

# CULT OF MITHRAS, SLAVES, *PORTORIUM* AND *SALINAE* IN DACIA

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## Abstract

*This article proposes a new interpretation of the inscriptions of the mithraeum discovered in Apulum in the 2010s. Their dedicator, Vitalis, would not have been a slave of the portorium but an arcarius of the conductor salinarum, P. Aelius Marius, for whose salvation he erected an altar. We also return to the hypothesis defended by the editors of these inscriptions, who considered the latter to be a "major node" in a supra-local network of Mithraic worshippers. If there was a Mithraic network, it was more likely to revolve around the servile agents of the salt-mines tenants, who should be recognised as having their own agency.\**

**Keywords:** *Mithras – portorium – saltworks – Dacia – Apulum.*

The role of the agents of the *portorium Illyricum* in the spread of the Mithraic cult has been repeatedly emphasised by scholars.<sup>1</sup> These officials, mostly slaves, were responsible for collecting taxes on the movement of goods within this vast customs district.<sup>2</sup> The system of the *portorium Illyricum*, established as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, was first entrusted to publicans' societies and, then, from Trajan onwards, to individual leaseholders chosen by the state, who bore the title of *conductores*. At the end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius or at the beginning of that of Commodus, these taxes

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1 See n. below.

2 The *publicum portorium Illyrici* includes the tenth region of Italy and the following provinces: Rhetia, Noricum, Dalmatia, the two Pannonias, the two Moesias, Dacia and Thrace.

were now collected directly by the state. With this transition to direct administration, *procuratores* of equestrian rank became responsible for it.<sup>3</sup> The subordinate staff of the *Illyricum* customs district were mostly slaves, working as *uilicus* (intendant) or *contrascriptor* (comptroller) for example.<sup>4</sup> This was a qualified staff, attached to the various customs posts of the district, the *stationes*, or to its central headquarters which, from Trajan onwards, was located in Poetovio (now Ptuj, in Slovenia).

One of the earliest testimonies of the cult of Mithras in the Roman world, dating from around 100, comes from a slave of the *portorium*, Melichrysus, based at *Nouae*, in Lower Moesia.<sup>5</sup> However, this inscription by a customs slave is isolated and it is not until the middle of the second century that Mithras is found in the context of the *portorium*, at Poetovio, as well as in four *stationes* in Dalmatia and Noricum, where he was worshipped by slaves.<sup>6</sup> The role played by the slaves of the administrative headquarters of the customs district in the spread of the cult in the Danubian provinces from the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century has been emphasised since Franz Cumont.<sup>7</sup> And they certainly contributed to it, as can be seen in particular from the dedications placed in Poetovio by the servile agents of several *stationes* of the customs district, who, as part of their mission, went to the administrative centre of the *portorium* and were able to discover the cult there.<sup>8</sup> This is also shown by the vows that some of them fulfilled before being transferred to a new *statio*, together with a form of promotion. They thanked Mithras in the place where the vow was made and continued to honour him in the *statio* they then joined.<sup>9</sup> If the servile agents of the *portorium* played a role in the transmission of this cult, it should not be overestimated, as I have recently shown.<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, these agents worshipped a number of other deities than Mithras within their *stationes* or in their vicinity, whether these gods were Roman, foreign or local. On the other hand, it should be noted that, as far as we know today, Mithras is absent from a number of *stationes* which nevertheless delivered religious dedications. Finally, it should be added that the agents of the other customs districts of the Empire do not seem to have worshipped this god,<sup>11</sup> with one exception.<sup>12</sup> These different

3 Piso 2013, 293–298.

4 France, Nelis-Clément 2014, 224–226; France 2017, 200–201, 207–208.

5 Belayche 2022, 646; Bricaut and Roy 2021, 377.

6 In Dalmatia, at Senia (AE 1940, 101; *CIMRM* 1847: *S(oli) I(nuicto) M(ithrae) / Faustus / T(iti) Iul(i) Saturni/ni praef(ecti) uehi/culor(um) et cond/uct(or)is p(ublici) p(ortorii) ser(uus) uil(icus) pro se et suis / u(otum) s(oluit) I(ibens) m(erito)*) and at Vratnik (near Senia; *CIL* III, 13283; *CIMRM* 1846: *I(nuicto) M(ithrae) / spelaeum cum / omne impen/sa Hermes C(ai) / Antoni Rufi / praef(ecti) ueh(iculorum) et / cond(uctoris) p(ublici) p(ortorii) / ser(uus) uilic(us) Fortu/nat(ianus) fecit*); in Noricum, at Camporosso in Valcanale (AE 2001, 1576: *D(eo) I(nuicto) M(ithrae) / Telesphorus / C(ai) Antoni Rufi / seru(us) publici p(ortorii) uilicus / u(otum) s(oluit) I(ibens) m(erito)*); AE 2015, 1049: *I(nuicto) d(eo?) / Amandu[s] / C(ai) A(nton)i R(ufi?) p(ublici) p(ortorii) / ((contra)scriptor / u(otum) s(oluit))* and in *Ad Enum* (AE 2008, 1020: *[Inu]ic[ito] / Mi[t]hr[ae] / [F]ructus Q(uinti) / [Sa]bini Verani / [con]d(uctoris) p(ublici) [p(ortorii) ser(uus) uil(icus?) -]A[-] / [-]DI[-] / [-] a]ramq(ue) m[-]*).

7 Cumont 1902, 61; Will 1970; Beskow 1980; Claus 1992, *passim*; Tóth 1995; Claus 2000, 21–23, 37–38; Gordon 2012, 974; Szabó 2015, 412–413.

8 *CIL* III, 15184, 4, 7, 8; Claus 1992, 165–166; Van Haepere 2020, 176–177.

9 *CIL* III, 5121; AE 1903, 287; Van Haepere 2020, 171–173.

10 Van Haepere 2020.

11 See already Beskow 1980, 1.

12 AE 1989, 34 (Augusta Praetoria-Aosta).

observations mean that the *portorium* agents cannot be presented, without nuance, as vectors of the spread of the cult in the Empire.

The recent excavation of a *mithraeum* at Apulum in Dacia (now Alba Iulia, Romania) would bring new elements to the case of the transmission of the cult of Mithras by customs officers, according to the editors of the inscriptions found there, M. Egri, M. McCarty, A. Rustoiu and C. Inel.<sup>13</sup> An *arcarius*, or treasurer, called Vitalis, offers three monuments.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, he dedicated an altar to the unconquered sun god Mithras, fulfilling a vow for the salvation of P. Aelius Marius, the colony's flamen.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, in fulfilment of a vow, he donated two statues, the bases of which are preserved in a similar workmanship,<sup>16</sup> one to the *Transitus dei*, the other to Cautopates. The abbreviation G.S., to which we shall return, follows the name of Vitalis on the first, and the mention of *[ar]k(arius)* on the second.<sup>17</sup>

According to the archaeological data, the *mithraeum* in which these inscriptions were found is later than the years 150–170, since its foundations rest on a rubbish pit that predates its construction and was filled in during that period.<sup>18</sup> The inscriptions, which could be contemporary with the founding of the *mithraeum*, can be dated to between the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the first decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

The mention of the flamine of P. Aelius Marius could provide an additional dating clue. The latter is known from four other inscriptions from Dacia, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or early decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>19</sup> Three of them identify him as an adjudicator of the state saltworks, the administrative centre of which was probably Apulum.<sup>20</sup> If the priesthood of P. Aelius Marius refers to the colony of Apulum, the altar was erected

13 McCarty, Egri et al. 2017; Egri, McCarty et al. 2018.

14 A dedication to *Fortuna publica* was placed in Apulum by a Vitalis (*CIL* III, 1010 = *IDR* III, 5, 1, 76); perhaps this is the same person (Egri and McCarty 2018, 271). Egri, McCarty et al. exclude on chronological grounds that the Vitalis of Apulum could correspond to the Vitalis, slave of Q. Sabinus Veranus, attested in the *mithraeum* I of Poetovio (*CIL* III, 14354, 26; note in passing that this is not Optimus Vitalis but Vitalis, *uilius* of which Optimus is the *uicarius*). It will be seen below that the chronology proposed here nevertheless allows such a hypothesis. If this is accepted, we would have to assume that the Vitalis of Poetovio was sold by his *conductor* to the farmer of the saltworks P. Aelius Marius - which remains unproven.

15 AE 2018, 1338 (120 × 52.8 × 38.8 cm): *Soli / Inuicto / Mit<hr>RH>ae / pro salut(e) / P(ubli) Ael(i) Ma[ri] flam(inis) col(oniae) / Vitalis ar<c>K>(arius) / u(otum) I(ibens) s(oluit)*. The form Marius should be preferred to Marus. Normally a gentilice, it does indeed also appear as a *cognomen*. Piso 2004–2005, 179–182; Dana and Zăgreanu 2013, 30.

16 AE 2018, 1339 (60.2 × 32.3 × 25.6 cm): *Transi/t<u>O>(i) dei / sacr[u]m / Vitalis / G( ) S( ) u(otum) s(oluit)*. AE 2018, 1340 (62.2 × 32.3 × 25.8 cm): *Cauto/pati sacrum / Vitalis / [ar]<c>K>(arius) G( ) S( ) / [u(otum)] s(oluit)*.

17 A fourth, very fragmentary base, similar to the one dedicated to Cautopates, may have been offered to Cautes (Egri and McCarty et al. 2018, 273).

18 McCarty and Egri et al. 2019, 287.

19 *CIL* III, 1363 (*IDR* III, 119; Micia): *Silvano Do/mestico / P(ublius) Ael(ius) Euph[o]/rus pro / salute P(ubli) Ael(i) / Mari con/ductoris / pascui et sa/linar(um) I(ibens) u(otum) u(ouit)*; AE 1967, 388 (*ILD* 804; Sicoe 15; Domnesti): text *infra*; AE 1983, 799b (*CIL* III, 1549; *IDR* III, 1, 145; Sicoe 203; Tibiscum): text *infra*; AE 2013, 1281 (Dana and Zăgreanu 2013, 28–32; Porolissum): *[AR[---] / [---] P(ubli) Ael(i) Ma[ri] con/ductoris(?)] / salinaru[m] ---] / [---]tati FE[---] / [---]jum e[ ]*. Dating: 2<sup>nd</sup> century on the basis of onomastics and palaeography.

20 On the Dacian saltmines, see Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2016.

after 180, when the Aurelian *municipium* was raised to the rank of colony. The editors of the inscription favour this hypothesis, but they point out that this flamine could correspond to that of the only colony that previously existed in Dacia, namely Sarmizegetusa.<sup>21</sup> Depending on which hypothesis is preferred, the lack of precision regarding the place where this priesthood was exercised can therefore be understood in two different ways: this absence can be explained either by the fact that at the time of the inscription there was only one colony in the province, or, on the contrary, by the fact it came from the colony of Apulum itself. However, the complex character of the Apulum conurbation must be noted. The city developed from the *castrum* of the *XIII Gemina* legion. Its southern sector became a *municipium* under Marcus Aurelius (*municipium Aurelium Apulense*) and was then raised to the rank of colony under Commodus (*colonia Aurelia Apulensis*). As for the area of the *canabae* of the camp, located to the north of the city, it was partially promoted under the Severans, becoming the *municipium Septimium Apulense*.<sup>22</sup> It was in this area that the *mithraeum* was found and not in that of the colony. Given the geographical proximity, it is understandable that, if the flamine of P. Aelius Marius was related to that of the *colonia Aurelia Apulensis*, it was not necessary to specify it. The name of the colony where the priesthood was exercised does not appear either in another inscription erected in honour of the same person, this time at Domnesti, almost 200 km south-east of Apulum, outside its territory. It is therefore more likely to accept, following C. Petolescu and the *Année épigraphique*, that these inscriptions date from a time before the reign of Commodus, when Sarmizegetusa was the only colony in the province.<sup>23</sup>

In any case, the *mithraeum* of Apulum is one of the oldest known in the Danubian provinces and the first to be discovered by archaeology in Apulum, where the cult of Mithras is amply attested by other epigraphic and iconographic documents, found out of context or whose place of discovery is not precisely known.<sup>24</sup> The *arcarius* Vitalis played an important role in the decoration of the chapel, offering an altar – perhaps the main altar, given its size – and statues of which only the bases survived. Did he also initiate the construction? Although the available documentation does not allow us to answer this question, it should be noted that the land on which the *mithraeum* was built could not have belonged to him, as he was a slave. Perhaps the owner was P. Aelius Marius, for whose salvation Vitalis offered the altar, unless the *flamen* rented it or the city granted it to him.<sup>25</sup> As for the construction, it could have been financed by the *flamen*,<sup>26</sup> which would explain the altar that Vitalis erected for his salvation, but nothing excludes that it was not financed by the *arcarius*. Other slaves did indeed build or, at the very least, decorate or restore *mithraea*, including

21 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 377–378; Egri and McCarty et al. 2018, 270.

22 See the introduction by I. Piso in *IDR* 3, 5, xx–xxi.

23 Petolescu 2019, no. 2012; *AE* 2018, 1338.

24 See Szabó 2013; Szabó 2015 (he estimates the number of *mithraea* in Apulum to be at least 5–6).

25 For such city authorisations, see the examples given by Latteur 2011, 747 (*AE* 1996, 601; *CIL* V, 5796 and *CIL* X, 4110 [text *infra*]); Bricault and Roy 2021, 180–189.

26 A *flamen* of the *municipium* of Apulum *Septimium* offered a temple of Mithras at his own expense. See below.

several agents of the *portorium*, who benefited from the resources due to their occupation.<sup>27</sup>

The editors of the three inscriptions propose from the outset to identify Vitalis as a slave treasurer of the *publicum portorium Illyrici*.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, they argue, an office (*statio*) of the *portorium* is attested by epigraphy at Apulum;<sup>29</sup> the slave-treasurers of the *portorium* had sufficient personal resources to dedicate monuments; the administration of the *portorium* was a fertile ground for the spread of the cult of Mithras, which may explain why Vitalis came to honour this god. His offering of a representation of the *transitus dei* – the episode of the myth that corresponds to the transport of the bull on Mithras' shoulders, after its capture and before its sacrifice – fits perfectly in this context, the authors continue, since most of them come from *mithraea* linked to the *portorium*.<sup>30</sup> Recognising Vitalis as a treasurer of the *portorium*, the authors therefore question the nature of the links between him and P. Aelius Marius.<sup>31</sup> These links cannot be familial, in the ancient sense of the term (thus including master-slave relationships). Nor could they have been professional, they argue, since the inscription does not mention the office of leaseholder held by Aelius Marius; even if Vitalis, in the service of the *portorium*, could have been led to deal with him and to seek his favours, according to them, we should not look for links between the leasing of the saltworks and the administration of the *portorium*, as some have done: these institutions functioned independently of each other.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, they consider, P. Aelius Marius and Vitalis “could have been connected via participation in the same religious community”.<sup>33</sup> From the other dedications in which he is mentioned, they conclude that Aelius Marius seems to have been an important figure in the formation of Mithraic communities in the province, even beyond the immediate sphere of his slaves and clients. Thus,

27 CIL III, 13283 (Senia-Dalmatia; text above); CIL III, 8163 (Guberevac-Moesia sup.): *Inuicto deo / Ision Caes(aris) n(ostris) ser(uus) / uil(icus) uectigal(is) Il/lyr(ici) templ(um) omn(i) / re instruct(um) a / solo p(e-cunia) s(ua) f(aciendum) c(urauit)*; AE 1933, 160 (Lamud[---]Lopate in Moesia sup.): *[Deo] Inu(i)c[to] pro / sal(ute) Aug[ustorum]* / *n[on]ostrorum]* templum / *uetustate / dilapsum i<m=N>pendio suo restituit / Apollonides eor(undem) / ser(uus) sc(rutator) stat(ionis) Lamud()* / *Gentiano et Bass(o) co(n)s(ulibus)*; CIL V, 810 (Aquilaia-reg. X): *Pro salute / Tiberi Claudii / Macronis con(ductoris) / fer(rariarum) Nor(icarum) Velox ser(uus) / uil(icus) spel(a)eum cum / omni apparatu fecit*; CIL III, 4800 (Virunum-Noricum): *Pro salute Aug(usti) / in honorem d(omi)ni d(iuinae) Soli / Inuicto M<i=Y>thr(ae) Hilarus / Aug(usti) lib(ertus) tab(ularius) p(rocuratoris) r(egni) N(orici) et Epictetus / ar<c=K>(arius) Aug(usti) n(ostris) tem(plum) uetustate con-l(ap)s(um) / sumptu suo cum pictura refe(cerunt) / Imp(eratore) d(omino) n(ostro) Gordiano Aug(usto) et Auiola c(o)n(s)ulibus] / sacerdot(e) Licin(io) Marcello pat(re) / d(edicatum) VIII K(alendas) Iulias Q(uinto) Vi[---]*; CIL IX, 4110 (Aequiculi-reg. IV): *sacellu(m) Solis Inuic[ti] / [Mithrae pro salut]e ordinis et pop[uli] / [Apronianus arca]rius rei p(ublicae) uetustate [collap]/sum / [permittente) ordin(e) de sua pecunia resti-tuit]*.

28 Egri and McCarty et al. 2018, 269–270 (“Vitalis does not specify what funds he oversees, but it is most likely that he was a treasurer for the *Publicum Portorium Illyrici*”) and *passim*; McCarty, Egri et al. 2017, 379–381.

29 AE 1998, 1074: *[G]enio p(ublici) p(ortorii) / [e]t T(iti) Iul(i) Sa/[t]urnini / conduc(toris) / p(ublici) p(ortorii) Illyr(ici) / Maximianus / [se]r(uus) uilic(us) ex pri(uatis) / [p]ro sal(ute) sua [suorumq(ue)]*. The *statio* is not attested as such, but this inscription makes this hypothesis very likely (in this sense Szabó 2015, 412–413).

30 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 379.

31 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 381–384; Egri and McCarty et al. 2018, 274.

32 Piso 2004–2005; Szabó 2015a.

33 Egri and McCarty et al. 2018, 274.

“Marius seems to have played the role of a cross-site elder, a figure held in regard by Mithraists from Tibiscum to Apulum to Porolissum, including people who would, outside the cult, have had no direct relationship with him”.<sup>34</sup>

The hypothesis that Vitalis was an agent of the *portorium* may seem plausible, but it has its weaknesses. On the one hand, no agent of the *portorium* is recorded as a follower of Mithras in Dacia.<sup>35</sup> However, they left several traces of their worship there, including in Apulum. The *uilicus* slave Maximianus worshipped the Genius of the *portorium* and the Genius of his *conductor* Titus Iulius Saturninus, whose activity can be dated to the 150s, while another of his slaves worshipped Hercules Augustus in the sanctuary of *Ad Mediam* in December 157.<sup>36</sup> A third slave of this tax-farmer, the *contrascriptor* Bellinus, made a vow to Jupiter Optimus Maximus in Dierna – where there was a *statio*.<sup>37</sup> It was probably also a *uilicus* of Iulius Saturninus, Mercator, who made a vow to Partiscum.<sup>38</sup> By the time when the *portorium* was now under the direct control of a *procurator*, slaves – this time imperial – from the *portorium* placed inscriptions to various deities in Dacia:

- in Porolissum, between the last two or three decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, to Fortuna Augusta;<sup>39</sup> to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the Genius of the *portorium*, for the salvation of the emperor;<sup>40</sup>
- in *Ad Mediam*, between 211 and 217, for the salvation of the emperor and his wife, to Hercules;<sup>41</sup>
- in Drobeta, between 198 and 209, for the salvation of the emperors;<sup>42</sup>
- in Micia in the last decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, *Terra Dacia*, and to the Genius of the Roman people and trade.<sup>43</sup>

In other words, if the cult of Mithras is amply attested in Dacia, none of these testimonies, as far as we know, comes from an agent of the *portorium*.<sup>44</sup> Vitalis would thus be an exception - which is possible, but must be pointed out and kept in mind.

As for the dedications to the *transitus dei* – of a representation of Mithras carrying the bull on his shoulders – they are, according to the editors of the inscriptions,

34 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 385. The inclusion of Porolissum in the list is not justified, as P. Aelius Marius appears there on a fragmentary votive inscription whose mention of the deity has not survived (*AE* 2013, 1281 [text *supra*]; Dana and Zăgreanu 2013, 28–32).

35 Sicoe 2014, 41–46; Van Haeperen 2020, 180. According to the present state of our knowledge, Mithras seems not to have been worshipped by the customs officers in some provinces of the *portorium Illyrici*: Lower Pannonia, Upper Pannonia with the exception of Poetovio, Thrace and Dacia.

36 *CIL* III, 1568; *IDR* III, 1, 60; *AE* 2010, 1385.

37 *IDR* III, 1, 35; *AE* 1960, 343.

38 *IDR* III, 1, 281.

39 *ILD* 691; *AE* 1944, 47.

40 *ILD* 678; *AE* 1988, 978; *AE* 1993, 1326; *AE* 2005, 1289.

41 *CIL* III, 1565; *IDR* III, 1, 58.

42 *IDR* II, 15; *AE* 1959, 310.

43 *CIL* III, 1351 = 7853; *IDR* III, 3, 102.

44 On the cult of Mithras in Dacia, see Carbó García 2010; Sicoe 2014; Szabó 2015.

“unique to sites connected with the *portorium Illyricum*”.<sup>45</sup> This statement needs to be examined more closely. Certainly, such a statue of Mithras, accompanied by an inscription *transitu dei*, and an altar dedicated to the unconquered Mithras and *transitus dei* are offered in the first *mithraeum* of Poetovio, around the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.<sup>46</sup> But what about all the other dedications to the *transitus* that are said to come from *mithraea*, “with certain or likely customs sites as well: Savaria, Brigetio, Malvesia, Gorsium, and Carnuntum”?

The two dedications from Savaria (Upper Pannonia) associated with the *portorium* do not refer to Mithras but to Nemesis and Hercules Augustus.<sup>47</sup> As for the dedication to the *tr[ansitus dei]*, it comes from the *mithraeum* found in this locality in 2007.<sup>48</sup> However, according to current knowledge, there is nothing to link it to the *portorium*. The dedication from Brigetio-Komárom (Upper Pannonia) associated with the *portorium* is addressed to *Genius commercii et negotiantium*.<sup>49</sup> There is no evidence to link it to the altar dedicated to *Tra(n)sito* found at Brigetio-Mocsa-Tömördpusztá.<sup>50</sup> It should also be noted that the large number of inscriptions from Savaria and Brigetio makes it all the more likely that inscriptions relating to the *portorium* on the one hand, and the *transitus dei* on the other, can be found there.<sup>51</sup> However, this does not mean that a link can be established between the two, especially when the places of discovery do not coincide.

The authors themselves admit, in a note, that no evidence related to the *portorium* has been found at Malvasia, Gorsium or Carnuntum. Nevertheless, they suggest that the first two sites, located on crossing points, in the case of the former on the river Drina, and in the case of the latter on major roads, were probably the headquarters of a customs office.<sup>52</sup> As for Carnuntum, a major access point to Pannonia, “it seems unlikely that the *portorium* was not collected as goods passed into or out of the province here”. In these three cases, therefore, the link between the *portorium* and the *transitus dei* is based solely on the assumption that a customs office was located there. In the last two cases, the dedicators of the *transitus* are part of the Roman army, an *optio* at Gorsium, a *custos armorum* at Carnuntum, with no connection to the administration of the *portorium*.

It therefore seems hazardous to use the argument of a dedication to the *transitus dei* to support the hypothesis that Vitalis was a customs officer, since this link is only proven in the case of Poetovio.

Finally, it should be noted that the *pro salute* dedications of the servile agents of the *portorium* are either for the salvation of the emperor (and sometimes his family),<sup>53</sup> or for

45 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 379–380; the authors are more cautious in 2018 (p. 272).

46 *CIL* III, 14354, 28; 14354, 27.

47 *CIL* III, 4161; 4155.

48 *AE* 2011, 966.

49 *CIL* III, 4288.

50 *CIL* III, 10963; *CIMRM* 1737.

51 In *EDH* (consulted on 18/2/23), 354 entries for Brigetio itself; 147 for Savaria.

52 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 380 n. 46; *CIMRM* 1900 (Malvasia); 1811 (Gorsium); 1722 (Carnuntum).

53 *CIL* III, 1565 (= *IDR* III, 1, 58; Ad Mediam, Dacie); *ILD* 678 (= *AE* 1988, 978 = *AE* 1993, 1326 = *AE* 2005, 1289; Porolissum, Dacie); *IDR* II, 15 (= *AE* 1959, 310; Drobeta, Dacie); *ILJug* III, 1413 (= *AE* 1903, 286; Ulpiana, Moesia sup.); *AE* 1903, 287 (Kumanovo, Moesia sup.); *CIL* III, 3327 (= 10301; Intercisa, Pann. inf.); *CIL* III, 15184, 4 (Poetovio, Pann. sup.).

the salvation of the dedicator and possibly his family,<sup>54</sup> or for the salvation of other members of the *portorium* (slaves<sup>55</sup> or citizens<sup>56</sup> including a procurator<sup>57</sup>). As far as we know, therefore, no agent of the *portorium* made a dedication for the salvation of a citizen other than the emperor or a member of the *portorium*. Again, Vitalis would be an exception.

In the end, therefore, there is no solid argument to support the assumption that Vitalis was an *arcarius* in the service of the *portorium*.

Could Vitalis have been the slave of a Gaius or a woman (Gaia), as might be inferred from the G.S.<sup>58</sup> abbreviation? There are several mentions of *serui arcarii*, sometimes preceded by the name of the slave's master (possibly followed by his function), as in the case of Festinus, *T(iti) Iuli Saturnini c(onductoris) p(ortorii) p(ublici) ser(uus) arc(arius)* making two offerings to Isis at Sublazio (reg. X).<sup>59</sup> However, formulae of the type *arcarius Gai seruus* do not appear in the epigraphic sources.<sup>60</sup> It therefore seems unlikely that the abbreviation G.S. refers to a Gaius (or a Gaia) whose slave Vitalis would have been.

Could Vitalis have been the *arcarius* of a community for which the letters G.S. stand? In the Danubian provinces there are documented *arcarii* of the province,<sup>61</sup> of the fleet,<sup>62</sup> of the fisc,<sup>63</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> of the inheritances,<sup>64</sup> of the *conductores* of iron mines,<sup>65</sup> of the *portorium*<sup>66</sup> or of *statio*;<sup>67</sup> beyond these provinces, there are also *arcarii* of cities, military units, colleges or various services.<sup>68</sup> The “area” covered by their function may appear before or after the mention of it. If the G can be interpreted as a C, be it as a lapicide error or a consonant swap, as seen in other Dacian inscriptions,<sup>69</sup> one might suggest, as Egri and McCarty et al. do, *c(onductoris) s(eruus)*. However, with the editors, it must be acknowledged that this would be an unusual formulation: in the few

54 AE 1998, 1074 (Apulum, see text above); AE 2015, 1051 (Camporosso in Valcanale, Noricum); *CIL* III, 10876 (Poetovio, Pann. sup.); *CIL* III, 4161 (Savaria, Pann. sup.).

55 AE 1981, 724 (= 1982, 841; Turiceva, Moesia sup.); *CIL* III, 11674 (= 13522; Atrans, Noricum); *ILJug* II, 1139 (Poetovio, Pann. sup.); *CIL* III, 15184, 7 (Poetovio, Pann. sup.).

56 AE 1938, 91 (= AE 1984, 740; Ratiaria, Moesia sup.).

57 *CIL* III, 4024 (Poetovio, Pann. sup.).

58 See AE 2018, 1339.

59 *CIL* V, 5079–5080 (text infra).

60 According to a search in the EDCS (consulted on 18/2/23) on *serv\* + arcar\**, which produced 34 results.

61 *CIL* III, 4797–4798 (Virunum): *arcarius regni Norici*.

62 AE 2015, 1257

63 AE 1910, 99: *Aur(elius) Vale/rius arc(arius) f(isci) / D(almatiae)* (Municipium Malvesatium, Dalmatia)

64 See note above.

65 AE 2006, 1094 (Mursa, Pann. inf.).

66 *CIL* III, 4015 (Poetovio, Pann. sup.).

67 *CIL* III, 3953 (Siscia, Pann. sup.): *arcarius stationis Siscianae*, linked to the vectigal of the iron mines of the province.

68 *Arcarii* of provinces: *CIL* VI, 8574 (epitaph of an *arcarius* of the *provincia Belgica*), of cities: AE 1933, 113 (Alta Ripa, Germ. sup.), *CIL* IX, 4109–4112 (Aequiculi, reg. IV); of military units: e.g. *CIL* VIII, 3289 (*arcarius* of legion, at Lambaesis); college *arcarii*: e.g. *CIL* X, 486 (Paestum); *arcarii XX hereditatum*: e.g. *CIL* III, 1996 (Salona, Dalmatia); AE 1978, 217 (Brundisium): a *publicus arcarius thermarum*.

69 Egri and McCarty et al. 2018, 272.



known examples, the name of the *conductor* is given and, when mentioned, the term *seruus* precedes *arcarius*.<sup>70</sup> Unless these two letters are to be understood as *c(onductor) s(alinarum seruus)*? The term *conductor* can be abbreviated by a simple *C*,<sup>71</sup> especially in the formula *c(onductor) p(ublici) p(ortorii)*. *Salinae*, on the other hand, never seem to be abbreviated by the single letter *S*.

Other possibilities are: *c(oloniae or olonorum) s(eruus or Sarmizegetusa)*. However, the numerous mentions of the type *coloniae Sarmizegetusae* do not seem to be abbreviated to *C.S.* or to refer to a slave. On the other hand, although rare, the formula *coloniae seruus* exists, even in an abbreviated form (of which I have found only one attestation, in Italy).<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, the letters *G.S.* may have nothing to do with *Vitalis'* function as *arcarius* – and it should be remembered that they also appear in the inscription to the *transitus dei*, which does not mention the office of treasurer. Perhaps the abbreviation should then be resolved into *g(ratus) s(e)*, as Petolescu has suggested, but the expression is very rare.<sup>73</sup> The abbreviation *c(um) s(uis)*, which is relatively common and exists in some Danubian provinces, is probably the least unsatisfactory solution.<sup>74</sup>

Whatever the resolution of this abbreviation, *Vitalis* could be the *arcarius* of *P. Aelius Marius*, who, as a *conductor*, needed a slave to perform this kind of function, as *McCarty and Egri et al.* quickly point out in their 2017 article. However, they reject this possibility, as the inscription does not mention his activity as a leaseholder of the salt mines. The fact that the *arcarius Vitalis* fulfilled a vow for the salvation of *P. Aelius Marius* nevertheless shows that there was a link between the two individuals: the former had promised *Mithras* an altar if the latter kept his *salus*. The nature of this bond is not specified, but was it necessary if *Vitalis* was the slave of the latter? Thus, by way of comparison, it seems clear that the *uilicus Velox*, who made a cave (*spelaeum*) of *Mithras* in *Aquileia* for the *salus* of *Tiberius Claudius Macro*, farmer of the *Noricum*

70 *CIL* III, 4015 (Poetovio, Pann. sup.): *Isidi / Aug(ustae) / sacrum / Marti//alis / Firmini / Q(uinti) Sabini / Verani / t(ertiae) p(artis) // conduc(toris) / portori(i) / Illyrici / ar[c]jari(i) uic(arius) / uoto // suscepto / d(onum) d(edit) / sac(erdotibus) T(ito) Fl(aui) / Martiale / et Fl(aui) Marul//lino fil(io); CIL V, 5079 (Sublavo, reg. X): *Isidi Aug(ustae) / Festinus / T(iti) Iuli Satur/nini c(onductoris) p(ortorii) p(ublici) ser(uus) / ar<c=K>(arius) ex uoto; CIL V, 5080 (Sublavo, reg. X): *Isidi / Myrionymae / sacrum / Festinus T(iti) Iuli / Saturnini c(onductoris) p(ortorii) p(ublici) / ser(uus) ar<c=K>(arius) / posuit Fortunatus / eiusdem ser(uus) / (contra)s(criptor) / faciundum / curauit.***

71 See for example in Dacia: *AE* 1937, 141 = *IDR* III, 4, 248 (Sanpaul): *Soli Inu/icto pro / salute(m) / C(ai) Iuli Valen/tini c(onductoris) salinar(um) / Iulius Omucio / libertus actor / posuit; CIL* III, 1568 (Ad Mediam): *Herculi Augusto sacrum / Felix T(iti) Iuli Saturnini c(onductoris) p(ublici) p(ortorii) / t(ertiae) p(artis) ex priu(atis) stationis / Tsiernenen(sis) IIII I(dus) Dec(embres) anno XI / Barbaro et Regulo co(n)s(ulibus) / ex uoto posuit; AE* 1960, 343 = *IDR* III, 1, 35: *I(oui) [O(ptimo)] M(aximo) / Bellinus / T(iti) I(uli) S(aturnini) c(onductoris) p(ublici) p(ortorii) / ser(uus) l(contra)scr(iptor) / u(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

72 *CIL* XI, 2656 (Saturnia, reg. VII).

73 Petolescu 2018, 263.

74 I am grateful to Manon Boving (see \*) who suggested this hypothesis. See e.g. *CIL* III, 13722 = 14207, 41 (Vicinus Trullensium-Kunino, Moesia inf.): *Dianae Scop/titiae pro salu/te d(omini) n(ostris) Seu(eri) [Ale]x(andri) / Pii Aug(usti) Domi/tianus eiu[s] / uil(icus) u(otum) c(um) s(uis) l(ibens) / p(osuit); CIL* VI, 41184 = 31716: *] / [co(n)]s(uli) pr(aetori) candid(ato) quaest(ori) / [ca]ndid(ato) trib(uno) mil(itum) leg(ionis) IIII / [Sc]yth(icae) item V Macedonic(ae) / [Pi]ae VIIuiro epulonum / [Sa]llio Palatino Xuiro / [st]litibus iudicandis / [se]uiro equitum / Romanorum / [He]sper (?) ser(uus) ar<c=K>(arius) c(um) s(uis); Supp. It. VI, Tridentum, 9: *Soli [Inu(icto)] / Q(uintus) Mu[---] / Iustus / c(um) s(uis) [d(onum) d(edit)?].**

iron mines, was the slave of the latter.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, the slave *actor* (agent) Spatalus, who made a vow to the unconquered god in Apulum for the salvation of C. Iulius Rufinus, must be considered the slave of the person for whom he made this offering,<sup>76</sup> regardless of his master's field of activity, which is not specified in the inscription.<sup>77</sup>

At the end of this investigation, therefore, I prefer to consider Vitalis as an *arcarius* slave of P. Aelius Marius. This hypothesis is more convincing than the others and should be preferred. It implies that, contrary to what McCarty and Egri et al. conclude, the ties that bind Vitalis to the individual for whose salvation he fulfils a vow to Mithras are primarily familial – in the Roman sense of the term – and professional.

A further issue needs to be addressed: was Aelius Marius a prominent member of the Mithraic community from which the Vitalis dedications originate? More broadly, was he “a senior ‘node’ linking the Mithraic communities of Dacia in a supra-site network”, as proposed by McCarty and Egri et al.?<sup>78</sup>

It should first be noted that Aelius Marius does not appear to have made any dedications to Mithras himself, either in Apulum or elsewhere. As our documentation is partial, this does not necessarily mean that he was not himself a worshipper of the god. For example, he may have provided the land and financed the construction of the *mithraeum* in Apulum, while Vitalis may have provided the furnishings for the chapel.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the involvement of Aelius Marius in the cult of Mithras, whose function as *flamen* is recorded in an inscription, would not be surprising, since other members of the elite were active in this cult in Dacia (and in the Danubian provinces).<sup>80</sup> In Apulum itself, Statorius [---]anus, decurion and *flamen* of the *municipium* of *Apulum Septimium* built a temple to Mithras, at his own expense, in the last years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or rather in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>81</sup> It should be

75 *CIL* V, 810; *Inscr. Aqu.* 1, 319 (text above).

76 *AE* 2001, 1708 = *IDR* III, 5, 720 = Sicoe 27: *Inui[cto] / deo pro / salute C. Iu[li]i[us] / Rufini I[bi]be[r]orumqu[e] / ei[us] Spatalu[s] / se[r]r[us] actor / [u]otum] s[oluit] I[bi]bens I[aetus] m[erito]*. Szabó 2015, 409, 411–412; Carbó García 2010, 449, 1035.

77 I wonder to what extent this C. Iulius Rufinus could not be identified with another *conductor salinarum*, attested in Micia: *AE* 2005, 1296: *Jtili Ru[fi]ni cond[uctor]is / [s]alinarum / Ursio ser[us] / act[or] uer[na]*. According to Piso 2004–2005, 179–180, the *nomen*, which is fragmentary, ends in *tili*, the reading of the *t* being uncertain. From the photograph, only the letters *LJ* are legible, while the drawing suggests two vertical bars for the first two. As in Apulum, it is a *seruus actor* who is worshipping a god for a Rufinus. If we accept the identity of the two figures, the C. Iulius Rufinus of Apulum, like Aelius Marius, would be a *conductor salinarum*. Finally, it should be noted that the altar erected by Vitalis for the salvation of Marius and the one offered by Spatalus for the salvation of C. Iulius Rufinus have formal similarities, both in terms of the support and dimensions and in terms of form. Could the latter, found in the bed of the river Mures 150m east of the bridge according to the *AE*, have come from the Vitalis *mithraeum*? However, this is closer to the colony than to the *municipium* near which the latter was located; but the stone may have been moved or reused before ending up in the Mures.

78 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 383.

79 The case of the *mithraeum* I of Poetovio offers an interesting parallel. The only citizen attested there, C. Caecina Calpurnius, is precisely the one who *redemit* the *mithraeum* (bought or rather took over the lease) and restored the *mithraeum* (let us remember that a redemption or a resumption of a lease could not be carried out by a slave). See Van Haeperen in press.

80 See Latteur 2011, 743–748; Sicoe 2014, 41–46.

81 *AE* 1998, 1079 = *IDR* III, 5, 2, 709 = Sicoe 53: *[D]eo Inuicto / [M]it(h)rae sac(rum) / [-] Statorius / [---]anus dec(urio) / [et] flamen m[unicipi]c[ipii] Sep(timi) Ap[ul]l[ens]is / [In]uicti templum pr[o] / salute[m] sua suorum / [que] p[ro]p[ri]a mea feci*.

noted briefly that Aelius Marius and Statorius seem to be the only two flamines attested in Mithraic documentation. A small number of other decurions were active in this cult, especially in the Danubian provinces.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, only two leaseholders were certainly Mithras worshippers: in Apulum, Turranius Marcellinus and Antonius Senecio, *conductores armamentarii*, made a dedication to Mithras, following a vow.<sup>83</sup>

Given these parallels, it is therefore possible that Aelius Marius was a member of the Mithraic community of Apulum. However, this is not certain since, unlike the examples cited above, he did not himself make an offering to the god. Indeed, it should be remembered that a slave's offering to a god for the salvation of his master does not necessarily mean that the latter was himself a worshipper of the god invoked. Thus, the slaves of several *conductores* (whether they were in the service of the *portorium* or of the iron mines) were worshippers of Mithras, without their master being attested as a follower of the god.<sup>84</sup>

According to McCarty and Egri et al., since other slaves or freedmen of P. Aelius Marius were worshippers of Mithras, the *conductor* would have been at the centre of a supra-local "Mithraic" network. Let us review these testimonies, before assessing the relevance of this hypothesis, which is based on another assumption, that of the *conductor's* Mithraic commitment.<sup>85</sup>

P. Aelius Euphorus makes a vow in Micia to Silvanus Domesticus, *pro salute* of P. Aelius Marius, whose function as *conductor* is mentioned.<sup>86</sup> Even if the dedicator does not explicitly mention it, it is very likely that he was a freedman of Marius, as his *praenomen* and *nomen* show. The same freedman dedicated a temple to *Deus inuictus*, still in Micia.<sup>87</sup> It should be noted, however, that the identification of this unconquered god with Mithras is not accepted by all researchers.<sup>88</sup>

At Domnesti, where there was a salt mine, the slave Atticus, *actor* – that is, agent – of Aelius Marius, made a dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and *T(erra) M(ater)*, for the salvation of his master, *flamen* of the colony and tenant of the pastures and saltworks.<sup>89</sup> McCarty and Egri et al., however, believe that Atticus' dedication was to

82 Latteur 2011, 743–748.

83 *CIL* III, 1121 = *IDR* III, 5, 1, 285 = Sicoe 47: *S(oli) I(nuicto) M(ithrae) Turranius Marcellinus / et Ant(onius) Senecio iunior conductores armament(arii) / ex uoto posuerunt*. I am not taking into account the inscriptions that mention *conductores* as masters of slaves who were themselves worshippers of the god – these alone cannot prove that these *conductores* participated in the cult.

84 Van Haeperen 2020, 181–182.

85 See Dana and Zăgreanu 2013, 30. Perhaps also in Porolissum, but the text is too fragmentary.

86 *CIL* III, 1363; *IDR* III, 3, 119 (see text above); McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 384; Egri and McCarty et al. 2018, 275; Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2016, 53.

87 *IDR* III 3, 49 = *AE* 1971, 384 = Sicoe 200: *Deo / Inuicto / [P(ublius)] Ael(ius) Euphorus pro / salute sua / et suorum / templum a solo / fecit*. Carbó García 2010, 1038.

88 Carbó García 2010, 1038 recognises the Roman *Sol inuictus* instead; Szabó 2015, 414 does not exclude that it could be Mithras.

89 *AE* 1967, 388 (*ILD* 804; Sicoe 15): *[I(oui)] O(ptimo) M(aximo) et T(errae) M(atri) / [p]ro sal(ute) P(ubli) Ael(i) / Mari fl(aminis) col(oniae) / conduc(toris) pas(cui) / et salina(rum) At(ticus) act(or) eius / u(otum) s(oluit) I(ibens) m(erito)*. Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2016, 54.

Jupiter and *I(nuicto) M(ithrae)*.<sup>90</sup> The preferred reading of *T(errae) M(atri)* seems all the more likely, however, as the goddess is also honoured in the context of salt pans or mines, as the provider of the resources they contain.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, in Tibiscum, another slave, Hermadio, made a vow *S(oli) i(nuicto) N(umini) M(ithrae)* for the salvation of Aelius Marius, whose office is not mentioned.<sup>92</sup> If the first two dedications were made by a freedman and a slave of Aelius Marius, the last one was made by a slave, *an actor*, of another master, Turranius Dius, member of an influential Dacian family (of which there is evidence of a *conductor armamentarium* in Apulum and three decurions in Sarmizegetusa).<sup>93</sup> Why did Hermadio make an offering to Mithras, following a vow, for the salvation of Aelius Marius? According to Egri et al., this slave, like Vitalis, would have been linked to Marius by the cult of Mithras in which the latter held an important position.<sup>94</sup> For others, however, Hermadio, who recalls his position as an *actor*, was the regular representative of his master's business when it came to dealing with the *conductor* of the saltworks; it is in this context that he would have erected this inscription.<sup>95</sup> Although Hermadio may have come into contact with the cult of Mithras through P. Aelius Marius or his dependents, it should be remembered that the god was known to his *familia*, since Turranius Marcellinus, *conductor armamentarium*, honoured him in Apulum (at a time that cannot be precisely determined, the inscription being dated between the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries).<sup>96</sup>

The examination of the documentation of what Egri et al. consider to be a kind of "Mithraic network" formed around P. Aelius Marius thus leads to a qualification of this hypothesis. On the one hand, the Domnesti inscription most probably does not refer to Mithras; on the other hand, Hermadio did not necessarily know about the cult through P. Aelius Marius, since a member of his *familia* also honoured Mithras.

These inscriptions simply show that two slaves and a freedman of the *conductor*, as well as the slave of a Turranius, worshipped different gods for his salvation, in different places – linked in one way or another to the collection of salt taxes, either in the immediate vicinity of the saltworks (Domnesti), or at transit and customs points (Micia, Apulum, Tibiscum),<sup>97</sup> corresponding, at least in the case of Micia and Tibiscum, to military centres.<sup>98</sup> In this respect, the attachment of these people to P. Aelius Marius seems to

90 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 384. The inscription is not included in Carbó García 2010.

91 See *IDR* III, 4, 67 = *AE* 1967, 407 (Ocna Mures – Salinae, Dacia); *ILD* 500 (= *AE* 1992, 1469, Potaiassa, Dacia), both in the vicinity of salt mines. At Alburnus Maior (Dacia), in the context of gold mines (*AE* 1990, 844; 2003, 1498 and 1509); at Ljubija (Dalmatia) in the context of *ferraria* (*AE* 1958, 63–65, *AE* 1973, 411–414, *CIL* III, 13240 (Ljubija, Dalmatia); in Hispania cit., in the context of the mining society of *locus Ficariensis* (*CIL* II, 3527; see Gatto 2021).

92 *CIL* III, 1549 = *IDR* III, 1, 145 = Sicoe 203: *S(oli) I(nuicto) N(umini) M(ithrae) / pro salute / P(ubli) Ael(i) Mari / Hermadio / act(or) Turran(i) / Dii u(otum) s(oluit) I(ibens) m(erito)*. Carbó García 2010, 775.

93 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 384. *IDR* III, 5, 1, 285 (Apulum); *IDR* III, 2, 445 (Sarmizegetusa).

94 McCarty and Egri et al. 2017, 384–385.

95 In this sense, Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2016, 54.

96 See n. supra.

97 Dana and Zăgreanu 2013, 31; Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2016 (who proposes to identify this farmer with a *quatuoruir* of Apuleius' Septimian *municipium* and patron of the college of *fabri* (*IDR* III, 5, 204).

98 Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2016, 53.

be deeper than that of the slaves of the *portorium* to their *conductor*: the latter did not in fact honour any god for the salvation of their master.

Mithras appears as a deity worshipped by slaves or other individuals who honour P. Aelius Marius: Vitalis, P. Aelius Euphorus and Hermadio. It should be added that the freedman Iulius Omucio, *actor* of another leaseholder of the saltworks, C. Iulius Valentinus, also worshipped Mithras, described as *Sol inuictus*, for the salvation of his patron – and this in the context of the saltworks (Sanpaul-Dacia).<sup>99</sup> Thus, of the eight Dacian inscriptions mentioning individuals who were *conductores salinarum*,<sup>100</sup> seven correspond to dedications,<sup>101</sup> three of which are to Mithras (those of Vitalis, Hermadio and Iulius Omucio), one is to Silvanus (P. Aelius Euphorus, who is also attested as a follower of Mithras), one to Jupiter *optimus maximus* and *T(erra) M(ater)* (Atticus), whereas the last two, too fragmentary, do not preserve the name of the deity.<sup>102</sup>

In the light of this analysis, can we assume, as Egri et al. do, that P. Aelius Marius was at the centre of a supra-local Mithraic network? Caution is called for. There is no evidence that this *conductor* was himself a worshipper of Mithras. On the other hand, one of his slaves and one of his freedmen are clearly worshippers of the god, as is the slave of another *conductor salinarum*. An alternative interpretation is therefore conceivable: would it not be at the level of the subordinate agents of these adjudicators that a form of network should be evoked, recognising the agency of these lower-status individuals in honouring various gods – including Mithras – for their master? The servile staff of the *conductores salinarum* included qualified individuals who represented the interests of their masters in the vicinity of the salt pans and at the key points where this precious commodity was stored or transited. Like the customs agents, most of the slaves of the farmers of the saltworks therefore had to travel and stay away from their masters. As men of trust, they enjoyed a degree of autonomy in the management of their master's affairs, as well as in their daily lives and religious choices.<sup>103</sup> Like the *uilici* of the *stationes* of the *portorium*, these *actores* had to travel regularly to the administrative centre where their master resided, in Apulum.<sup>104</sup> They could have met there, especially for ritual activities, for example in the *mithraeum* where Vitalis was active, who may have resided in Apulum, given his function as treasurer. Wherever they stayed to represent their master, these *actores* may have been accompanied by their own slaves, the *uicarii* – like the *uilici* of the *portorium*. They would have formed small communities in the places where they resided and could have worshipped various deities – including Mithras – for the salvation of their master. Hermadio, a slave representative of Turranius, could have joined such a community in Tibiscum (he had

99 *IDR* III, 4, 248; *AE* 1937, 141. Szabó 2015, 425; Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2016, 55. According to Carbó García 2010, 454–455, 608, 1040, this is not Mithras but Sol Invictus Elagabal.

100 I count among these the two inscriptions placed for the *salus* of P. Aelius Marius which do not mention his office as *conductor*.

101 The eighth is an honorary inscription for the *conductor* P. Aelius Strenuus (*CIL* III, 1209 = *IDR* III, 5, 2, 443; Apulum) by one of his slaves.

102 *AE* 2005, 1296 (Micia); 2013, 1281 (see Dana and Zăgreanu 2013).

103 On the cultic autonomy of slaves living far from their masters, Amiri 2021, 253–330.

104 On Apulum and its links with the *conductores salinarum*, Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2016; Szabó 2015, 413–415.

to deal with a representative of the *conductor* of the saltworks for whose salvation he set up an altar). However, it is also possible that these *actores* joined groups of local worshippers, thus becoming part of communities formed on other bases than their activity in the service of the saltworks.

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