

Newly Published Documents Concerning Cult Associations in the Black Sea: Some Remarks

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Several inscriptions published in the last years provide new information about private cult associations in the cities of the Black Sea region in Hellenistic and Roman times. A few remarks will be presented here.

Askold Ivantchik carefully published three very fragmentary inscriptions from Tanais which date from the second century or the first half of the first century BC.¹ All the documents have been passed by a local *thiasos*.

1. Ivantchik 2008 b, 94-95, no. 1. Tanais, 2nd cent. or first half of the 1st cent. BC.

 [- - - - - θι]ασεῖτ[αι οἱ περὶ ἱερέα τὸν δεῖνα τοῦ δεῖνος]
 [- και πατέρα συ]νόδο[υ τὸν δεῖνα τοῦ δεῖνος - - - - -]
 [- - - - - και] φιλά[γαθον τὸν δεῖνα τοῦ δεῖνος - - - - -]
 4 [- - - - - και νε]οκόρ[ον - - - - -]
 [- - - - -],ν Κυ[- - - - -]

1. Ivantchik 2008 b. See also the Russian version of the same paper, Ivančik 2008 a (with abstract in English).

2. Ivantchik 2008 b, 96-100, no. 2. Tanais, 2nd cent. or first half of the 1st cent. BC.

vac. Δ[----- ἐλλη]-
vac. νάρχ[?-----]
 Ἀπολλώ[νιος-----]
 4 Δημήτρι[ος -- και οἱ λουποῖ]
 θιασῖται [-----]
 Τανάει χρ[-----]
 Σφανος Πι[-----]
 8 Σαυρου Πο[-----]
vac. Η[-----]
 Ἀρτεμίδ[ωρος τοῦ δεῖνος --]
 Ἐστιαῖος[τοῦ δεῖνος ----]
 12 Δ...ΝΥ[-----]

3. Ivantchik 2008 b, 100-103, no. 3. Tanais, 2nd cent. or first half of the 1st cent. BC.

 [Ἐπὶ τοῦ δεῖνος --]δῶρου [ἐλληνάρχου?]
 [----- ἔ]δοξε το[ῖς θιασ(ε)ῖταις· *vel sim.* ἐπανέσαι]
 [τὸν δ. τοῦ δ. και στ]εφανοῦ[σθαι χρυσῶ ?]
 4 [στεφάνω τήν τε εἰκόν]α ποή[σασθαι αὐτοῦ]
 [και ἀναθεῖναι ----]φ *vac.*
 [-----] δέ τῶν [-----]
 [-----]ΣΤΑΣ ΣΥΣΤ[----]
 8 [-----] οὐδ' ἰδιο[-----]

These inscriptions are important, despite their fragmentary character. First of all, their early date requires attention. Though the known inscriptions from Tanais are not earlier than the Roman period, the paleographic features of the recently published ones show without any doubt that these documents belong to the Hellenistic period.² Furthermore, we are informed that a *thiasos* existed at that

2. For the Greek character of Tanais and its resistance to Sarmatian influences, see Heinen 2005, 180: 'Mit Recht hat man von einer zunehmenden Sarmatisierung des

time in this rather isolated city populated both by *Hellenes* and *Tanaitai*, and led respectively by a *hellenarches* and an *archon*. This association included in its staff among others a *pater synodou*, convincingly restored in the first document,³ as well as a *neokoros*, attested by the same inscription.⁴

A *thiasos* managing the cult of Theos Hypsistos⁵ is well known in Tanais from later inscriptions,⁶ and other inscriptions⁷ seem to have been erected by the same association, although they do not mention the name of the god. However, Theos Hypsistos is not attested before the 1st century AD, which rules out the possibility that the newly attested *thiasos* of the middle or later Hellenistic period could be connected with this later series of documents. Ivantchik tried, therefore, to find another solution. He insisted on the word *Τανάει* (no. 2, l. 6) and developed the idea that a cult of Tanais ('most likely a river god') existed in the city, that the inscription is a dedication to this river god (see the dative) and that the *thiasos* is connected to this cult. Furthermore, Tanais would not be, in his opinion, the official name of the city, insofar as this community is attested by Alexander Polyhistor (*FGrH* 273 F 36; cf. Steph. Byz., s. v. *Τάναϊς*; Str. II.2.3; Ptol. 3.5.12, 5.9.16, 8.18.5) under the name of *Ἐμπόριον*.⁸ The cult of the river god Tanais is, by the way, the only point where I do not agree with the editor's views. First of all, it would be, in my opinion, rather strange that the name of the god to whom the offering was

Bosporanischen Reiches, gerade auch in Tanais, gesprochen. Doch die Strukturen der Stadt und ihrer Vereine waren griechisch, genauso wie die freilich nicht immer einwandfreie Sprache ihrer Inschriften. Das zeugt von der außerordentlichen Lebenskraft griechischer Tradition am Rande der Steppe'.

3. See *CIRB*, 95-96, 98-100, 104, 105 from Panticapaion and 1261, 1263, 1277, 1282, 1288 from Tanais.

4. See *CIRB* 59 and 1054 (*νάκορος*) with the editor's commentary.

5. See in general Mitchell 1999. For Theos Hypsistos in the Bosporan Kingdom see especially Ustinova 1999; cf. Bowersock 2002; Heinen 2006, 52-53.

6. *CIRB* 1260, 1260a, 1261, 1277-1280, 1282, 1284, 1287-1287.

7. *CIRB* 1262-1268, 1276, 1290, 1291.

8. Ivantchik also adduces *CIRB* 1237, in which he translates 'sent by the king to Emporion' and argues that 'Emporion was indeed a designation for a city within the Bosporan kingdom', but the article in the sequence εἰς τὸ ἐμπόριον rules out such possibility.

addressed occurs after so many names of (leading?) members of the *thiasos*. The inscriptions referring to Theos Hypsistos all begin with the god's name in dative, followed by the names of the leading and ordinary *thiasitai* who made the dedication. Secondly, I find no parallel for a *thiasos* organized around the cult of a river god.

Without having a concrete suggestion for the restoration, I wonder if we are not invited to try [ἐν] Τανάει. So, the god remains unknown, while 'in Tanais' could be understood as a supplementary precision in a context, which is unfortunately unclear.

Thiasoi are not widely attested in the Hellenistic period on the North shore of the Black Sea. I can adduce only the private associations from Olbia: the Βορειοὶ θιασίται⁹ and the obscure [ἰ]ερεῖς Εὐρησιβ[ιάδαι καὶ θι]ασίται connected to the cult of Zeus *Soter*.¹⁰ The *thiasos* of Tanais provides new evidence for private cult associations in this area in the Hellenistic period. On the other hand, taking into account the rather complex organization of this *thiasos* – including a *pater synodou*, a *neokoros* and, most probably, if the restoration can be accepted (no. 2, l. 1-2), the *hellenarches* himself, i.e. the chief magistrate of the Greek community in Tanais –, this association seems to have been founded for a divinity of central importance. Several candidates come to mind, first of all, of course, Dionysos. However, the sparse evidence on pre-Roman cults at Tanais does not allow speculation on the identity of the god.

I would like to add a last remark on this question. If the restoration [ἔ]δοξε τῶ[ις θιασ(ε)ίταις] in no. 3 is correct, we might ask if the association was really a private one. A *thiasos* passing a decree and using the same formulas as public documents seems to be rather public than private.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is not certain that no. 3 be-

9. *IGDOP* 95 (c. 300 BC): perhaps a 'thiase apollinien qui pouvait avoir des rapports avec les associations orphiques'.

10. *I.Olbiae* 71 = *IGDOP* 11 (end of the 4th century BC): 'thiase gentilice des prêtres de Zeus Sôter'.

11. A good parallel would be furnished by some decrees passed by the Bactic *thiasos* from Callatis: *I.Kallatis* 35-36 = Jaccottet 2003, nos. 54-55; *I.Kallatis* 42-46 = Jaccottet 2003, nos. 56-60. A.-F. Jaccottet, speaking about the 'rôle ambigu, à la fois privé et public, joué par les thiasites callatiens' (Jaccottet 2003, 129), accepts my conclusions (Avram 2002, 70-71, 74-76).

longs to the same series as nos. 1 and 2;¹² accordingly, any speculation on this matter would be unproductive.

A number of other relevant inscriptions come from the Western shores of the Black Sea and date from the imperial period. One of them is a funeral monument from the end of Hadrian's reign found in Tomis.

4. Bărbulescu and Câteia 2007. Tomis, end of Hadrian's reign.¹³

Μ(άρκῳ) Ἀντωνίῳ
 Μαρκιανῷ πα-
 τρὶ νομίμῳ
 4 καὶ ἱερεῖ σωτεί-
 ρης Ἑκάτης κτλ.

The editors commented mainly on the cult of Hecate in this region and on the office held by the *πατὴρ νόμιμος*, 'dont l'attribut νόμιμος confirme la légitimité'. This title is attested only in a group of three dedications on statues from the *mithraeum* of Sidon dated to 390/391 AD¹⁴ and in a Latin inscription from Aquileia.¹⁵ Moreover, one of the dedicatory statues from Sidon represents a *Hecate Triformis (Triceps)*; thus, we have decisive proof for the connection between the cult associations devoted to this goddess and the *pater nomimos*.

Philip A. Harland remarked that parental metaphors were widespread especially in the Greek East and that 'such terminology was an important way of expressing honour, hierarchy, and belonging within the association or community, and it could also pertain to functional leadership roles (rather than mere honours) in certain

12. I also remark that the restoration [ἐπιανέσαι] makes the second line too long. The insertion of this verb is doubtful.

13. The monument had been first published and commented from an archaeological point of view by S. Conrad (Conrad 2004, 160-161, no. 132) through the courtesy of the Museum of National History and Archaeology of Constanța, nevertheless, without the permission to publish also the inscription.

14. *CIMRMI* 76, 78/79 and 84/85; cf. *BE* 2003, 576 and *SEG* 51, 1591-1593.

15. *CILV* 764 = *ILS* 4251 = *CIMRMI* 739: *pater nomimos*.

cases'.¹⁶ He does not discuss the inscriptions from Sidon and Aquileia mentioning the *pater nomimos*, to whom the newly discovered monument from Tomis should be added, but he gives many other interesting examples of 'fathers' in cult associations. Unfortunately, not all of them are convincing. He insists, for example, on the decree of a *thiasos* in Callatis,¹⁷ which, in his opinion, is 'in honour of Ariston, who is called "father", as well as "benefactor" of the cult society and founder of the city (πατὴρ ἐὼν εὐεργέτα καὶ κτίστα τῆς πόλιος καὶ φιλοτείου τοῦ θιάσου)'.¹⁸ Not only did he misunderstand the text of the inscription, but he surely did not read my detailed commentary on this inscription, although he cites my corpus (*I.Kallatis*). The decree passed by the *thiasitai* is in fact for an Ariston (II), son of a homonymous Ariston (I), and the right translation is 'whose father is a benefactor and founder of the city and a honorary member of the *thiasos*'. Thus, the 'father' is here not a parental metaphor, but obviously the real father of the beneficiary of the decree. Nor should the titles of *euergetas* and *ktistas tas polios* be connected with Ariston's (I) membership within the *thiasos*, but with his public activities.

More convincing are the other examples found by Harland in several inscriptions from the Roman period in Macedonia, in Thrace and on the North shore of the Black Sea.¹⁹ Nevertheless, one of the main conclusions of his study, namely that the title of 'father' or 'mother' in the cult association would express a functional rather than a merely honorific role remains, as I submit, unproven. Several inscriptions from Panticapaion²⁰ and Tanais²¹ mention the pair *hierus* and *pater synodou*, every time in this order. Therefore, we are invited to identify these as the highest-ranking members of the association, and not that 'one of its leaders was known as the "father of the synod" or simply "father", alongside other standard functionaries

16. Harland 2007, 57.

17. *I.Kallatis* 35 = Jaccottet 2003, no. 54 (c. 12-15 AD).

18. Harland 2007, 69-70; cf. my critical point of view in *BE* 2008, 363.

19. Harland 2007, 69-72.

20. *CIRB* 96, 98-100, 104, 105.

21. *CIRB* 1261, 1263, 1277, 1282, 1288.

such as the priest (ἱερεὺς).²² On the other hand, we also have in Panticapaion an inscription, where the *hiereus* and the *pater synodou* seem to be the same person.²³ To this evidence, the inscription of Tomis mentioned above should be added (a person having been both *pater nomimos* and *hiereus*). The possibility that a person may be in the same time *hiereus* and *pater* shows in my opinion that the first term addresses the functional leadership, while the second one is merely an honorific title. The rare epithet *nomimos* only adds a symbolic legitimacy. The cult association could confer on one of its leaders (i.e. the *hiereus*, the *archiereus* etc.) the honorific title of *pater* of the association. How then should we explain then the pair *hiereus* and *pater synodou* revealed by the Bosporan inscriptions mentioned above? Perhaps the ‘priest’ should be understood as an *archiereus* (see an analogy in Histria which I shall discuss below). There were perhaps more priests in every association but only one of them had the leading position in the board. Thus, the *pater* could be his predecessor in this position. Anyway, the newly published inscription from Tomis adds a new argument against any attempt to establish a functional hierarchy starting from the title of ‘father’ of the association.²⁴

Another inscription which may contribute to a better understanding of the internal organization within private cult associations was found in nearby Histria (Istros). Alexandru Suceveanu recently published several inscriptions discovered during his excavations at a basilica from the 6th century AD. Among them, we find a fragmentary catalogue of winners at a musical competition organized by a local association.

22. Harland 2007, 72.

23. *CIRB* 95.

24. Cf. also Jaccottet 2003, 65-66: ‘Notons que ce titre apparaît à une date tardive dans les associations et qu’il se retrouve dans des collèges aussi différents que les orgéons de Béléla, dans une association thrace, chez les Paianistes de Rome, ou chez les Dendrophores de Tomis. Ce titre qui place celui qui le porte à la tête de l’association, comme dans la hiérarchie mithriaque, provient peut-être d’une influence romaine au travers du *pater collegii* largement attesté’ (she follows here Poland 1909, 372).

5. Suceveanu 2007, 149.

 [...Λί]λλου καὶ Ὑ[γ]ιαίνων -----]
 [........]υ ἀρχιέρεια [-----]
 [...Πά]πᾶς Ἀναξίμην[ου -----]
 4 [...θία]σον ὕμνωδ[ῶν -----]
 [--]των ἀ' χορω[στατούντος (sic) -----]
 [...νεικήσα]ντες ἐπ[ὶ ἀγωναθέτου -----]
 [...ἱερωφαν]τούντω[ν (sic) ----- οἶδε συναγω]-
 8 [νισάμενοι ----- Ἰουκού]νδου, Φ[λ(άβιος)]
 [-----] Οὔλπ[ιος --]
 [-----]ου, Μει[δίας -]
 [----- Δά]δα, Ἰο[ύλ(ιος) -]
 12 [-----]υ[-----]
 [-----]μ[-----]

Unfortunately, Suceveanu's edition is far from satisfactory and it is accompanied by a rather surprising translation: '... le fils de Lillas et Hygiainon ... la prêtresse ... Papas, le fils d'Anaximénès ... l'association (bachique) des chanteurs (*sic*) ... ayant pour la première fois comme chef d'orchestre (*sic*) ... vainqueurs pendant l'agonothésie de ... et des hiérophantes ... ont participé au concours les suivants : ... le fils de Iucundus, Flavius ... Ulpius ..., Meidias ... le fils de Dada, Iulius ...' The editor adds that this inscription, 'de quelques générations plus ancienne, autrement dit de la période des Antonins, que la plupart des inscriptions histriennes concernant les associations dionysiaques (*IScM* I 99-100, 167, 199, 208, 221), pourrait nous apporter, pour la première fois, la preuve de l'existence d'un θίασος à Histria, assimilable ou non avec l'association (σπεῖρα) des « anciens Dionysiastes » de l'époque des Sévères'.

I noted few years ago²⁵ that in l. 5 [τὸν ἀ]γῶνα χορῶ[v], 'the competition between the choruses, should be restored. Epigraphic parallels are provided mainly by inscriptions from Halicarnassus, Delos and Termessus,²⁶ while the same expression occurs in Plutarch

25. *BE* 2008, 379 (no. 6) with further other critical views.

26. Halicarnassus: *GIBM* 902 (cf. *SEG* 28, 839). Delos: *IG XI* 4, 1150. Termessus: *TAM*

(*Vit. Alex.* 67.8.2: ἀγῶνας χορῶν). The first visible letter is obviously a *gamma* (not a *tau*), furthermore, the word χορω[στατούντος] (*sic*) restored by Suceveanu is unattested.

The first letters of the text (a genitive of a personal name) might belong to the name of the governor of Moesia Inferior. All the documents of private cult associations from the Roman period in Histria and Tomis are introduced by the common formula ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος (*vel* τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων) κτλ. *e.g.* τύχης τε καὶ νεύκης καὶ αἰωνίου διαμονῆς κτλ. καὶ κρατίστου ὑπατικοῦ κτλ. Therefore, we might identify at the beginning of the text the name of Ovinus Tertullus, the governor of 198-202, which occurs in a similar position in an inscription from Tomis.²⁷ A *hedera* after [-]λλου indicates that we have there the end of the introductory sequence. Then, we can continue by supposing another sequence introduced by ὑ[πέρ] and referring to the name of an unknown ἀρχιτέρεια, daughter of a man whose name belongs to the second declension (genitive in -[ο]υ). For my restorations of the next lines, I rely on another Histrian inscription published by the same association of the σπεῖρα Διονυσιαστῶν πρεσβυτέρων (this formula being attested in *I.Histriae* 199). *I.Histriae* 100, the beginning of which is missing, gives [-] καὶ τοῦ [κρατίστου ὑ]πατικοῦ Ἰουλίου [Γαιτουλικ]οῦ, ὑμνωδοὶ πρεσβύτε[ροι οἱ πε]ρὶ τὸν μέγαν θεὸν Διόνυσον. The dedication *I.Histriae* 167 has ὑμνωδοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἱερoneϊκαῖς τοῖς περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον. I suggest, therefore, to insert the broken word [-]σον (l. 4) in the common formula [οἱ περὶ τὸν μέγαν θεὸν Διόνυ]σον ὑμνωδ[οἱ πρεσβύτεροι]. Thus, we no longer have a [θία]-σος, as cautiously suggested by Suceveanu, but the *speira* which is attested by the other inscriptions of the same series. Since these all date to the middle of the 2nd century AD to the end of the Severan time, it is not surprising that the new document, dated to 198-202 by Ovinus Tertullus' governorship, belongs to the same series. In my opinion, the text must be restored as follows:

[Ἐπὲρ τῆς τῶν θειοτάτων αὐτοκρατόρων ----]
 [(*i.e.* *Septimius Severus and Caracalla*) κτλ. ----]

III 154 and 163 (in both instances ἀγῶνα χορῶν).
 27. *I.Tomis* 82.

- [-- *numerus versusum incertus* -----]
 [e.g. τύχης τε καὶ νείκης καὶ αἰωνίου διαμονῆς κτλ.]
 [----- καὶ κρατίστου ὑπατικοῦ Ὀουεινίου]
 [Τερτύ]λλου καὶ ὑ[πέρ τῆς δεῖνα τῆς -----]
 [...ο]υ ἀρχιερεία[ς -----]
 [...Πα]πας Ἀναξιμέν[ου καὶ οἱ περὶ τὸν μέγαν θεόν]
 4 [Διόνυ]σον ὑμνωδ[οὶ πρεσβύτεροι -----]
 [τὸν ἀ]γῶνα χορῶ[ν ----- νει]-
 [κήσα]ντες ἐπ[ὶ ἀ]γωνοθέτου -----]
 [προστ]ατούντω[ν δὲ -----]
 8 κτλ.

We have thus a catalogue of winners at a choral competition. Several other documents of the same *speira* mention among its leading members an *archiereus*, a *hiereus* (perhaps the same as the *archiereus*), a *pater*, an *agonothetes*, more *prostatai* and a *grammateus* and among the special officials a *mesochoros*, a *chorostates* and a *mousarchos*.²⁸ The last office seems to be attested only by these Histrian inscriptions and by a fragment of *Lyrica adespota*.²⁹ The other offices are rather common and the new inscription does not add anything to them. Nevertheless, attention is required by the mention of an *archiereia*. This is, to my knowledge, the first occurrence of a woman holding such an office in a Dionysiac association. In her remarkable book devoted to the Dionysiac cult associations, Anne-Françoise Jaccottet draws the attention to the contradiction between the common presence of women in the mythical *thiasoi* and the modest evidence for the same matter in real associations. As for their functions within the associations, ‘il faut aussi remarquer que les fonctions de tête réservées aux femmes sont toujours en rapport exclusif avec l’aspect

28. *Archiereus*: *I.Histriae* 207. *Hiereis*: *I.Histriae* 99-100 (= Jaccottet 2003, nos. 64-65), 199 (= Jaccottet 2003, no. 66). *Pateres*: *I.Histriae* 99-100 (= Jaccottet 2003, nos. 64-65). *Agonothetes*: *I.Histriae* 100 (= Jaccottet 2003, no. 65), 207. *Prostatai*: *I.Histriae* 99-100 (= Jaccottet 2003, nos. 64-65; in the first of these inscriptions A.-F. Jaccottet rightly replaces [ἱεροφάν]την of *I.Histriae* through [προστά]την), 207. *Grammateus*: *I.Histriae* 167 (= Jaccottet 2003, no. 63). *Mesochoros*: *I.Histriae* 100 (= Jaccottet 2003, no. 65), 167 (= Jaccottet 2003, no. 63), 207. *Chorostates*: *I.Histriae* 100 (= Jaccottet 2003, no. 65). *Mousarchos*: *I.Histriae* 100 (= Jaccottet 2003, no. 65), 167 (= Jaccottet 2003, no. 63).

29. *PMG*, fr. 23, 1, 2: τῶι μουσάρχει.

religieux du collège. Si une femme peut être prêtresse, cistaphore, *archibassara* etc., jamais elle ne sera spirarque. La femme est en principe incapable socialement d'assurer la direction administrative d'une association. Par contre, le rôle religieux qui lui est dévolu souligne la haute compétence qui lui est attachée, tout particulièrement dans le domaine dionysiaque.³⁰ To the examples collected and discussed by Jaccottet, in which women have (or seem to have) leading positions in Dionysiac associations,³¹ the catalogue of a *speira* from Thessalonike should be now added, in which we find (col. II) among other women a μήτηρ σπείρας.³²

If the woman whose name remains unknown is the *archieira* of the *speira*, then [Πα]πας³³ Ἀναξιμέν[ου] must be its *pater*. A parallel can be found in an inscription which reveals the formula [ῆ] σπείρα Διονυσιαστῶν πρεσβυτέρων· οἱ περὶ πατ[έρα] Ἀχιλλᾶ· Ἀχιλλᾶ καὶ ἱερέα Αὐρ(ήλιον) Βίκτορα Κάστου.³⁴ Above, I expressed my opinions about the title of *pater* in religious associations. I add that apart from this Histrian inscription and one more fragmentary document coming from Nicopolis ad Istrum,³⁵ where a πατήρ σπείρης is mentioned, no other example of *pater* related to an association called *speira* is known to me. We have, on the other hand, as we have seen, a μήτηρ σπείρας in Thessalonike. Moreover, a Latin inscription put up by the association of *Asiani* in Napoca (Dacia Porolissensis) from 235 AD mentions the pair *Germanus spirar[ch]es Tattario Epipodia mater*, and then, arranged in two separate columns, the men and the women who were members of the *speira*.³⁶ Therefore, this last inscription and the documents from Histria might suggest a duality at the head of a *speira*: a *pater* (or a *meter*, both taken in an honorific meaning, perhaps former *archieiris*) and a *hiereus* (taken as *archieirus*, see above).

30. Jaccottet 2003, 90.

31. Jaccottet 2003, nos. 22, 62, 70, 71, 146, 147, 182, 188.

32. *SEG* 49, 814 = *AE* 1999, 1430; cf. *SEG* 51, 886.

33. The restoration of this name is not certain. I prefer to write without accent, not being able to choose between Πάπας and Παπᾶς. *LGN IV*, s. v. Πάπας, registers 18 occurrences in Thrace. See for this name Robert 1963, 513-514.

34. *I.Histriae* 99 = Jaccottet 2003, no. 64.

35. *IGBulg* II 671.

36. *CIL* III 870 = *ILS* 4061 = Jaccottet 2003, no. 71.

A last remark concerns the members of the Histrian *speira*. The first occurrence of this association seems to be *I.Histriae* 207, an inscription which is dated, on prosopographical grounds, to the reign of Antoninus Pius. Among the *prostatai* we find M. Ulpius Artemidoros, the ‘first pontarch’ and Histria’s most prominent citizen in that time,³⁷ and T. Cominius Euxenides *neoterus*, another pontarch.³⁸ M. Ulpius Artemidoros is called $\nu\acute{\omicron}\delta[\zeta \tau\eta\zeta \pi]\acute{\omicron}\lambda\epsilon\omega\zeta$, a title which obviously has nothing to do with his activities within the association, but which was conferred to him by the political authorities of the city.³⁹ The *catalogi* being rather rare at the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century, we are poorly informed about the Histrian elite during this period. Nevertheless, the presence of personalities like M. Ulpius Artemidoros among the *prostatai* of the association in the early years of its activity invites us to suppose that this *speira* was rather attractive for the Histrian elite. Since the competitions organized by this private association were, as it seems, open to non-members,⁴⁰ the *speira* was of some help to the city’s officials: it organized, at least partially, contests which would normally have been staged by the city’s authorities. As in other cities of the Western Black Sea coast or Asia Minor, benefactors of the imperial period seem to demonstrate their generosity through private foundations, professional or cult associations rather by assuming offices in the boards of the city.

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37. The same M. Ulpius Artemidoros also appears in *I.Histriae* 137, 178-180 (with commentary), 193. Cf. Avram, Bărbulescu and Ionescu 2004, 360-361 with note 22.

38. See about his family Ruscu 2004, 907-910.

39. Cf. Canali de Rossi 2007, 100-101 no. 207 (with the wrong reference ‘proviene invece da Tomi’).

40. So far the *speira* put very much emphasis on promoting these contests by publishing so many documents concerning them.

- Avram, A., Bărbulescu M. and Ionescu M. 2004, 'À propos des pontarques du Pont Gauche', *AWE* 3.2, 354-364.
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