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ON CULT ASSOCIATIONS AT ISTROS AND TOMIS

Ligia Ruscu¹

Abstract: A list of members of an association of *dendrophoroi* at Tomis includes eight persons from the neighbouring city of Istros. The paper discusses the implications of this fact against the background of the relative importance of each of the cults in each of the two cities (compared to the cults of other divinities in *tem*) and of the social status of each association and its members.

Key words: Cult associations, Cybele, Dionysus, Western Pontic cities, Principate

In the Western Pontic city of Tomis, an Imperial dedication erected as thanks to the emperors Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta for gifts received was put up by an association of *dendrophoroi*². It includes a list of 38 member names, some of them bearing titles and ranks. At its head stood the ἱερεὺς Πωλλίων Πωλλίωνος, the μήτηρ δενδροφόρων Νάνας Θεάδωνος, the πατήρ Ἀχιλλεὺς Ἀχιλλᾶ, the ἀρχιδενδροφόροι Ἀλέξανδρος Ηλει and Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀλεξάνδρου and the ἀρχιραβδουχίσα Π. Αἰλία Ὀλυμπ[ία]. The hierarchy of these persons sets the priests above the “fathers” and “mothers” and these in turn above the *archidendrophoroi*³. To this *collegium dendrophorum* in all likelihood also belonged the otherwise attested⁴ C. Antonius Eutyches *archidendrophorus*. Of the 38 members of the association whose names are preserved, 16 held the Roman citizenship, without exception with Imperial *nomina*. 14 of them (except for T. Flavius Sallustius and T. Flavius Salvianus, A13–14) bear Greek *cognomina*, some of these, like T. Flavius Eutyches (A39), likely indicators of servile origin. The others have Greek or mixed Graeco-Roman peregrine names; the *meter dendrophoron* Nanas Theadonos bears an Asianic name⁵.

Unusual about this list is the fact that no less than eight names also occur in roughly contemporary inscriptions from the neighbouring city of Istros.

Ἀχιλλεὺς Ἀχιλλᾶ, who at Tomis (I. A16) is dubbed *pater*, appears in two (perhaps three) Istrian inscriptions⁶. One of them, an honorary inscription for Elagabal⁷, was erected by the σπεῖρα Διονυσιαστῶν πρεσβυτέρων. The *speira* may have borne this title in order to distinguish itself from another σπεῖρα Διονυσιαστῶν (see below), which was perhaps a

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² ISM II 83 = IGR I 614 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 93–94 no. 48; cf. SEG 27, 399, AD 199–201; all dates further on, unless otherwise indicated, are AD.

³ TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 149.

⁴ ISM II 119 = CIL III 763 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 92–93 no. 47 = CCCA VI 438, 2nd century.

⁵ As a woman’s name spread especially in Phrygia, Cilicia and Isauria: ZGUSTA 1955, § 601; ZGUSTA 1964, § 1013–6.

⁶ PIPPIDI 1959, 412–413.

⁷ ISM I 99 = JACCOTTET 2003, II no. 64; cf. SEG 19, 477; 24, 1120.

“speira of juniors”. It was led by the πατήρ Ἀχιλλεύς Ἀχιλλᾶ, by the priest Αὐρ. Βίκτωρ and the hierophant or prostates⁸ Φλ(άουιος) Ἰουκοῦνδος, also by Φλ(άουιος) Σεουήρος and [--- Ἀ]ριστίδης, who bear no titles. The text gives valuable information on the internal structure of such associations⁹.

The other text¹⁰ was put up by the ὑμνωδοὶ πρεσβύτεροι οἱ περὶ τὸν μέγαν θεὸν Διόνυσον, where Achilles son of Achillas was again called *pater*, a title which, occurring at Istros as well as at Tomis (and in other contexts as well), bears probably no specific significance for either cult¹¹. It is possible that this musical association was a branch of the *speira*¹². In their board we find the προστάται Φλ. Ἰουκοῦνδος, Φλ. Διογένης, Φλ. Λουγεινιανός and Αὐρ. Διονύσιος β' τοῦ Ἐστιαίου; the contest took place in the time of office of the agonothete Αὐρ. Γρήγορος τοῦ Ἀρτεμιδώρου, the πατήρ Ἀχιλλεύς Ἀχιλλᾶ, the μεσόχορος and χοροστάτης Αὐρ. Ηλει τοῦ Ηλει and the μούσαρχος Δημήτριος Δομετιανοῦ.

The names of Achilles Achilla, kept in the peregrine fashion even after the *constitutio Antoniniana*, are very rare on the Western Pontic shore¹³. The name Achilles does not otherwise appear at Tomis. There are two further occurrences of the name Achilles at Istros: one as a patronym in the 2nd c. ([?Ρου]φείνα Ἀχιλ[λέως], ISM I 217); the other in the early 3rd c. (ISM I 225)¹⁴. The name Achillas does not occur anywhere else at Istros or at Tomis¹⁵, except in the same inscription of the *dendrophoroi*, where in l. 32 stands the name of Χρυσάων Ἀχιλλᾶ, possibly Achilles' brother. Given the rarity of the names in this area, the identity of the two Achilles Achilla of Istros and of Tomis need be in no doubt¹⁶.

Among the persons holding the rank of ἀρχιδενδροφόροι in the inscription of Tomis, there is one Ἀλέξανδρος Ηλει (A17); among the members, there is also one called Αὐ---ων Ηλει (A28). At Istros, in the inscription of the *hymnodoi*, there are four people by the same patronymic: the μεσόχορος and χοροστάτης Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ηλει τοῦ Ηλει and the contenders [Αὐ]ρ(ήλιος) Αἰλιανός Ηλει, [Αὐ]ρ(ήλιος) Ἀλέξανδρος Ηλει (l. 16) and [Αὐ]ρ(ήλιος) Σατουρνείλος Ηλει. This Alexandros is probably one and the same person at Istros and at Tomis, before and after the *constitutio Antoniniana* was issued. Ηλει is the genitive of Asianic name Ηλεις (or Ηλις)¹⁷. Αἰλιανός Ηλει is also known as μουσάρχης from another Istrian inscription of the second half of the 2nd century, according to which the priest of Dionysus Ζιπας Διοκλέους built as *summa honoraria* (ἀντὶ ἱερωσύνης)¹⁸ a στιβάς for the ὑμνωδοὶ πρεσβύτεροι οἱ περὶ τὸν μέγαν θεὸν Διόνυσον¹⁹.

In the inscription of Tomis, in A31 occurs Ποντικός Ἐρμοδώρου. In l. 22B of the hymnodic inscription of Istros he occurs as Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ποντικός Ἐ[ρμωδώρου]; the two

⁸ See for this JACCOTTET 2003, II 133, 135–136.

⁹ See for structure and functions PIPPIDI 1959, 406–413.

¹⁰ ISM I 100 = JACCOTTET 2003, II 133–136 no. 65, early 3rd century; cf. SEG 17, 342. If the fragmentarily preserved name of the governor of Lower Moesia mentioned is indeed Iulius Gaetulicus, the date would be 222–224; STEIN 1940, 94; FITZ 1966, 51; PIR I² IV 332.

¹¹ JACCOTTET 2003, II 135–136.

¹² J. and L. ROBERT, BÉ 1955, 163a, p. 244; PIPPIDI 1955, 68–69.

¹³ LGPN IV 62–63.

¹⁴ For this being one and the same with the character under discussion here, see PIPPIDI 1955, 65; PIPPIDI 1962, 176.

¹⁵ See for the names also COJOCARU 2004. There are two occurrences of the name in another Western Pontic city, at Odessos: the funerary inscription of Ἀγαθήνωρ Ἀχιλλᾶ IGB I², 147, 1st- 2nd c.) and the ephebic catalogue IGB I², 47bis b31, dated to a. 221 and mentioning Ἀυρήλιος Κρατίδημος Ἀχιλλᾶ.

¹⁶ PIPPIDI 1962, 182.

¹⁷ See for this ROBERT 1960, 25–26; ROBERT 1963, 443–444, 508; ZGUSTA 1955, §399.

¹⁸ For this interpretation see J. and L. Robert, BÉ 1971, 441; JACCOTTET 2003, II 131.

¹⁹ ISM I 167 = JACCOTTET 2003, II 130–131 no. 63.

inscriptions presumably fall on both sides of the *constitutio Antoniniana*. He is also named in a fragmentary list of names belonging to an unspecified, perhaps musical²⁰ association (ISM I 197 = SEG 24, 1118, second half of 2nd c.).

Τούρβων Διονυσίου (l. A21) also occurs in a name list of Istros, presumably of an(other?) association (ISM I 225); ἄνδρων Λουγ[είνο]υ (A22) also in yet another name list of Istros, ISM I 197, B6²¹; Ἰλαρίων Λουκίου (l. B27) also in the name list ISM I 218 of Istros (Severan period). In l. A23 of the inscription at Tomis, Τ. Φλ. Θ---ς is probably one and the same as T. Flavius Thala[ssios?] who occurs at Istros in ISM I 225. The name of T. Flavius Sallustius (l. A13) also crops up in the great *gerusia* inscription of Istros (ISM I 193 B74), dated to 138. This is obviously not the same person as at Tomis; but, given the rarity of the cognomen (no other occurrence on the entire Western Pontic coast), the latter was probably the former's ancestor, most likely his grandfather.

The entire list looks like this:

Tomis ISM II 83	Istros
Ἀχιλλεύς Ἀχιλλᾶ	ISM I 99 Ἀχιλλεύς Ἀχιλλᾶ ISM I 100 Ἀχιλλεύς Ἀχιλλᾶ
Ἀλέξανδρος Ηλει	ISM I 100 [Ἀύ]ρ(ήλιος) Ἀλέξανδρος Ηλει
Ποντικὸς Ἐρμοδώρου	ISM I 100 Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ποντικὸς Ἐ[ρμοδώρου]
Τούρβων Διονυσ[ίου]	ISM I 225 Τούρβων Δ[----]
ἄνδρων Λουγ[είνο]υ	ISM I 197 ἄνδρων Λουγείνου
Ἰλαρίων Λουκίου	ISM I 218 Ἰλαρίων Λουκίου
Τ. Φλ. Θ---ς	ISM I 225 Τ. Φλ. Θαλά[σσιος?]
Τ. Φλ(άουιος) Σαλλούστιος	ISM I 193 Τ. Φλ(άουιος) Σαλλούστι(ο)ς

These are particularly close relations between members of different associations of different cities. It was not unusual that a person cumulate several offices in various mystery cults²². That associations tended towards forming a closed milieu, is attested elsewhere in the Roman period²³. Still, the occurrence of no less than eight citizens of Istros in an association of Tomis requires an explanation which the proximity and close relations of the two Western Pontic cities do not quite offer.

The most relevant fact is that all the Istrians mentioned at Tomis are themselves members of various associations in their own home city. Only – and this is the crucial point – none of them belongs to an association of the cult of Cybele, as is the case at Tomis. Let us consider, then, the situation of either cult in both these cities.

²⁰ PIPPIDI 1966, 55 no. 19.

²¹ The names of these two characters are derived in all likelihood from the name of the governor of Lower Moesia T. Flavius Pal. Longinus Q. Marcus Turbo (IGR I 622 = ISM II 57 Tomis; CIL III 7449 *municipium Montanensium*; ISM I 151, 152 Istros; also in ISM II 56 Tomis; CIL III 13735 Rasova). His term of office belongs to the period 153–156/7 (153/4–156: PISO 2004, 273–274; or 154?–156/7: ŻELAZOWSKI 2009).

²² BURKERT 1987, 48–49; SLAVOVA 2002, 143. See additionally the case of the Istrian Φλ(άουιος) Ἰουκοῦνδος, who was [ἱεροφάν]της (or [προστά]της, JACCOTTET 2003, II 133) of the *speira* (ISM I 99) and [π]ροστάτης (or else [χο]ροστάτης; J. and L. Robert, BÉ 1955, 163a) of the *hymnodoi* (ISM I 100; cf. PIPPIDI 1955, 68). Also, the μουσάρχης of the *hymnodoi*, Demetrios Dometianou, was likely the brother of Cocceius Dometianou, μεσοχορῶν for the same (ISM I 167 l. 10–11).

²³ Cf. BASLEZ 2004, esp. 109–110.

1. The cult of Cybele at Istros²⁴ appears to belong to the earlier ones in the city, perhaps derived from the *metropolis Miletus*. The earliest representations²⁵ date back to the Archaic period and continued through the Hellenistic²⁶ and Roman ages²⁷. The *tronans* type of these statues of Cybele may be described as Archaic Ionic, even as Milesian²⁸. Inscriptions are distinctly later²⁹. Coins with the image of the goddess occur only in the Roman period³⁰.

We are aware of perhaps two sanctuaries of the goddess in the city and her territory. In the quarter of the city dubbed “sector X”, a building was discovered, dated around 200 BC and identified by its material as a possible sanctuary of Cybele³¹. In the sanctuary of Demeter at Nuntași³² in the *chora* of Istros (4th- 2nd century BC), Cybele occurs as a *parhedros* of the main deity³³.

²⁴ CHIEKOVA 2008, 128–129.

²⁵ Terracotta statuette, late 6th- early 5th century BC (COJA/DUPONT 1979, 49 no. 58); terracotta statuette, early 5th century BC (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1990, 221; OPPERMAN 2004, 98; cf. ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999, 41); fragmentary marble statuette, late 5th century BC (?) (TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 99–100 no. 58 = CCCA VI 467).

²⁶ Fragment of a terracotta relief, 4th century BC (?) (ALEXANDRESCU 2005, Tc 72); statuette, 3rd century BC (BORDENACHE 1969, 42 = ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 14 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 100 no. 59 = CCCA VI 462; COVACEF 2002, 151); terracotta statuette from Nuntași II, 3rd century BC (DOMĂNEANȚU 1993, 69 no. 41); statuette, second half 2nd century BC (BORDENACHE 1969, 41 = ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 16 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 101–102 no. 64 = CCCA VI 463); fragment of a statuette, second half 2nd century BC (BORDENACHE 1969, 50 = ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 15 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 101 no. 62 = CCCA VI 465); headless statuette, second half 2nd century BC (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 17); headless statuette, second half 2nd century BC (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 19); fragment of a statuette, second half 2nd century BC (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 20); fragments of a terracotta statuette of Attis, 2nd century BC (ALEXANDRESCU 2005, Tc 46); terracotta statuette, late 2nd- early 1st century BC (COJA 1961, 215–216 no. 1 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 101 no. 63 = CCCA VI 472; cf. OPPERMAN 2004, 275 with n. 2816); two relief plates, 2nd century BC (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1990); statuette, 1st century BC (BORDENACHE 1969, 39 = ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 18 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 99 no. 57 = CCCA VI 455; COVACEF 2002, 151); fragment of a statuette, late Hellenistic – Imperial period (BORDENACHE 1969, 44 = ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 26 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 100–101 no. 61 = CCCA VI 461); terracotta statuette from a Hellenistic building (POPESCU 1969, 518 = CCCA VI 456).

²⁷ Statuette, 1st century BC or Imperial period (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 22); fragment of a marble relief with Cybele and the Thracian Horseman from the *chora*, 2nd century (SCORPAN 1967, 33 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 107 no. 75 = CCCA VI 432); statuette, 2nd- 3rd century (BORDENACHE 1969, 54 = ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 23 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 105 no. 69 = CCCA VI 464; Covacef 2002, 151); small marble relief from the *chora* showing Cybele and the Thracian Horseman, 3rd century (SCORPAN 1967, 34 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 106 no. 74 = CCCA VI 473); statuette, Imperial period (BORDENACHE 1969, 43 = ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 24 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 100 no. 60 = CCCA VI 466); fragment of a statuette, Imperial period (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 25); fragment of a statuette, Imperial period (BORDENACHE 1961, 191–192 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 105 no. 70 = CCCA VI 468); fragment of a statuette, Roman period (BORDENACHE 1961, 191 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 106 no. 71 = CCCA VI 469); fragment of a statuette (BORDENACHE 1961, 191–192 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 106 no. 72 = CCCA VI 470); fragment of a statuette (BORDENACHE 1961, 192 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 106 no. 73 = CCCA VI 471); statuette (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 21); fragment of a statuette (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 27); fragment of a statuette (ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999 no. 28).

²⁸ ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999, 41.

²⁹ A statue base for the μήτηρ θεῶν, erected in the 1st- 2nd century by Ἀλέξανδρος Ἡγησαγόρου (ISM I 126 = SEG 24, 1137 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 104–105 no. 68 = CCCA VI 457. For the relief see ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999, 104. Al. Avram [AVRAM 2007, 98] prefers a late Hellenistic date.) A statue erected by Ἥλιος (ISM I 128 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 104 no. 67 = CCCA VI 460); an Altar dedicated by --- Φιλίνου (ISM I 127 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 104 no. 66 = CCCA VI 459), both from the 2nd century.

³⁰ Commodus: AMNG II, 486; Severus Alexander: AMNG II, 517; cf. IACOB/PARASCHIV 2008, 104–111.

³¹ DOMĂNEANȚU 2003–2005.

³² See for this DOMĂNEANȚU 1980; DOMĂNEANȚU 1993.

³³ DOMĂNEANȚU 1993; AVRAM 2001, 547.

Most of the evidence for the cult of Cybele dates to pre-Roman, especially Hellenistic times, while the inscriptions are almost all from the Roman Imperial period. At the latest, the city had at this time an official cult of the goddess, attested by the honorary decree for Ἄβρα Ἡκαταίου, priestess of the Mother of Gods (second half 2nd century)³⁴. The priestess³⁵ had assumed the office voluntarily (αὐτεπάγγελ[τος]) and sumptuously mounted the spring feasts of the goddess³⁶. The presence of statuettes with interchangeable heads at Istros (as well as at Tomis and Callatis), produced probably for such feasts of the goddess, a habit that seems to have been abandoned during the Principate³⁷, may be an indication for a higher age of this public cult. The priestess bears a name which occurs most frequently in Cilicia and Caria; but, since it belongs rather to the widespread category of the so-called “Lallnamen” than to Asian names proper³⁸, it is not necessary to postulate a Microasiatic origin for the priestess or her family. She belonged to the elite of the city, descended from glorious ancestors and was married to a priest of Dionysus³⁹.

Thus, the cult of Cybele was constantly practiced at Istros, from early on down to the Principate, but it neither appears to have belonged to the original cults at the time of foundation, nor is there certainty about the existence of a temple in the city, nor did it later enjoy very widespread popularity, such as for instance the cult of Dionysus did.

2. The cult of Cybele at Tomis

The cult of Cybele⁴⁰ is well attested in this city starting with the late 4th century BC, an unusually early time for Tomis; during the Principate, it was an official cult with priestesses, cult associations and a fairly large number of worshippers⁴¹. Apart from the *dendrophori*, another cult association, a *sacratus dumus*, set up an altar through Aur(elius) Valeria[nu]s *pater dumī*, Fl(avia) Nona *mater dumī* and the *vix(illarius)* (of the association) Dionus⁴².

The priestesses of Cybele belonged to the elites of the city, thus (Ιουλίᾳ) Σοοσίᾳ⁴³ Ἀφρικανᾶ, the daughter of C. Iulius Africanus, the wife of the Roman veteran and *agoranomos* of the city [---]nus Quietus⁴⁴ and a benefactress of the city. The whole family was presumably of “Roman” origin, but was integrated into the local Greek-speaking elite. Quietus was presumably

³⁴ ISM I 57 = SEG 18, 293; 24, 1112; 25, 793 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 102–104 no. 65 = CCCA VI 458.

³⁵ See for her activities also van BREMEN 1996, 297–298.

³⁶ See for this inscription POPESCU 1960.

³⁷ TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 137, 150.

³⁸ See for this ZGUSTA 1955, §591; ZGUSTA 1964, § 1–1.

³⁹ Ἡράκων Ἀριστομάχου also appears in a list of priests of Dionysus from the second half of the 2nd century (ISM I 198 = SEG 19, 481).

⁴⁰ CHIEKOVA 2008, 130–133.

⁴¹ The decree of the city guard ca. 100 BC, mentioning public sacrifices for the μήτηρ θεῶν and the Dioscuri (ISM II 2B = Syll³, 731 = SGDI 5545 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 90–91 no. 42 = CCCA VI 436); statue of (Ιουλίᾳ) Σοοσίᾳ Ἀφρικανᾶ, priestess of the μήτηρ θεῶν, 2nd century (ISM II 72 = IGR I 602; TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 92 no. 46 = CCCA VI 437); altar (?) for Attis, dedicated by C. Antonius Eutyches, *archidendrophorus* (see for him above n. 3); altar for the *mater deorum*, 2nd- 3rd century (ISM II 145 = CIL III 7533 = CCCA VI 449); fragment of aedicula with relief of Cybele, 2nd- 3rd century (ISM II 146; for the relief see BORDENACHE 1969, 55 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 95–96 no. 50 = CCCA VI 440; COVACEF 2002, 151); altar dedicated μητρί θεῶν, dedicated by Σοῦρι[ς?] in the 3rd century in the *vicus Clementiani* (Mihail Kogălniceanu) (BĂRBULESCU/ CĂTEIA/WISOŞENSCHI 2009, 411–414); votive inscription for the *mater deum magna* and the tetrarchy, dedicated by Aur. Firminianus *v. p., dux limit(is) prov. Scyt(biae)* between a. 293–305 (ISM II 144 = CIL III 764 = ILS 4103 = IGLR 2 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 95 no. 49 = CCCA VI 435).

⁴² ISM II 160 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 78–80 no. 14 = CCCA VI 454.

⁴³ The name occurs as nomen as well as cognomen; cf. OPEL IV 89.

⁴⁴ ISM II 71 = IGR I 640; ISM II 72 = IGR I 602.

the newcomer, hailing from the Roman army and acceding to the elites of Tomis due to his marriage⁴⁵.

The latest Western Pontic dedication to the Mother of Gods also comes from this city. It is however, the dedication of the *dux limitis* of the province of Scythia, Aurelius Firminianus⁴⁶, thus an official act whose relation to the actual practice of the cult by the population is not necessarily a given. During the Tetrarchy, the cult of Cybele was, like a number of other pagan, primarily mystery and salvation cults, favoured and supported by the Imperial government⁴⁷.

The mostly vaguely dated representations belong to the Hellenistic period⁴⁸ and to the Principate⁴⁹. Coins with the image of the goddess only date to the Imperial period⁵⁰.

The outstanding importance of the cult of Cybele in this city, exceeding its relevance in other Western Pontic cities, resides in good measure on her association with the Dioscuri, who counted here as founders of the city⁵¹. This is not the only case in which Cybele acquires prestige and importance through association with one of the main deities of a city⁵². The image of the Dioscuri occurs as city emblem on the decree of the city guard, which i. a. prescribes sacrifices for the Μήτηρ θεῶν and for the Dioscuri (ca. 100 BC)⁵³. This connection brings the common

⁴⁵ Based on the ending of the veteran's *nomen* it is not admissible to complete it as Africanus. Thus, however, Stoian *ad* ISM II 71, 72; TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 92, 148.

⁴⁶ See for him another dedication at Tomis, for Deus Sol, ISM II 155 = CIL III 14450; IGLR 3, 4; PLRE I 339.

⁴⁷ WILLIAMS 1985, 153–163.

⁴⁸ Aedicula with Cybele, Zeus and Hermes, uncertain provenance, end of 4th century BC (BORDENACHE 1969, 59 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 90 no. 41 = CCCA VI 450); aedicula, (mid?-) Hellenistic (BORDENACHE 1969, 53 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 91–92 no. 45 = CCCA VI 441; COVACEF 2002, 151); statuette, (late?) Hellenistic (BORDENACHE 1969, 47 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 91 no. 43 = CCCA VI 442; COVACEF 2002, 151); aedicula, uncertain provenance, late Hellenistic (BORDENACHE 1969, 52 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 91 no. 44 = CCCA VI 451; COVACEF 2002, 151); aedicula, uncertain provenance, Hellenistic (BORDENACHE 1969, 51); marble statuette, Hellenistic (BORDENACHE 1969, 46 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 107 no. 77 = CCCA VI 443).

⁴⁹ Relief of Cybele and the Thracian Horseman, late 1st- early 2nd century (CCET IV 37 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 98 no. 55a = CCCA VI 446; COVACEF 2002, 152); statue, late 2nd- early 3rd century (COVACEF 1997, 213 no. 2.4); relief of Cybele and the Thracian Horseman, erected by Γλυκονιανὸς Λυσοῦνιου for θεὸς Καριος, late 2nd- early 3rd century, uncertain provenance (TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 109 no. 82 = CCCA VII 90); fragment of a marble aedicula, 2nd- 3rd century (COVACEF 1972, 515–516 no. 3 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 96 no. 52 = CCCA VI 434; COVACEF 2002, 151); marble statuette, first half 3rd century (CANARACHE/ARICESCU/BARBU/RĂDULESCU 1963, 25–28 no. 2 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 97 no. 53 = CCCA VI 448; COVACEF 2002, 151); double aedicula with Cybele and the Thracian Horseman, 2nd- 3rd century (SCORPAN 1967, 75 no. 38 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 98–99 no. 56 = CCCA VI 433); statuette, mid-3rd century (?) (BORDENACHE 1969, 57 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 96 no. 51 = CCCA VI 445; COVACEF 2002, 151); relief, Cybele and Attis, Roman period (BORDENACHE 1969, 56 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 97–98 no. 55 = CCCA VI 439; COVACEF 2002, 151, 155); marble relief with Cybele alone, Roman period (COVACEF 2002, 151); relief with Cybele surrounded by Corybantes, Roman period (COVACEF 2002, 152); statuette (BORDENACHE 1969, 49; TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 113–114 no. 96 (against her identifying as Cybele) = CCCA VI 444; COVACEF 2002, 151); fragmentary statuette (TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 97 no. 54 = CCCA VI 447).

⁵⁰ Marcus Aurelius: AMNG I2, 2681–2; Commodus: AMNG I2, 2701–11, 2728; Pertinax: AMNG I2, 2731; Septimius Severus: AMNG I2, 2748–55, 2795, 2822–3; Caracalla: AMNG I2, 2874–9, 2947–8; Geta: AMNG I2, 2964, 3001; Maximinus Thrax: AMNG I2, 3325; Gordian: AMNG I2, 3451–2; Philippus Arabs: AMNG I2, 3580, 3604–5; cf. IACOB/PARASCHIV 2008, 104–111.

⁵¹ The evidence for this is late, a statue erected by ---ος Ἀσκληπιῶδ[ῶ/ρου] for the *phyle Boreon* to the Διοσκόροι κτίστ[αι τῆς πόλεως], late 2nd- early 3rd c. (ISM II 122 = SEG 24, 1068; CANARACHE/ARICESCU/BARBU/RĂDULESCU 1963, 90–93 no. 17; ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 2009, 34; OPPERMANN 2010, 447 and n. 22). See for the foundation myths at Tomis LESCHHORN 1984, 366 and 381; EHRHARDT 1983, 226.

⁵² See e. g. the famous temple at Aizanoi for Zeus, to whom under Hadrian also Cybele was added, under the local cult name Μήτηρ θεῶν Στευηνή: NAUMANN 1979; ROLLER 1999, 336–341.

⁵³ ISM II 2 = Syll³, 731 = TACHEVA-HITOVA 1983, 90–91 no. 42.

cult of Cybele and the Dioscuri closer to the cult of the Cabiri than is the case anywhere else on the Western Pontic coast⁵⁴.

3. The cult of Dionysus at Tomis⁵⁵

The evidence for the cult of Dionysus in this city is rather late, even for Tomis: no earlier than the late Hellenistic period⁵⁶, but most of it from the second half of the 2nd- first half of the 3rd century⁵⁷. No priestly or other cult office is known from Tomis, the only evidence for there being a temple are late coin images⁵⁸.

At least two Bacchic cult associations are attested. In the 1st century BC, the son of Πάρμις offered a statue of Dionysus (described as ταυροκέρος and πυρίβρομος) for the *thiasos* of Πασώ⁵⁹. The association, led by a woman⁶⁰, includes members called βάκχοι, the text refers to the ἀρχαίη τελετή (a notion which can also be interpreted as initiation) and the pursuit of the μυστικός στέφος. All this refers to the mysteries of the ecstatic Dionysus, different from the official deity of the city for whom public offerings and ceremonies were meant⁶¹. A further cult association is the σπεῖρα Ῥωμαίων, who honoured its priest Vitalius with “busts and statues” (εἰκόσι καὶ ἀνδριάσι)⁶². A relief of a Dionysiac cult scene was dedicated to Gordian, probably also by a Bacchic cult association⁶³.

A *naiskos* dedicated by Ἀκυλεῖνος Ἀρτεμιδώρου for Διόνυσος Καθηγεμών shows the god together with Priapus, Pan, Silen and the Thracian Horseman (2nd- 3rd century)⁶⁴. Kathegemon, whose cult barely spread outside the kingdom of Pergamum, was present on the Western Pontic coast presumably due to direct contacts between this region and Pergamum⁶⁵.

Thus, Dionysus was a popular deity at Tomis, but his cult does not seem to have gained high prestige or to have ever enjoyed official status here.

⁵⁴ CHAPOUTHIER 1935, 7, 237–248.

⁵⁵ CHIEKOVA 2008, 79–83.

⁵⁶ Late Hellenistic statuette of Dionysus as a child (SCORPAN 1966, no. 16; cf. OPPERMAN 2004, 276 and n. 2823).

⁵⁷ Statue, mid–2nd century (BORDENACHE 1969, 114); head of Dionysus, second half of 2nd century (BORDENACHE 1969, 106); statue with a satyr, 2nd century (BORDENACHE 1969, 107); marble relief of Dionysus, the panther and a satyr, 2nd century (COVACEF 1998, 163–164); statuette, 2nd century (COVACEF 1997, 212–213 no. 2.3); two bronze images of the god as sarcophagus ornaments, 2nd century (IRIMIA 1967, no. 12, 13; COVACEF 2002, 131); relief, late 2nd- early 3rd century (BORDENACHE 1969, 111); relief, late 2nd- early 3rd century (BORDENACHE 1969, 115; COVACEF 2002, 129–130); relief, first half of 3rd century (CANARACHE/ARICESCU/BARBU/RĂDULESCU 1963, 29–31 no. 3; ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 2009, 32); fragmentary relief, 2nd- 3rd century (SCORPAN 1966, 196–197 no. 3); altar with Dionysiac symbols, Roman period (CANARACHE 1969, 67; COVACEF 2002, 128); relief stele, Roman period (SCORPAN 1976, 196–197); relief stele (BORDENACHE 1969, 116).

⁵⁸ Caracalla: AMNG I2, 2919–2922 = BERNHART 1949, 626 = PRICE/TRELL 1977, 246 no. 60; AMNG I2, 2954 = BERNHART 1949, 627; Geta: AMNG I2, 2980 = BERNHART 1949, 628, 629; Maximinus Thrax: AMNG I2, 3339–3340 = BERNHART 1949, 630; BERNHART 1949, 631; AMNG I2, 3355 = BERNHART 1949, 632.

⁵⁹ ISM II 120 = JACCOTTET 2003, II 129–130 no. 62; cf. ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 2009, 32.

⁶⁰ For women in Dionysiac associations see JACCOTTET 2003, I 88–94.

⁶¹ See for this JACCOTTET 2003, I 131–132.

⁶² ISM II 100 = IGRR I 638; cf. J. and L. Robert, BÉ 1962, 231.

⁶³ ISM II 107 = IGRR I 615. For the relief see BORDENACHE 1969, 113; COVACEF 2002, 128; ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 2009, 32–33.

⁶⁴ CANARACHE/ARICESCU/BARBU/RĂDULESCU 1963, 32–37 no. 4 = ISM II 121 = SEG 24, 1067 = CCET IV 33; ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 2009, 31–32.

⁶⁵ ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 2007; RUSCU 2010.

4. The cult of Dionysus at Istros⁶⁶

The evidence for the cult of Dionysus in this city lags behind only those for the cult of Apollo, the main deity of Istros. The attestations reach, with one exception (a graffito on a ceramic vessel from the second half of the 6th century BC⁶⁷), no higher than the 3rd century BC and down to the end of the Principate; the great majority belongs however to the 2nd- 3rd c. The official cult was rendered primarily to Dionysus Carphorus and the names of several of his priests⁶⁸ are known from the 2nd century⁶⁹, to which further evidence is to be added⁷⁰.

Beside the official, the mystic cult of Dionysus is also attested at Istros. Besides the inscription of the σπεῖρα Διονυσιαστῶν πρεσβυτέρων⁷¹ mentioned above, in the Severan period a fragmentary inscription refers to a [σπεῖρα] Διονυσι[αστῶν]⁷², which may have been a different one⁷³.

The *hymnodoi presbyteroi* are attested by the inscription of Ζίπας Διοκλέους and by the agonistic inscription, both mentioned above. Further inscriptions may refer to a different association of ὕμνωδοὶ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον, dated to the 2nd century⁷⁴; presumably in order to distinguish themselves from these did the ὕμνωδοὶ πρεσβύτεροι get their surname. The associations of *hymnodoi* had essentially the purpose to perform the sacred hymns in the cults of certain deities, especially the main gods of a polis⁷⁵. Under the Principate, they belonged mostly to the Imperial cult, but they remained connected also to other deities. At Istros they were mainly linked to the cult of Dionysus (ὕμνωδοὶ πρεσβύτεροι οἱ περὶ τὸν μέγαν θεὸν Διόνυσον) and formed the artistic branch of the association of Dionystai, or else a separate group, subordinated to the former for the purpose of common performances⁷⁶. The connection to the Imperial cult is given explicitly in two of the four cases, those referring to the “elder” hymnods⁷⁷. Apart from these Dionysiac hymnods, there were at Istros also other associations of

⁶⁶ CHIEKOVA 2008, 74–79.

⁶⁷ BIRZESCU 2003–2005, 208.

⁶⁸ They appear to have served in colleges of four (although the earliest inscription only includes three names). This is conceivably an influence of the Roman collegiate system: PIPPIDI 1998, 291–292.

⁶⁹ List of priests, first half of the 2nd century, including Ἐκαταῖος Εὐξενίδου, Ἔστιαῖος Δ[ί]ωνος, Κλειτοφῶ[ν] Διονυσίου (AVRAM/MARCU 1999 = SEG 50, 683). Fragment of a catalogue of priests of Dionysus (Carphorus?), mid–2nd century (ISM I 203 = SEG 19, 482). Catalogue of priests of Dionysus Carphorus, second half of 2nd century: Ἡρόφαντος Αἰσχρίωνος, Ἡράκων Ἀριστομάχου, Διονύσιος [Ἄ] θηνάδου, Ἀριστομένης [Ἄ]ρτεμᾶ (ISM I 198 = SEG 19, 481). Fragment of an inscription of priests of Dionysus (Carphorus), second half of 2nd century (ISM I 206). Stele of the priests of Dionysus Carphorus ἐλτίδιος Σάνκτος, Ποσειδώνιος Θεοπόμπου, Ἀπολλωνίδης Μενεχάρμου, Ζω[ί]-λος *sive* -ίλων] Λυσιμάχ[ου], late 2nd century (ISM I 204 = SEG 24, 1124). Fragment of a catalogue of priests of Dionysus Carphorus, 2nd century (ISM I 205 = SEG 24, 1122).

⁷⁰ Mention of the month Ἄνθεσθηριῶν in the honorary inscription for Μενίσ[κος ---], 2nd century BC (ISM I 58 = SEG 48, 965). *L. Pompeius Valens, natus Fabia Anquira*, was archon, agoranomos and priest of Dionysus, named here Liber Pater, a. 157 (ISM I 373 = CIL III 12489 = ILS 7182). Dionysiac relief dedicated to the emperor, the Roman senate and people, Antonine period (SUCEVEANU 1982, 130; ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1999, 174). Votive inscription for Dionysus, erected in the first half of the 3rd century by the priest of Dionysus Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ἀσιάρχης Χαρμίδου (ISM I 142). Coins: autonomous: PREDA/NUBAR 1973, p. 40 and no. 475–487; colonial: Crispina: PREDA/NUBAR no. 678–684; Caracalla: PREDA/NUBAR 1973 no. 703–704.

⁷¹ ISM I 99 = SEG 19, 477; 24, 1120 = JACCOTTET 2003, II 131–133 no. 64.

⁷² ISM I 199 = SEG 19, 478 = JACCOTTET 2003, II 136–137 no. 66.

⁷³ See for this PIPPIDI 1962, 164; less sanguine JACCOTTET 2003, II 132–133, 136–137.

⁷⁴ ISM I 208 = SEG 32, 694; ISM I 221 = SEG 32, 694.

⁷⁵ See for this van NIJF 1997, 165–168.

⁷⁶ PIPPIDI 1967, 445–463.

⁷⁷ See for this POPESCU 1960, 291.

singers⁷⁸. The social status of all these associations was middling. In the decree for Aba Hekataiou (ISM I 57), an association of hymnodists occurs midway through the list of participants of the banquet and receivers of donations⁷⁹, which means that they did not belong to the city elite – or at least not as a group.

Thus, the evidence for the cult of Dionysus at Istros does not stem from early times and it is rather unlikely that it was of Milesian origin⁸⁰. Even so, by the Roman period it had become one of the most, if not *the* most important cult of the city; the cult of Apollo Ietros may have surpassed it in prestige, but none other outshone it in popularity. This is shown not only by the sheer number of attestations, by the multitude of cult associations, but also by the fact that the priests of Dionysus belonged to the elites of the city or were closely connected to them.

5. Conclusion

The presence of all those Istrians in the cult association of Cybele at Tomis is not due alone to the proximity of the two cities. There are many associations in one or other of the Western Pontic cities, but this is the only case known to us where such close relations between members of cult associations in different cities are attested. It is also not due to any close connections between the cults of Dionysus and Cybele. There is a certain amount of syncretism between these two cults in Thrace, visible in contaminations of dignitaries and functions of Bacchic associations by terms which rightly belong to the realm of Cybele⁸¹, on evidence slightly later than the one under discussion here. But there may be more to this.

The choice of this particular relation between the two cult associations at Istros and Tomis was due more to the relative importance of the two cults, each in its own city. Dionysus had come to be of paramount importance at Istros in the Roman period, but at Tomis he was of much less significance. Conversely, Cybele belonged to the most prestigious deities at Tomis, but at Istros there were others who overshadowed her. Thus, when members of a Dionysiac *speira* or hymnodic guild went looking for – or were invited as – partners at Tomis, they chose, not associations worshipping the same god as they did at Istros, but an association which constituted the equivalent of theirs in terms of importance, prestige and social standing.

The coming of Rome, on the Western Pontic shore as elsewhere, did not bring about a break with the past in the religious life of the Greek cities. Aside from the Imperial worship and from the rise of deities of Thracian origin, most notably the Thracian Horseman – both admittedly far-reaching novelties –, the traditional cults of the cities went on much like before. What did change was the pre-eminence the cult associations and their activities achieved under Roman rule and as an indirect consequence thereof. Cult associations in themselves were nothing new in the Western Pontic cities; witness the very active Dionysiac *thiasos* of Callatis, which in the 3rd century BC built its own temple and which later would emulate the practices of the polis concerning the honouring of its benefactors⁸²; or the less visibly active Poseidonian association of *Taureastai* at Istros⁸³. However, the associations discussed above, and others –

⁷⁸ The honorary decree for Ἰββα Ἡκαταίου τοῦ Εὐξενίδου of the second half of the 2nd century mentions an association of ὑμνωδοί (ISM I 57 = SEG 24, 1112; 25, 793). The list of victors in a competition in an inscription of the mid-2nd century (ISM I 207 = SEG 24, 1115).

⁷⁹ van NIJF 1997, 167.

⁸⁰ See for this AVRAM 2001, 574.

⁸¹ γάλ(λ)αροι at Apollonia, IGB I², 401 = JACCOTTET 2003, II no. 46; ἀρχιγάλλος at Dionysopolis, IGB I², 22*bis*; ἀρχιγάλλαρος at Cillae/Cirpan, IGB III1, 1517 = JACCOTTET 2003, II no. 47. Cf. MORETTI 1986, 248–249; SLAVOVA 2002, 143. The inscription of Cillae/Cirpan, the only one firmly dated, was dedicated to Gordian III.

⁸² ISM III 35–37, 41–46. See for this AVRAM 2002; JACCOTTET 2003, II 54–61.

⁸³ ISM I 60; 61 (2nd century BC).

mostly Dionysiac⁸⁴ – were adapting to the new circumstances. Roman influence was active, not so much upon religious life directly, as upon social structures and mentalities, which in their turn influenced religious life. Thus, associations in the Greek East generally and Dionysiac ones in particular had become loyalist, filo-Imperial, trustworthy centers of political fidelity⁸⁵. Thus, given the conservative outlook of such associations, it is not surprising that their members should wish to preserve their social status and prestige in their dealings with outside partners.

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