

TÜNDE VÁGÁSI

EPIGRAPHIC RECORDS OF THE FRIENDSHIP OF MITHRAS AND SOL IN PANNONIA

Summary: Regarding the Mithras cult, Pannonia had an exceptional status in the Roman Empire. This unique status was connected with the huge numbers of military forces stationed there. Numerous inscriptions and altars give evidence that Pannonia had an uncommon sensitivity for religions; this is why some local characteristics and relief-versions could be made, for example: *dadophores* with pelta shields, and unique dedicational forms which are mostly known in Pannonia, and perhaps spread from there to other parts of the Empire. In my paper, I want to show the connections between Mithras and Sol on their Pannonian representations.

Key words: Mithras, Pannonia, *Intercisa*, *Sol Socius*, *publicum portorium Illyrici*, Syrian Sun cult

The Mithras cult had a great impact on the population of Pannonia, which can also be seen from the fact that the cult's inscriptions and sanctuaries can be found in the greatest numbers in this province. It comes before other provinces not only in the number of memorabilia, but also in their religious-historical importance. These previously mentioned facts have led some historians of religion to believe that the Danube-region may have been the place where the cult was formed,¹ and the Pannonian Poetovio also played an important role in the spreading of the cult.² The *liberti* of the *publicum portorium Illyrici*, operating here, were active participants in the development of the cult's dogmatic system. From the 2nd century AD we can find organized groups

¹ The details of the cult's foundation are disputed, for the different opinions, see GORDON, R.: Mithraism and Roman Society: Social Factors in the Explanation of Religious Change in the Roman Empire. *Religion* 2 (1972) 92–121; MERKELBACH, R.: *Mithras*. Hain 1984; ULANSEY, D.: *Mithraism. The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*. Oxford University Press 1989; BECK, R.: The Mysteries of Mithras: A New Account of Their Genesis. *Journal of Roman Studies* 88 (1998) 115–128, here 115.

² TÓTH, I.: Mithras Pannonicus. Esszék – Essays. *Specimina Nova Dissertationum Universitatis Quinqueecclesiensis* 17 (2003) 13 and 19.

of believers in Aquincum, Carnuntum and Poetovio, and these three settlements had a central role in spreading the cult in Pannonia.

The most striking characteristic of the Mithraic material found in Pannonia after the 2nd century AD is a well-definable, uniquely dogmatic system, which can be specifically separated in time and space, and which gives a unique character to the Mithras cult here, and whose combined presence can be demonstrated in relation to Poetovio and its immediate surroundings.³ As its point of origin, Mithraeum I must be set in Poetovio. The greatest number of inscriptions and statues erected with the following dedicational forms were found in the Pannonian area. These dedications are: *Petrae genetrici* and *Naturae dei, Fonti perenni* and *Transitu dei*. It is also a noteworthy phenomenon that the four dedicational forms appear at the same place and at the same time only in Mithraeum I, in Poetovio. Thus, it can possibly be said that its creators must be the *liberti* of the *publicum portorium Illyrici*, because, diverging from the other parts of the Empire, in the mithraea in Pannonia and the Danube-area a strict order can be established regarding the placement of the four dedication types inside the sanctuaries.

The other Pannonian unique feature of the torchbearer shield is typical to the North-Eastern region of Pannonia, in the territory of Aquincum.⁴ These *dadophores* have been known – those who hold the amazon shields – thus far in Aquincum⁵ and in the Mithraic reliefs of the surrounding country influenced by the provincial center.⁶ Proportionally, these occurred in close circles, which suggests the local importance of the shields. These *peltae* or oval shields have never been just ornaments, and there is no reference to the oriental nature of the accompanying figures, but those memories inherently have religious content at all times. They could be considered as having the special “military” aspect of the Mithraism of North-Eastern Pannonia.⁷

The end of the Mithras-worship in Pannonia has no exact date. However, at the beginning of the 4th century AD, Mithraeum III in Carnuntum was renovated by the rulers of the Roman Empire.⁸ At the end of the century, with the spreading of Chris-

³ TÓTH, I.: Das lokale System der Mithraischen Personifikationen im Gebiet von Poetovio. *Archeološki Vestnik* 28 (1977) 385–392, here 385. For more details on the topic, see *ibid*.

⁴ NAGY, T.: A sárkeszi Mithraeum és az aquincumi Mithra- emlékek [The Mithraeum of Sárkeszi and the Mithra-monuments from Aquincum]. *Budapest régiségei* 15 (1950) 47–103, here 85–87.

⁵ KUZSINSZKY, B.: *Aquincum: Ausgrabungen und Funde: Führer mit einer topografischen und geschichtlichen Einleitung*. Budapest 1934, 93, photo 40; KUZSINSZKY, B.: Az Aquincumi Múzeum római kőemlékeinek ötödik sorozata [The Fifth Series of the Roman Inscription from the Museum of Aquincum]. *Budapest régiségei* 12 (1937) 61–152, here 76, photo 6; KUZSINSZKY, B.: Az aquincumi múzeum és kőemlékei [The Museum of Aquincum and Its Monuments]. *Budapest régiségei* 5 (1897) 95–164, here 121. Nr. 24; NAGY, T.: *Budapest Története I. Az őskortól az Árpád-kor végéig* [History of Budapest. From the Prehistoric Times to the End of the Árpád Period]. Budapest 1942, 434; KUZSINSZKY, B.: *Aquincum*. Budapest 1933, 166, photo 129.

⁶ In the cult reliefs from Budaörs (*CIMRM* 1791), Sárkeszi (*CIMRM* 1816) and Ulcisia (*CIMRM* 1804). The statues of Cautes and Cautopates from Aquincum (*CIMRM* 1794), Mithraeum III (*CIMRM* 1961) Mithraeum IV (*CIMRM* 1770), and from Intercisa (*CIMRM* 1823).

⁷ NAGY (n. 4) 87.

⁸ *CIL* III 4413.

tianity, signs of the cult's decline begin to appear and, at this time, some cultic activities can be supposed on the sole basis of the coin found in the sanctuaries.⁹

SOL AND MITHRAS: ONE OR TWO SEPARATE PERSONS

On many inscriptions Mithras is invoked as *Sol Invictus*, the invincible or unconquered Sun-god. Along with Cautes and Cautopates he represents the Sun at the three main aspects of the day: morning, afternoon and evening. But in spite of this, the Sun-god often appears beside Mithras on the reliefs with his four-horse chariot, riding through the heavens. Mithras and Sol were originally two separate personalities; Mithras was identified with *Sol Invictus* only a century later. This syncretism makes possible the interpretation of a dedication, which also appears on an inscription in Carnuntum, possibly where Mithras is named *genitor luminis*.¹⁰ The relation of Sol and Mithras is very complex. Based on the depictions portraying the story of Mithras, they were in a varying-ordered hierarchy, allied to each other, but at the same time it is very hard to define what this alliance meant exactly.

THE ALLIED SUN

A form of dedication of the Mithraic monuments found in the Danube region after the 3rd century AD, which can be set in a well-defined time interval, is the *Soli Socio*, that is, the inscriptions dedicated to the 'Sun, Ally'. We only have a few examples of this form of dedication. The joint dedications could have different reasons, which depended partly both on the cultural background of the deity and on the personal wishes of the person who raised the altar. Sol's cognomen in the dedication, which means 'companion, ally, united' probably refers to the pact of friendship which symbolizes the 'forming of the alliance' or the act of 'choosing as companion'.¹¹

The dedication is set on a well-defined time interval,¹² so we can claim that Sol here is different from the Sol who is depicted in the Mithras-Vita,¹³ where Sol appears

⁹ Cf. Mithraeum II in Aquincum (Mithraeum of *Marcus Antonius Victorinus*). The coins are of Constantinus II, Iulianus, Valentinianus I, Valens and Gratianus. In the Mithraeum of Fertőrákos the initial findings of 28 coins, which are recorded at a series from Gallienus to Probus (254–282) and from Licinius to Gratian (307–383) continuously trained. For the Mithraeum of Fertőrákos, see TÓTH, I.: A fertőrákosi Mithraeum [The Mithraeum of Fertőrákos]. *Soproni Szemle* 25.3 (1971) 22–35.

¹⁰ *CIL* III 4414.

¹¹ OTTOMÁNYI, K. – MESTER, E. – MRÁV, ZS.: *Antik gyökereink, Budaörs múltja a régészeti leletek fényében* [Ancient Roots. The History of Budaörs in the Mirror of the Archeological Artifacts]. Budaörs 2005, 87.

¹² The dating of the altars can be narrowed down to a small time interval based not only on the circumstances in which they were found, but also on the designation of the ruler or the consul's dating.

¹³ For the visual representation of the pact of Mithras and Sol in Pannonia, see VÁGÁSI, T.: A szövetséges Nap. Mithras és Sol kapcsolatának ábrázolása Pannoniában [The Allied Sun. The Visual Representation of the Pact of Mithras and Sol in Pannonia]. In TÓTH, O. (ed.): *A fény az európai kultúrában és tudományban. Hereditas Graeco-Latinitatis III*. Debrecen 2016, 98–123.

as Mithras' companion. To examine the possible points of origin of the *Sol Socius* dedication form, we must first take a look at the inscriptions found in Pannonia and the circumstances in which they were found.

SOL CULTS IN INTERCISA

From the time of the Markomannic-Sarmatian wars in 176 AD, a Syrian troupe stationed in Intercisa,¹⁴ the *cohors I (milliaria) Hemesenorum*, and, with them, people from Eastern populations settled here as well in great numbers.¹⁵ In Intercisa, the Eastern elements have a very powerful presence, even by Pannonian standards. Almost every religion was influenced by Semitic features.¹⁶ During the Severan period, the cohort was further reinforced from Syria. The Syrians became the leading social class preserving their traditions and religious ideas.

Inscriptions, archeological artifacts and local characteristics stand as proof of the existence of an Eastern religious community. Because of the numerous Orientals, a different religious progression transpired in the history of Intercisa, and because of this we get a more complex picture of Mithras' and Sol Invictus' cult. In Intercisa we can separate three different Sun cults: Deus Sol Elagabalus, Sol Invictus and the worship of Mithras.¹⁷ The inscriptions of this unit show tight connections to the birth place, which is moreover the city of origin, and also include the devotional acts to the imperial house.¹⁸

The worship of Elagabalus, who came from Syria, arrived with the Syrian *cohors* in Intercisa, where he is mentioned in an inscription as the Hemesian groups' *Deus Patrius*.¹⁹ His official worship was in the encampment's sanctuary;²⁰ these groups

¹⁴ LÖRINCZ, B.: *Die römischen Hilfstruppen in Pannonien während der Prinzipatszeit*. Wien 2001, 35 and 42. The cohort is first mentioned in the diploma fragment found in Adony, which was issued between 168–190 AD (*CIL* XVI 132).

¹⁵ The same way as in Ulcisia and Brigetio. For Ulcisia, see TETTAMANTI, S.: Mithras-kultusz emléke Szentendrén [Memories of the Mithras Cult in Szentendre]. *StudCom* 9 (1980) 179–186. In the case of Ulcisia the quantity of the Eastern population increases with a Syrian cohort being settled here. The *cohors I (milliaria) Aurelia Antoniana Surorum* was stationed here in 176 AD, the same time as the Intercisian cohort.

¹⁶ FITZ, J.: *Les Syriens a Intercisa* [Collection Latomus 122]. Bruxelles 1972, and FITZ, J.: Die Domus Heraclitiana in Intercisa. *Klio* 50 (1968) 159–169.

¹⁷ The peculiar question of the Intercisian Sun-cult was examined in more details by TÓTH, I. – VISY, ZS.: Das große Kultbild des Mithraeums und die Probleme des Mithraskultes in Intercisa. *Specimina Nova Dissertationum Universitatis Quinqueecclesiensis* 1 (1985) 37–56; FITZ, J.: Septimius Severus pannóniai látogatása Kr. u. 202-ben [The Visiting of Septimius Severus in 202 AD in Pannonia]. *ArchÉrt* 85 (1958) 156–173, here 170; FITZ, J.: A római kor Fejér megyében [The Roman Period in County Fejér]. In MAKKAY, J. – FITZ, J. (ed.): *A római kor Fejér megyében* [Fejér megye története az őskortól a honfoglalásig 4]. Székesfehérvár 1970, 169.

¹⁸ TENTEA, O.: *Ex Oriente ad Danubium. The Syrian Auxiliary Units on the Danube Frontier of the Roman Empire*. MEGA Publishing House 2012, 84.

¹⁹ *RIU* 5, 1139.

²⁰ Perhaps the following inscription testifies the erection of this sanctuary *RIU* 5, 1104.

received the rights to this in 202 at the latest,²¹ when the emperor Severus and his family visited Intercisa and the other Pannonian cities. Two memorabilias of the worship of Deus Sol Elagabalus can be found in Intercisa from the time before the rule of Elagabalus, proving that the worship of Elagabalus was known in Intercisa even before the emperor ascended the throne. One of them is erected for the *salus* of Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta,²² and the other for the salvation of Caracalla²³ in 214. The cult of Elagabalus was intertwined in many ways with Mithraism.²⁴ The worship of Mithras spread primarily among the civilian population in Intercisa from the second half of the 2nd century. Based on the archeological investigations, the Intercisian Mithras-sanctuary should be located in the area of the *canabae* of the fort, on the Öreghegy, where, during the excavations, Nyuli Márton's vineyard was located. The difficulties in the localization of the sanctuary are primarily due to the fact that the buildings of the *canabae* were made of loam. It can be observed that in the civil settlements of the auxiliary forts of Pannonia the exceptional stone houses do not occur before the time of the Severi. This is the case not only at Intercisa, where the Syrian enclave created a situation which must not be generalized, but also at those of Ulcisia.²⁵ As a conclusion, the localization is challenging for two reasons. On the one hand, the transportation of stone was very difficult, and, moreover, it was only used to build the camp. On the other hand, the well-known Mithras-artifacts were not found in the excavations but in vineyard territories.²⁶ From the *canabae* area two altars dedicated to *Deus Sol Invictus* and a votive inscription dedicated to *Deus Sol Invictus Mithras* were found, however, the meagre presence of the inscriptional material is notable.²⁷

Sol worship can usually be connected to Mithras, and this is proven by the numerous dedications to *Soli Invicto*, which were discovered in one of the mithraea. In the 3rd century the form of Sol, which was part of the Mithras-religion, started to

²¹ This is certified by the inscription mentioned above, which puts the erection of the sanctuary between 199–202 AD. For the visit of Septimius Severus to Pannonia in the year 202, see FITZ: Septimius (n. 17). During his visit he granted several rights and privileges to the cities of Pannonia and the soldiers. We know of several altars erected in the worship of Mithras during the emperor's visit: *CIL* III 4539, 4540, 15184/4; or the mithraeum in the area of the legions' camp in Aquincum, in the house of the *tribuni laticlavii*, was built in this period as well.

²² *RIU* 5, 1104.

²³ *RIU* 5, 1139. The inscription dates from the end of August, 214 AD. The cohort erected a monument to Elagabalus to commemorate the victory in Germania of the Emperor.

²⁴ TÓTH-VÍSY (n. 17). For the similarity of these two gods (Mithras and Deus Sol Elagabalus) see VÁGÁSI, T.: Deus Azizos, the Hemesian Lucifer in the Danubian Provinces. In BAJNOK, D. (ed.): *Alia Miscellanea Antiquitatum. Proceedings of the Second Croatian–Hungarian PhD Conference on Ancient History and Archaeology* [Hungarian Polis Studies 23]. Budapest–Debrecen 2017, 53–80, here 59–60.

²⁵ MÓCSY, A.: *Pannonia and Upper Moesia: History of the Middle Danube Provinces of the Roman Empire (The Provinces of the Roman Empire)*. 1974, 238.

²⁶ About the Intercisian Mithras artifacts and the circumstances in which they were found a detailed explanation is given in BARKÓCZI, L. – FÜLEP, F. – RADNÓTI-ALFÖLDI, M.: *Intercisa (Dunapentele-Sztd-linváros). Geschichte der Stadt in der Römerzeit*. Bd. 1. Budapest 1954.

²⁷ Altogether three inscriptions are known from Intercisa which are dedicated to Mithras: *RIU* 5, 1090, 1091 and 1092. We can add to this number the Mithraic dedications to Cautus and Cautopates: *RIU* 5, 1054 and 1055.

become independent, and the syncretism led to the two gods merging. Sol becomes more and more the ruler of all things, until the time when Elagabalus tries to officially identify this syncretized Sun-god with the Hemesaian Ba'al. The memory of Sol is preserved on many inscriptions in Intercisa. Intercisa in this aspect diverges from the imperial tendencies, because this dedicational form can be connected to Elagabalus, and not to Mithras,²⁸ which is the result of a unique and local development.

Three different Sun cults can thus be identified based on the inscriptions in Intercisa. It is not possible, however, to distinguish them clearly from one another. It seems they were not identical in their names, but regarding their essence, they were equalized with one another through their similar aspects. One of the problems arising when studying the Sun cult in the Roman Empire is the lack of agreement as to whether Sol Invictus Elagabalus should be identified with Mithras.²⁹ This has facilitated the identification of the Syrian trait, which can emerge in the Mithraeum of Dura.³⁰ Downey³¹ suggested that the prominence of the mounted Persian hunter in the Dura-Europos Mithraeum was due to the popularity of the armed rider gods in Syria, especially among the semi-nomadic population of the Syrian-Mesopotamian steppe. In Syria, mounted warrior gods are frequently worshipped in pairs, such as Azizos and Monimos, Arsu and Azidu, etc.³² Here, too, the impact of the Syrian population is observed, and this suggests that in Intercisa Elagabalus had his own temple,³³ but the vast majority of the inscriptions were found in the same place as the suspected mithraeum.³⁴ Beside Elagabalus, the cult of the accompanied deity of Elagabalus also appears, that is the worship of Azizos, which can be also attached to the Syrian traits.³⁵ The integration of the Syrian Sun cult of Elagabalus and the cult of Mithras started in the east and could be interpreted in Intercisa. This interpretation did not arrive with the Syrian troupe but during the reign of Elagabalus.

Possibly at the end of the short reign of Elagabalus, the cohorts which had Hemesian origins still retained their veneration of their native god, and abandoned the name of Elagabalus. The names of the dedicators³⁶ give the best evidence of this

²⁸ TÓTH–VISY (n. 17) 49.

²⁹ As stated by P. HABEL in his *Zur Geschichte des in Rom von den Kaisern Elagabalus und Aurelianus einige führten Sonnenkultes*. In *Commentationes in honorem Guilelmi Studemund*. Straßburg 1889, 95.

³⁰ For the interpretation, see DIRVEN, L.: A New Interpretation of the Mounted Hunters in the Mithraeum of Dura-Europos. In HEYN, M. K. – STEINSAPIR, A. I.: *Icon, Cult and Context: Sacred Spaces and Objects in the Classical World*. Los Angeles 2016, 17–33.

³¹ DOWNEY, S. B.: Syrian Images of the Tauroctone. In DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN, J. (ed.): *Études mithriaques: Actes du 2^e congrès international Téhéran, du 1^{er} au 8 septembre 1975* [Acta Iranica. 1^{ère} série, Actes de congrès 4]. Téhéran–Leiden 1978, 135–149, here 148.

³² SEYRIG, H.: Les dieux armés et les Arabes en Syria. *Syria* 47 (1970) 77–112.

³³ *RIU* 5, 1104.

³⁴ TÓTH–VISY (n. 17) 37–56.

³⁵ VÁGÁSI: Deus Azizos (n. 24) 53–80.

³⁶ *Aurelius Arbas* – *RIU* 5, 1098; *Aurelius Barsamsus* – *RIU* 5, 1099; etc. These people were probably of Hemesian origin. For this, see FITZ: Les Syriens (n. 16) and FEHÉR, B.: Syrian Names Given in Pannonia Inferior. *Acta Class. Univ. Debr.* 45 (2009) 95–111.

vation (Nr. 9). The dedicator has a characteristically Semitic name. The soldiers from Hemesa were always and everywhere propagandists for their national cult. One of the inscriptions mentioned *Deus Sol Paternos*,³⁷ which must have meant for him *Deus Sol Elagabalus*, the native god of the Cohors from Hemesa, which was stationed in Intercisa, but it is perhaps remarkable that the specific name Elagabalus is not appended to *Deus Sol Invictus* in either of the inscriptions. It seems obvious to conclude that in this city it was not necessary to specify the Sun god more in keeping with the previous.³⁸ Although Elagabalus was not specifically added, there can be no doubt about the identity of this *Sol Invictus Deus*. But at the same time it must be mentioned that the location of the altars and the votive inscriptions are the same as the Mithras-monuments' location, and there are people among the dedicators, one of whom erected altars to Mithras as well as to Sol, and who, according to the inscription, erected the Mithras-sanctuary on his own property.³⁹ Based on these inscriptions, it can be established that the altars dedicated to Sol were most probably standing in a mithraeum or mithraea.⁴⁰ In this way the numerous Sol dedications would compensate for the small number of inscriptions dedicated to Mithras himself. The syncretism of Elagabalus and the Sol-Invictus cult could have developed in three decades in Intercisa, where the influence of the Syrian population was very powerful. The result of this syncretism is the *Sol Socius*⁴¹ dedicational form.

AQUINCUM AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, THE SYRIAN IN PANNONIA INFERIOR

The Eastern population increased so much in Pannonia by the 3rd century that, in Brigetio, they had to establish a separate city section, and it can be concluded that the circumstances were the same in Aquincum. Because the Intercisian cohort was made up entirely of Hemesians, it had strong connections with all the surrounding places where Syrians were stationed. Some soldiers' sons from the circle of the *cohors I miliaria Hemesenorum* were enlisted in *legio II Adiutrix*.⁴² Based on an inscription found in 1949,⁴³ it is known that the Syrian groups from Ulcisia maintained connections with Intercisian Hemesians.⁴⁴ The Syrians in Ulcisia, however, had connections only with the Syrians of Aquincum. The *Sol Socius* worship could have arrived in Aquincum through this system of connections.

³⁷ *RIU* 5, 1099.

³⁸ HALSBERGHE, G. H.: *The Cult of Sol Invictus*. Leiden 1972, 52.

³⁹ *RIU* 5, 1091 and 1097; Both inscriptions were erected by Antonius Veranus, the person standing at the highest point of initiation of the local Mithraic community.

⁴⁰ In Intercisa, in the area of the civilian city, three mithraea could have been standing, but the location of these sanctuaries have not yet been confirmed by archeological excavations.

⁴¹ *CIL* III 10311.

⁴² *CIL* III 3334; *CIL* III 10306; *CIL* III 10315; *AE* 1910, 131; *RIU* 5, 1155; *RIU* 5, 1176.

⁴³ *RIU* 5, 1192.

⁴⁴ BARKÓCZI et al. (n. 26) 38.

There were several simultaneously active Mithras-sanctuaries⁴⁵ in the Aquincum area; the first was built at the beginning of the 160's AD. During the rule of the Severi, three sanctuaries were built in the civil town's area; moreover, the creation of the mithraeum in the soldiers' town⁴⁶ can be dated to the same period. Even the special details which were characteristic to this territory, appear on the portrayal of the *tauroctony* scene: the peltic shield is held in the hands of the dadophori.⁴⁷ Mithraeum V holds a special place among the sanctuaries of both Pannonia and Aquincum: its importance lies in the fact that it is located inside the military camp, in the house of the *tribuni laticlavii*. No other similar case is known in the Pannonian area thus far.⁴⁸ It was impossible to establish a sanctuary inside the military camp before Septimius Severus ascended the throne; therefore it is very likely that he granted this privilege to the soldiers.

Two altars dedicated to *Sol Socius* have been found in Aquincum so far, and they may have stood in one of the mithraea. It is not impossible that the people erecting inscriptions in Aquincum were of Eastern origins, as it is suggested by the name of the person, *Sura*, who is mentioned in the first inscription (Nr. 2) found in the *canabae* area (now Bogdáni street), may be of Eastern origin, and was the son or *libertus* of *Proclus*, but because of the fragmentation of the inscription this could not be clarified.⁴⁹ The third row of the other inscription (Nr. 3) is fragmented; furthermore, even the name of the emperor has been erased from it. The religious-historical circumstances mentioned before suggest that the name which was written here belongs to *Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus*, that is, Elagabalus, who was struck with *damnatio memoriae* after he was killed. Therefore the inscription can be placed in the period of his reign (218–222 AD).

BUDAÖRS, THE MITHRAEUM FOUNDED BY SOLDIERS FROM THE LEGIO II ADIUTRIX

In Budaörs,⁵⁰ during the excavations on the one-time Szőlőhegy, two inscribed altars and the sanctuary's main cult-image were found.⁵¹ The circumstances in which the

⁴⁵ For the mithraea from Aquincum, see TÓTH, I.: Addenda Mithriaca (Additions to the Work of M. J. VERMASEREN: *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*). *Specimina Nova Dissertationum Universitatis Quinqueecclesiensis* 4 (1988) 17–73, here 39–52 ff.

⁴⁶ NAGY: Budapest története (n. 5) 434.

⁴⁷ NAGY: A sárkeszi Mithraeum (n. 4) 1950.

⁴⁸ In the Roman Empire, aside from the sanctuary in Aquincum, only the sanctuary in Lambaesis was inside the area of the military camp, with two inscriptions with native Pannonians (*AE* 1955, 79 and *CIL* VIII 2675). For the mithraeum, see LESCHI, L.: Travaux et publications épigraphiques en Algérie in: *Actes du 2^e Congrès International d'Épigraphie grecque et latine*, Paris, 1952 (1953) 125.

⁴⁹ TÓTH: Addenda (n. 45) Nr. 57.

⁵⁰ Probably the ancient name was *Vicus Teuto* see OTTOMÁNYI, K.: *Római vicus Budaörsön* [The Roman vicus at Budaörs]. Budapest 2012, 9–409.

⁵¹ On the cult-image (*CIMRM* 1791) *Cautes* and *Cautopates* can be seen with amazon shields, which is a characteristic of the Aquincum area.

artifacts were found suggest that a Mithras-sanctuary may have stood near the area where the inscriptions were dedicated to the two strongly connected gods, the invincible Mithras and his companion Sol, who were placed close to each other. From Budaörs we have two inscriptions⁵² dedicated by the duumvir of Aquincum, *Marcus Antonius Victorinus*, who founded a Mithras shrine⁵³ in the civil town. Victorinus had a property with a *villa* in Budaörs and he probably built a sanctuary to Mithras in the territory of the *villa*, too.

Two soldiers, *Marcus Aurelius Frontinianus* and *Marcus Aurelius Fronto*, belonging to the *legio II Adiutrix* in Aquincum, built a Mithras shrine in Budaörs, most likely on their own property, and erected the two altars here,⁵⁴ to which two statues may have belonged as well. The inscriptions were erected in 213 or in 222 AD, as is marked on the second inscription (Nr. 1). The two statues, since then lost, probably portrayed the two gods mentioned in the dedication. The two brothers on earth offered statues to the two brothers in heaven.

The undertaking of such huge cost as came with the creation of a sanctuary was not uncommon among low-ranking soldiers.⁵⁵ The meaning of *fratres* is dual: the dedicators, as can be seen from their names, were blood-brothers; the *Frontinianus* cognomen is a derivative of the name *Fronto*; but at the same time the phrase *fratres* may have meant that they belonged to the same Mithraic community.⁵⁶

OUTSIDE PANNONIA, THE SPREAD OF THE UNIQUE FORM

A specific trait of the *Sol Socius* dedicational form can be seen on its inscriptions outside Pannonia. Here they set two separate altars to *Sol Socius* and to Mithras and Sol together. The reason behind this may have been that this dedicational form needed explanation for the believers in these areas which were away from the starting point, Pannonia.

The mural tablet found in the area of Bremenium,⁵⁷ next to the Hadrian-wall, bears the following inscription: *Deo Invicto Soli socio sacrum* (Nr. 5). This is evidence of the building of a Mithras-shrine dedicated by a tribune and his fellow worshippers.⁵⁸ On the inscription *Deo invicto et Soli socio sacrum* could be seen, “to the

⁵² *AE* 2005, 1266 and *AE* 2002, 1202.

⁵³ *CIMRM* 1750. KUZSINSZKY, B.: A legújabb aquincumi ásatások. 1887–1888 [The latest excavations from Aquincum]. *Budapest Régiségei* I. (1889) 59–86.

⁵⁴ *CIL* III 3383 and 3384.

⁵⁵ See the shrines in Sárkeszi (*CIMRM* 1816) – NAGY: A sárkeszi Mithraeum (n. 4) and Fertőrákos – TÓTH: A fertőrákosi Mithraeum (n. 9).

⁵⁶ Much as in the case of the inscriptions *CIL* III 3959 and the *AE* 1974, 496 where we must think of it more like a religious brotherhood too. See SOUDAVAR, A.: *Mithraic Societies: From Brotherhood to Religion's Adversary*. Houston 2014.

⁵⁷ *CIL* VII 1039. For a date under Caracalla, see HACKETHAL, I. M.: Studien zum Mithraskult in Rom. *ZPE* 3 (1968) 221–254, here 226.

⁵⁸ MOORE, C. H.: Oriental cults in Britain. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 11 (1900) 47–60, here 56.

undefeatable god (Mithras) and the ally Sol”, but before erecting the inscription the *ET* was erased,⁵⁹ and thus the meaning of the inscription changed as well, “to the undefeatable Sun god (our) ally”. The letters in the three last lines are added to supply a part which is broken off, and now this part is lost. The tribune, *Lucius Caecilius Optatus*, who could be the son or descendant of the retired centurion of the same name, became a local dignitary at Baetica.⁶⁰ The meaning of *cum consecraneis* “with all those who are devoted to the same sacred ritual” or “all those soldiers who swore on the same flag” clearly denotes the member of a religious association, and the inscription proves that such an organization for worship existed among the members, but this formula is very rare.⁶¹ The back side of the inscription is unwrought because it has been built on the wall, perhaps of a mithraeum. The *cohors I Vardulli* is attested at several forts in the north of Britain; at Castlecary on the Antonine Wall, at Longovicium and here at Bremenium.⁶² The *Vardulli* were at Bremenium from 197 AD. The name of this particular unit appears on over twenty percent of the inscriptions recovered from this site. It seems that this unit was bound to the emperor Elagabalus, because the governor of Britain, *Tiberius Claudius Paulinus*,⁶³ dedicated an altar to the emperor. The nearest mithraeum was in Brocolitia, about 80 meters from the southwest corner of an early 3rd century fortress. The emperor mentioned in our inscription is also *Marcus Aurelius Antonius*; thus the date of the inscription can be set between 219 and 222. This inscription is the latest reference to the *cohors I Vardulorum*.

The inscription (Nr. 6) found in Sublavio (Eisack-valley)⁶⁴ is much clearer, where Mithras and Sol appear as equal partners. The inscription was dedicated by the man who erected it to the memory of *Valentinus Secundionus*, who held the grade of the *pater* in the sanctuary. Such a kind of dedication is rare in the Roman Empire; there are few inscriptions which preserve the memory of the dead, but this may be connected to the idea of “translating god” or *Transitus dei*, which can be found in numerous mithraea.⁶⁵ Dedications similar to this can be found in Poetovio at the entrance of Mithraeum I, on the statue bases of Cautes and Cautopates, where an inscription in honor of the sanctuary’s founder Hyacinthus was set up.⁶⁶ In the territory of Sublavio, near to the inscription mentioning the allied gods, three other inscriptions were found⁶⁷ dedicated by a worker of *publicum portorium Illyrici*. Obviously, this idea of the memory of a *pater* comes from Poetovio.

⁵⁹ CLAUSS, M.: *The Roman Cult of Mithras. The God and His Mysteries*. New York 2001, 146.

⁶⁰ *AE* 1984, 454.

⁶¹ *AE* 1922, 70; *CIL* VI 1780 and *CIL* XIII 7865.

⁶² DAVIES, R. W.: Roman Scotland and Roman Auxiliary Units. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 108 (1976–77).

⁶³ *CIL* VII 1044. This stone is the only concrete evidence regarding the tenure of the governor in 220 AD.

⁶⁴ *CIL* V 5082.

⁶⁵ This peculiarity of the Mithraic material has been most recently examined by TÓTH, I.: *Pannoniai vallástörténet* [History of Religion in Pannonia]. Pécs–Budapest 2015, 171–173.

⁶⁶ *CIMRM* 1501 and *CIMRM* 1503. For this see TÓTH: Mithras Pannonicus (n. 2) 19.

⁶⁷ *CIL* V 5079, 5080 and 5081.

On the silver plate⁶⁸ found in Mithraeum I in Stockstadt, an inscription (Nr. 7) mentions Mithras and *Sol Socius* together, but the exact explanation of this is disputed. According to Domaszewski,⁶⁹ the abbreviation must be interpreted as *socius suis*. On the plate, an *aedicula* with two columns decorated with spiral shafts and leaf capitals was represented. In the left upper corner is the bust of Sol with radiate crown; the bust of Luna is lost. It has a triangular pediment, stylized *akroteria* and roof tiles. In the pediment there is a representation of Mithras' rock-birth; he holds a torch in his upraised left hand; his other hand with the knife is lost. On a base, Cautes is standing with upraised torch and represented with crossed legs, while in the statue of Cautopates only the crossed legs are preserved. Under an arch there is the representation of Mithras as a bull-killer; he looks at the raven perching upon his flying cloak. Around Mithras there were seven stars within an arch. Underneath the bull there are the dog and the scorpion; there is a standing amphora with a serpent and a lion. The use of such a lamella is unclear and disputed; they were either nailed directly to a wall or fixed on painted wooden boards and hung as ornaments on the mithraeum walls. Thus they belonged to their inventory, or they served as fittings for consecrated boxes or shrines, or as a protection and cover for the consecrated god statuettes deposited on the ground. The name of the dedicator, *Argata* is a personal name, possibly that of a slave. Mithraeum I at Stockstadt was outside the legionary camp by the southeast corner.⁷⁰ There was a temple to Jupiter Dolichenus very close by. According to the inscriptions, the sanctuary was built around 210 AD. The mithraeum existed until the fort was destroyed by a fire around 260 AD, but its extraordinarily rich inventory remained buried in the ground. In addition to a silver votive plate, fragments of a revolving Mithras cult image,⁷¹ and 66 further monuments belonging to it were discovered, pointing to the richness of the shrine. The different deities⁷² that were worshipped here indicate that the Mithras cult slowly became mixed with other religious trends from 250 AD onwards.

The reading of the inscription Nr. 8 by G. Ristow is wrong,⁷³ and I doubt the proposed expansion of DIMSS: the nearest parallels to the collective worship are from Stockstadt (Nr. 7) and from Eisack (Nr. 6), so we should probably read *Deo Invicto Mithrae (et) Soli Socio* here. Mithraeum II was found in 1969 beside the cathedral.⁷⁴ It was built in the cellar of a private house near other substantial houses of the second

⁶⁸ CIL XIII 11786.

⁶⁹ DOMASZEWSKI, A. V.: *Die Religion des römischen Heeres*. Trier 1895, 22.

⁷⁰ HENSEN, A.: Das „langgesuchte Mithrasheiligtum“ bei der Saalburg. *Saalburg Jahrbuch* 55 (2005) [2009] 163–190.

⁷¹ HULD-ZETSCHKE, I. – RAU, K. J.: Das doppelseitige Kultbild aus dem Mithräum I von Stockstadt. *Saalburg Jahrbuch* 51 (2001) 13–36.

⁷² Images of Mercury, Hercules, Diana, and Epona, and others have been found. For Mithras and other deities, see CLAUSS (n. 59) 146–167.

⁷³ RISTOW, G.: *Mithras im römischen Köln* [Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 42]. Leiden 1974, 33; GORDON, R.: Review of Ristow's *Mithras im römischen Köln*. *JRS* 65 (1975) 247.

⁷⁴ Mithraea have been found south of the cathedral and in the west of the town (Breite Straße/Richmodisstraße). Cf. ECK, W.: *Köln in römischer Zeit. Geschichte der Stadt Köln*. Köln 2004, 477.

half of the 2nd century AD. The only inscription is the one by a veteran; the legion is also unknown. From Mithraeum II,⁷⁵ a birth of Mithras, four small altars without inscriptions, and a tauroctony relief were found. This rock-birth scene is rather unusual: Mithras holds a bunch of wheat in his right hand and most probably ears, rather than a torch, in his left hand.

In summary, based on the inscriptions outside Pannonia, we can say that in the links outside Pannonia, the Eastern elements cannot be detected, as in the case of Pannonia, where the attachment is undisputable. In the case of the inscriptions outside Pannonia, soldiers were responsible for the inscriptions (Nr. 5 and 8). The veteran mentioned in the Cologne inscription belongs to the unknown troop.

CONCLUSION

In our study we find another specific Pannonian dedicational form that can be defined in time and space very well, and which originated in Intercisa and spread to the other parts of the Empire from here. If we look at their time-dispersion, these dedicational forms can be set in a short time interval – during the time of the Severan dynasty, and appearing even until the short reign of Elagabalus (218–222). It is very likely that in this case we can talk about a short time-period, when Sol (his individual aspect) appears in a separate dedicational form as Mithras' companion.

This Intercisian speciality culminated during the reign of Elagabalus, when his cult attained a quasi-official nature. Its spread started from here, first to the areas near Intercisa through the connections of the Syrian population – the inscriptions found in Aquincum and its area prove this as well – and then it possibly spread in the same way to other parts of the Empire. The reign of Elagabalus served as rich soil to this syncretic form for a short time, but it was the very reason for its fast decline as well. This syncretic form enriches the image of Pannonian religiosity, and more specifically, the unique nature of the Mithras-cult.

INSCRIPTIONS

Nr. 1.

Pannonia Inferior, Budaörs

Marble altar. H: 85, W: 30, D: 23.

Bibl.: *CIL* III 3384; *RIU* 6, 1334; *ILS* 4232; *CIMRM* 2, 1793; *ZPE*-140-275; *AE* 2002, +1175; DESJARDINS, E. – RÓMER, F.: *Monuments épigraphiques du Musée National Hongrois*. Budapest 1873, 45; NAGY, M.: *Lapidarium*. Budapest 2007, 198.

Date: 213 or 222 AD.

⁷⁵ SCHLEIERMACHER, W.: Das zweite Mithräum in Stockstadt am Main. *Germania* 12 (1928) 46–56.

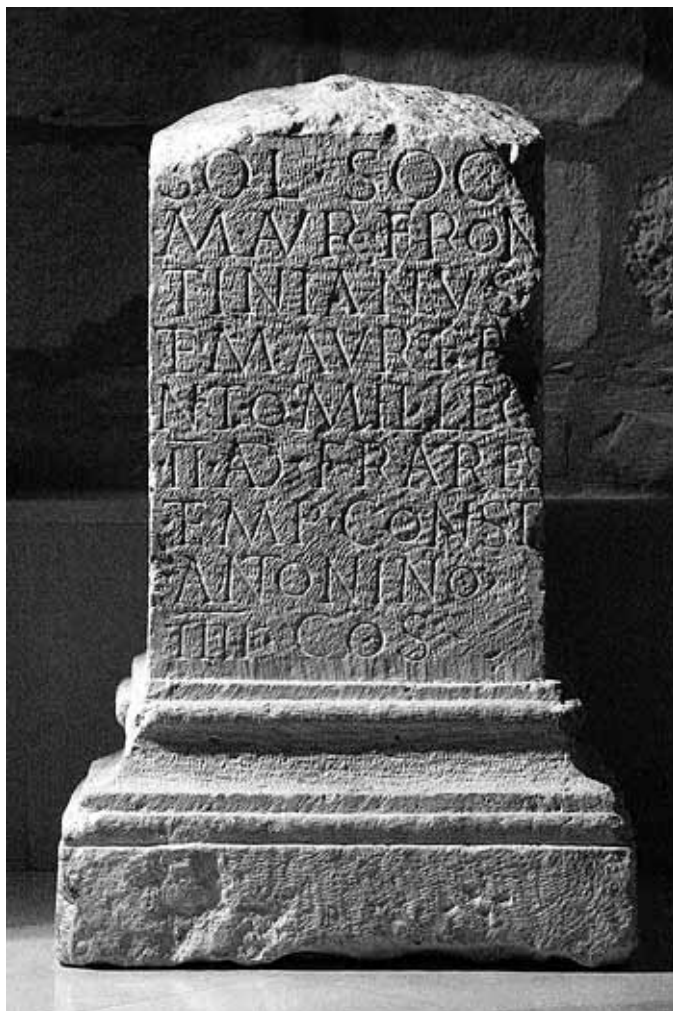


Fig. 1. Budaörs (Lupa (www.ubi-erat-lupa.org/) Nr. 7043)

Inscr.: *Sol(i) Soc(io) / M(arcus) Aur(elius) Fron/tinianus / et M(arcus) Aur(elius) Fr[o]nto mil(it)es leg(ionis) / II Ad(iutricis) fratres / templ(um) const(ituerunt) / Antonino / III co(n)s(ule)* (fig. 1)

Nr. 2.

Pannonia Inferior, Aquincum

Fragment of an altar. H: 34.5, W: 71, D: 21.

Bibl.: *TitAq*-1, 355; *AE* 2009, 1141.

Date: 201–235 AD.

Inscr.: *Soli / Soc{c}io / Marc(ius?) Sura Pr/ocli* (fig. 2)



Fig. 2. Aquincum (Lupa Nr. 10588)

Nr. 3.

Pannonia Inferior, Aquincum

Votiv altar. H: 56, W: 52, D: 36.

Bibl.: *TitAq*-1, 356; *AE* 2009, 1142.

Date: 218–222 AD.

Inscr.: *[Soli] Socio [sac(rum?)] // pro sal(ute) Imp(eratoris) / Caes(aris) [[M(arci) Aur(eli)]] / [[Antonini (fig. 3)*



Fig. 3. Aquincum (Lupa Nr. 10724)

Nr. 4.

Pannonia Inferior, Intercisa

Sandstone altar. H: 44, W: 22, D: 12.

Bibl.: *CIL* III 10311; *RIU* 5, 1103; *CIMRM* 2, 1833; G. ERDÉLYI – F. FÜLEP in BAR-KÓCZI, L. ET AL.: *Intercisa (Dunapentele-Sztálinváros). Geschichte der Stadt in der Römerzeit*. Bd. 1. Budapest 1954, 327, Nr. 365; Pl. 83, 10.

Date: 201–235 (218–222) AD.

Inscr.: *Deo / Soli / Socio / [...]* (fig. 4)

Nr. 5.

Britannia, Bremenium

Votiv, sandstone altar. H: 63.5, W: 101.6.

Bibl.: *CIL* VII 1039; *RIB*-1, 1272; *ILS* 4234; *CIMRM* 1, 876; *ZPE*-3-226.

Date: 219–222 AD.

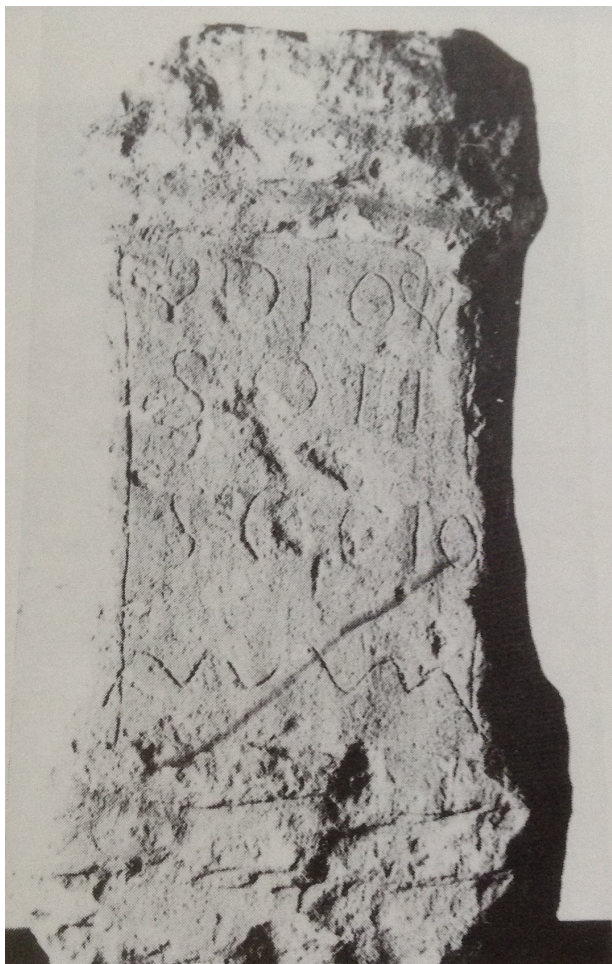


Fig. 4. Intercisa (BARKÓCZY, L. – MÓCSY, A.: *Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns [RIU]*. Amsterdam 1972–, Nr. 1103)

Inscr.: *Deo Invicto Soli soc(io) / sacrum pro salute et / incolumitate Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) / M(arci) Aureli Antonini Pii Felic(is) / Aug(usti) L(ucius) Caecilius Optatus / trib(unus) coh(ortis) I Vardul(lorum) cum con[se]/craneis votum deo [...]/ a solo ex(s)truct[um ...]* (fig. 5)

Nr. 6.

Venetia et Histria, Sublavio, Eisack valley

Bibl.: *CIL* V 5082; *ILS* 4233; *IBR* 60; *CIMRM* 1, 730; *AE* 2005, +639.

Date: 201–235 AD.

Inscr.: *D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) / et Soli Soci/o sac(rum) Valen(tinus) Se/cundion(i)s / obnemor(iam) / patris sui / ex coiieg(io) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)* (fig. 6)



Fig. 5. Bremenium (*The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, Nr. 1272
[RIB online: <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/>])

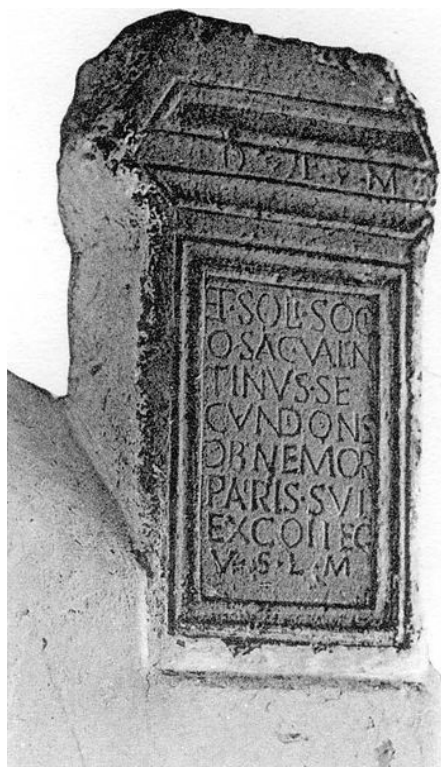


Fig. 6. Sublavio (VOLLMER, F.: *Inscriptiones Baivarum Romanarum, sive inscriptiones provinciae Raetiae adiectis Noricis Italicis*. München 1915, Nr. 60)



Fig. 7. Stockstadt (<http://www.tertullian.org/rpearce/mithras/display.php?page=cimrm1206>)

Nr. 7.

Germania Superior, Stockstadt am Main

Silver plate. H: 10.1, W: 13.

Bibl.: *CIL* XIII 11786; *RKO* 8; *CIMRM* 2, 1207; ESPÉRANDIEU, É.: *Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Germanie romaine*. Paris–Brussel 1931, 182, Nr. 281.

Date: 210–260 AD.

Inscr.: *[D(eo)] I(nvicto) M(ithrae) et S(oli) S(ocio) Argata / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito)* (fig. 7)

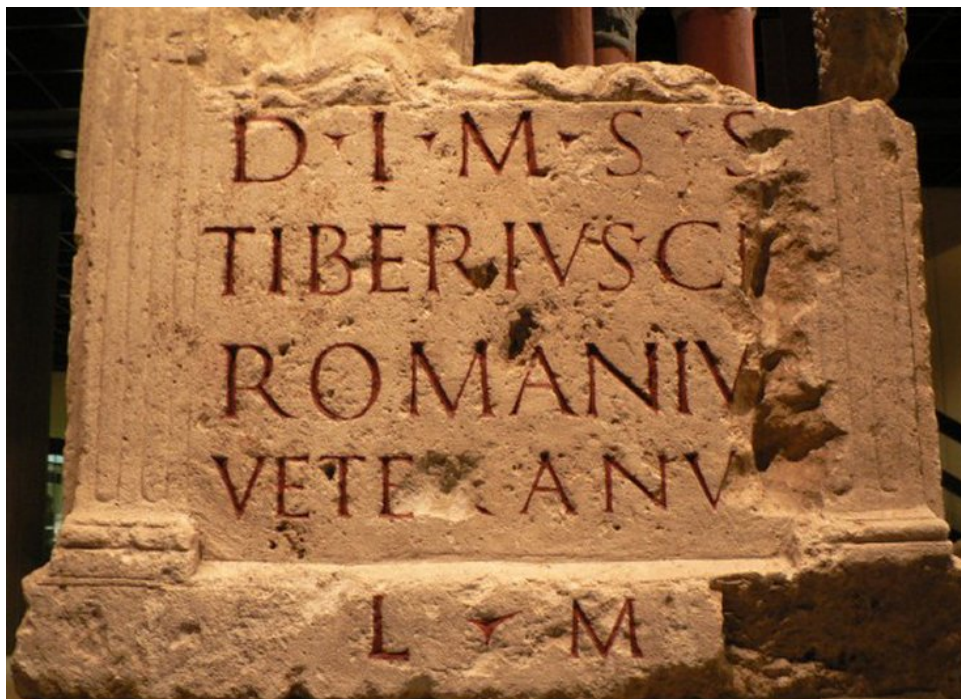


Fig. 8. Köln (GALSTERER, B. – GALSTERER, H.: *Die Römischen Steininschriften aus Köln*. Köln 1975, Nr. 125)

Nr. 8.

Germania Inferior, Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium

Votiv altar. H: 75.5, W: 66, D: 32.

Bibl.: *AE* 1969/70, 442; *RSK* 125; *IKöln* 180; Schillinger 173.

Date: 201–300 AD.

Inscr.: *D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) S(oli) s(ocio) / Tiberius Cl(audius) / Romaniu[s] / veteranu[s] / l(ibens) m(erito)* (fig. 8)

Nr. 9.

Pannonia Inferior, Intercisa

Votiv altar. H: 38, W: 28, D: 17.5.

Bibl.: *RIU* 5, 1099; *AE* 1971, 331; *RHP* 335; VÁGÓ, E.: Neue Inschriften aus Intercisa und Umgebung. *Alba Regia* 11 (1970) 129, Nr. 464.

Date: 201–250 AD.

Inscr.: *Deo Soli Au(r)elius Bars/amsus o(pt)io coh(ortis) ex / voto pate(r)no cum / [suis pos(uit)]* (fig. 9)



Fig. 9. Intercisa (Lupa Nr. 8065)

Tünde Vágási
Doctoral School of History
Department of Ancient History
Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) Budapest
Hungary