. Volumen: III.2: Inscriptiones inter Haemum et Rhodopem repertae. Fasciculus posterior: A territorio Philippopolitano usque ad oram Ponticam, ed. Mihailov, G. In aedibus typographicis Academiae Litterarum Bulgaricae: Serdicae, 1964.

IGB V – Inscriptiones graecae in Bulgariae repertae. Volumen V: Inscriptiones novae, addenda et corrigenda, ed. Mihailov, G. In aedibus typographicis Rivae: Sofia, 1997.

ISM I – Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris antiquae. Series altera: Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris graecae et latinae. Volumen I: Inscriptiones Histriae et vicinia, ed. Pipidi, M. Typis Academiae Scientiarum Dacoromanae: Bucurestiis, 1983.

ISM II – Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris antiquae. Series altera: Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris graecae et latinae. Volumen II: Tomis et territorium, ed. Stoian, I. Typis Academiae Scientiarum Dacoromaniae: Bucurestiis, 1987.

ISM VI – Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris antiquae. Series altera: Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris graecae et latinae: Volumen VI.2: Tomis et territorium, eds. Avram, A., Bărbulescu, M., Buzoianu, L. editura Academiei Române: București – Diffusion de Boccard: Paris, 2018.

LGNP IV – A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names, Volume IV: Macedonia, Thrace, Northern Regions of Black Sea, eds. Fraser, P., Matthews, E., Catling, W. V. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2005.

RÉG – Revue des Études Grecques

RICIS II – Recueil des Inscriptions concernant les cultes Isiaques (RICIS). Volume II – Corpus, ed. Bricault, L. Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 2005.

RICIS Suppl. II – Bricault, L., Veymiers, R. 2011. Recueil des Inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques. Supplément II. Bibliotheca Isiaca 2: 273-307.

RICIS Suppl. III – Bricault, L., Veymiers, R. 2014. Recueil des Inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques. Supplément III. Bibliotheca Isiaca 3: 139-195.

SEG – Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum, Volumina: 1–11, eds. Pleket, H. W., Stroud, R. S. Leiden-Amsterdam, 1923.

SIRIS – Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae, ed. Vidman, L. Walter de Gruyter & Co: Berlin.

StudClass – Studii Clasice. Societatea de Studii Clasice din România

ZAG – Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte

ZPE – Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

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