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THE CULT OF JUPITER DOLICHENUS IN MOESIA SUPERIOR: MINING ASPECTS*

VLADIMIR P. PETROVIĆ

Abstract

The cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, of Oriental origin, is evident throughout almost all the territory of the Roman Empire. The followers of the Dolichenus theology, such as soldiers, priests, tradesmen, miners and freedmen dedicated figurative representations as well as numerous inscriptions to the glory of the deity. In the territory of Upper Moesia, a particular frequency of dedications is noticed along the Danube border region/*limes*. In this study I shall deal with a somewhat particular type of Dolichenus believers, namely those who had a direct or indirect connection with the mining areas of Upper Moesia.

Key words: Jupiter Dolichenus – Upper Moesia – believers – mining areas.

Апстракт

Култот на Јупитер Долихен, од ориентално потекло, евидентиран е речиси на целата територија на Римското Царство. Следбениците на теологијата на Долихен, како што се војниците, трговците, рударите и слободните луѓе, посветувале фигурални претстави, како и бројни натписи во слава на божеството. На територијата на Горна Мезија особено е забележана фреквенција на натписи на граничниот регион на Дунав (*limes*). Во оваа студија се задржувам на малку поодреден тип верници на Долихен, оние што се директно или индиректно поврзани со рударските области на Горна Мезија.

Клучни зборови: Јупитер Долихен – Горна Мезија – верници – рударски области.

Introduction

Before we start discussing the mining aspects of the Jupiter Dolichenus cult in Upper Moesia (*Moesia Superior*), which is the subject of this study, it is important to raise a few points concerning the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, its origin, significance,

* The article results from the Institute for Balkan Studies project Society, spiritual and material culture and communications in the prehistory and early history of the Balkans (no. 177012), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

representations and routes of expansion throughout the Roman Empire, and particularly in the province of Upper Moesia.

The Jupiter Dolichenus cult, as can be concluded from the names of the god, originates from North Syria and is usually connected with the Commagenian town of Doliche (Dülük in present-day Turkey). In accordance with the interpretation of a number of inscriptions discovered in the western part of the Roman world and dedicated to the Dolichenus deity, his homeland has a significant meaning in itself. Namely, we are dealing with an area rich in iron ore here, indicated by the epigraphic formula *ubi ferrum nascitur*,¹ or *ubi ferrum exoritur*.² Traces of iron metallurgy are certainly evident in Doliche itself, but the Anatolian plateau area, in general, rich in ore deposits in the past as it is today, should also be considered as a point of origin of the cult.³

The Dolichenian deity is, in fact, the local god Baal; the basis of the cult itself can be traced back more deeply in Syrian religion and tradition of the pre-Roman period. The adaptability of Dolichenus speaks of the syncretism of different influences and, in general, refers to the Sky (Sun) and Earth. Gradually, thanks to strong contacts with Roman culture, Dolichenus was connected to and identified with Jupiter, which was also frequently the case with some other native cults, and in this way he entered the Roman Pantheon under the name of *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus*.⁴

Spread of the cult

The Dolichenus cult spread quickly throughout the Roman world. There is a belief, widespread among scholars, that the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus was introduced in Rome during the Severan dynasty (193–235 AD), given that Iulia Domna, Iulia Mamaea and Iulia Maesa originated from the Syrian city Emesa, from the family of priests of Baal, and exerted a powerful influence on the policy of the Emperors of this dynasty. However, there are numerous examples of followers of this cult before the Severan dynasty. According to Speidel the ratio between inscriptions from the time before the Severan dynasty and those of the time of this dynasty in Rome would be 14 to 23.⁵ Dedications to Dolichenus from earlier periods have also been attested in provinces outside Italy. Even in provinces outside Italy dedications to Dolichenus from earlier periods were confirmed. In Macedonia the monument from Ellassona dedicated to Dolichenus dates to the time of Trajan, that of Carnuntum in Pannonia Superior to the time of Hadrian and that of Apulum in Dacia to the time of Antoninus Pius.⁶

¹ *Civitas Taunensium* (Heddernheim): *AE* 1902, 17; *Statio Vetoniana* (Pfünz): *AE* 1889, 68; *Novae* (Svishtov): *AE* 2008, 1187.

² *Apulum* (Alba Iulia): *CIL* III, 1128.

³ Concerning the homeland of the Dolichenus cult, see Dörner 1965; Speidel 1978, 45.

⁴ Concerning the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, see Zotović 1966, 37–52.

⁵ Speidel 1978, 10.

⁶ *Ellassona*: *AE* 1913, 2; *Carnuntum*: *AE* 1936, 132; *Apulum*: *CIL* III, 1128.

Followers of the cult

One should not expect to find followers of the Commagenian deity only among one group of believers, primarily among soldiers, as is usually thought, but also among social classes like priests and traders or craftsmen of eastern origin.⁷ Traders were introduced to the cult through their role in supplying the army: a hypothesis supported by the locations where traders' inscriptions have been found, which are all connected with the military.⁸ In Dacia, two inscriptions mentioning Syrian traders (*negotiatores*) have been found – Alexander and Flavus Suri in Apulum and Gaius Gaianus and Proculus Apollofanus Suri in Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa.⁹ A distinctive group of followers of the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus are soldiers who associate this cult with iatric deities like Asclepius. This is the case in the inscription of Veturius Marcianus,¹⁰ veteran of the 13th Legion Gemina from Apulum in Dacia and in the inscription from Prizren, from the area of Upper Moesia dedicated to Asclepius, Telesphorus, Hygeia and the genius of Jupiter Dolichenus, by Surus who could be of Eastern, possibly Syrian origin.¹¹ That freedmen were also among Jupiter Dolichenus' dedicants we learn from the inscription of Achilleus from the area of Kumanovo (Lopate) in the territory of Moesia Superior.¹² We shall return to the latter two inscriptions from Upper Moesia later.

As an example of the inclusion of different social groups, we will mention one somewhat particular type of Dolichenus dedicants, those who were directly or indirectly connected with the mining areas. As we have already mentioned, some inscriptions state that the deity was created where iron is born, *ubi ferrum nascitur (exoritur)*.¹³ To this, we should also add representations of Castors,¹⁴ the divine escorts and assistants, attested on inscriptions and iconographic monuments of the Dolichenus cult such as an inscription from Dalmatia (Maslovare).¹⁵ Here we are actually dealing with the interpretation and comprehension of another detail of the Jupiter Dolichenus theology concerning the aspect of hardness and permanence represented, above all, in the insurance of stability in the mining layers primarily because of the frequent earthquakes.¹⁶ Thus, it is absolutely right to conclude that the Dolichenus cult was particularly respected and widespread in

⁷ Concerning the interpretation of Jupiter Dolichenus as a military deity, see Toutain 1911, 40; *RE* V.1, 1276–1281, s.v. *Dolichenus*; von Domaszewski 1972, 140–141; Swoboda 1964, 132; Zotović 1966, 49; Berciu and Petolescu 1976, 9 f.; Popa and Berciu 1978, 46.

⁸ Rome: Publius Aelius Marcus, connected to *X Gemina*, *CCID*, nos. 415–416; Brigetio: Domitius Titus, a former *decurio* now occupied in trade, *CCID*, no. 239.

⁹ Apulum: *CIL* III, 7761 = *CCID*, no. 153; Popescu 2004, 317; Sarmizegetusa: *CIL* III, 7915 = *CCID*, no. 169.

¹⁰ Apulum: *CIL* III, 1614 = *CIL* III, 8044 = *CCID*, no. 158.

¹¹ Prizren: *ILJug* III, 1438 = *CCID*, no. 126 = *AE* 1981, 739.

¹² Kumanovo: *IMS* VI, 208.

¹³ Merlat 1951; Dörner 1965; Speidel 1978.

¹⁴ Concerning the representation of Jupiter Dolichenus with Castors, from the inventory of the *dolicheneum* in Egeta, see Vučković-Todorović 1965, 176–177.

¹⁵ *ILJug* II, 764 = *CCID*, no. 25 = *AE* 1968, 415 (Maslovare): *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) D(olicheno) et Castori(bus) | M(arcus) Aur(elius) Flav(us) s(acerdos) I(ovis) O(ptimi) | M(aximi) D(olicheni) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito)*.

¹⁶ Medini 1982.

mining areas, *territoria metallorum*. This statement is clearly supported by examples like the one from Maslovare in Ferrariae Pannonicae.¹⁷ Such a claim is further corroborated by the inscription from Aureriae Dacicae with the formula *ubi ferrum exoritur*.¹⁸

The cult of Jupiter Dolichenus in Moesia Superior

The intensive penetration of the Jupiter Dolichenus cult into the province of Upper Moesia is often connected, in scientific literature, with the Severan dynasty, thus, with the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century AD.¹⁹ Concerning the spreading of the Dolichenus cult over the Upper Moesia territory, two dates are particularly significant. Namely, in the year 198 AD, the Emperor Septimius Severus, in the course of whose reign a significant number of Orientals joined the army and administration, goes to Syria; this was an opportunity to become acquainted with the local cults and it seems especially the case with the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus. On his return from the East, in the year 202 AD, he passed through Upper Moesia until the Danube *limes* and Viminacium (Kostolac).²⁰ The majority of dedications to Jupiter Dolichenus in Upper Moesia originate from the Danube *limes* region. However, it is difficult to give a precise *terminus post quem* for the establishment of the cult in the regions of Upper Moesia. The worshippers of Jupiter Dolichenus could have existed even earlier, before the Severan dynasty. Ethnic intermingling and migration will certainly have occurred in the past, so that the newcomers from the East could be found among soldiers, as well as among other social categories like tradesmen, craftsmen, miners, freedmen and slaves. It is known, for example, that during the 1st century, the first cohort of Thracians from Syria, cohors I Thracum Syriaca, was situated in the Roman army camp in Ravna, Timacum Minus,²¹ in the Timok River valley. From the discovered inscription, we learn not only about the tribune Vecilius Modestus, under whose command the cohort of Thracians from Syria was moved from Syria, but also about the soldiers and veterans who, having finished military service, settled in the surroundings of the Timacum Minus *castrum*.²² There may have been followers of the Dolichenus religion among them.

¹⁷ Concerning the extent to which the Dolichenus cult was spread in the region of Ferrariae Pannonicae through an epigraphic dedication to Jupiter Dolichenus and Castors, see Dušanić 1999, 134.

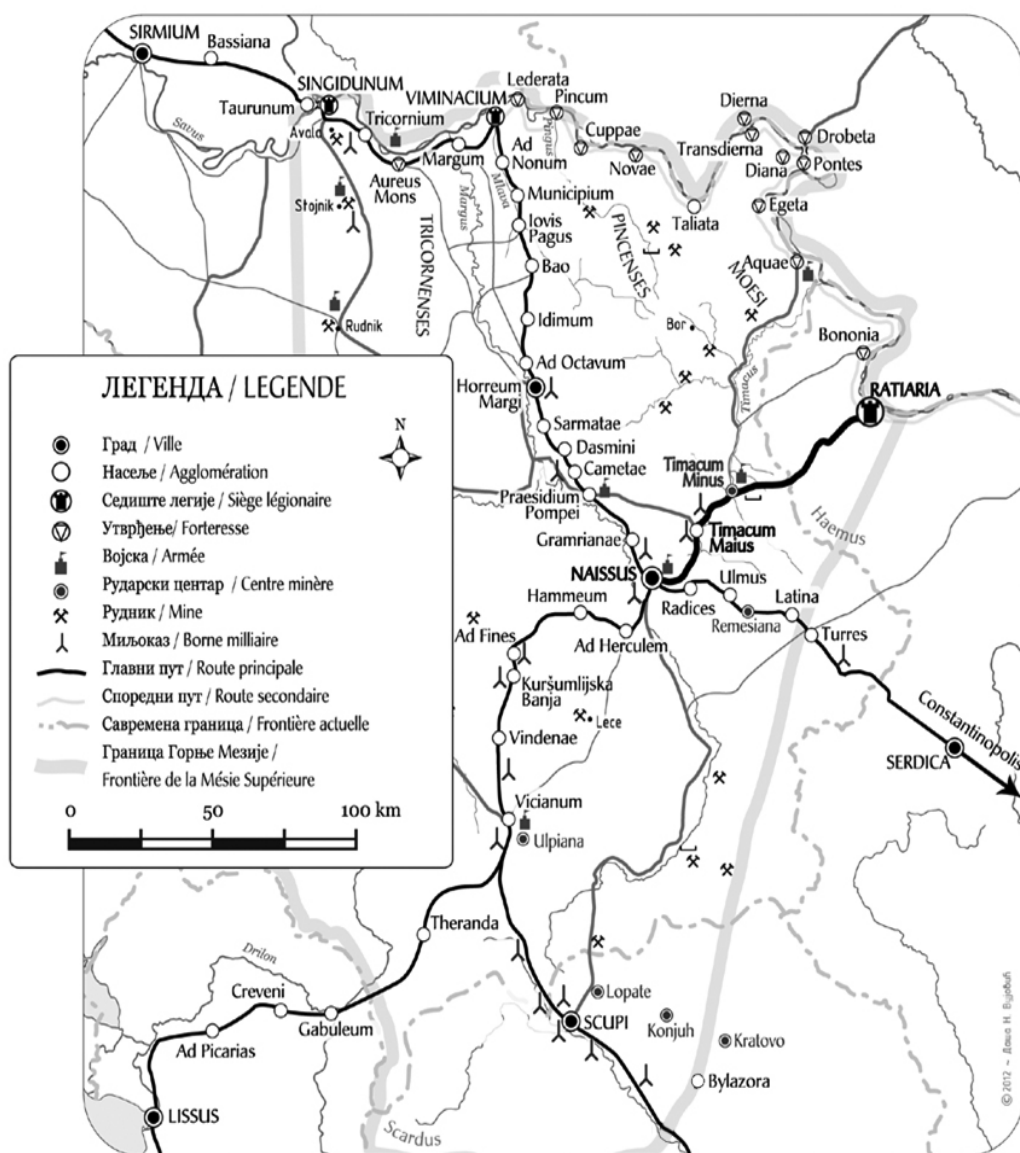
¹⁸ *CIL* III, 1128.

¹⁹ Marić 1933, 79; Vučković-Todorović 1965, 178; Zotović 1966, 49; Zotović 1967, 67.

²⁰ Concerning the sojourns of Septimius Severus in the region of antique Viminacium, see *IMS* II, 23, 11; Fitz 1959, 258.

²¹ The sculpture of Jupiter Dolichenus on a bull, without inscription, was found in Timacum Minus: Vulić 1941–1948, 92 and 201.

²² Concerning the antique fortification Timacum Minus and army garrisons which were stationed there, see *IMS* III.2, 32; Petrović and Jovanović 1997, 18.



In the territory of the Roman province of Upper Moesia up to 19 inscriptions dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus were found so far,²³ several figural representations of the divinity²⁴ and depictions of Dolichenus' cult on a triangular plate which is probably

²³ *AE* 2005, 1313; *AE* 2010, 1394; *CCID*, no. 87 = *AE* 2003, 1532; *CCID*, no. 104 = *AE* 1933, 121; *CCID*, no. 105 = *AE* 1933, 122; *CCID*, no. 110; *CCID*, no. 111 = *AE* 1938, 91 = *AE* 1984, 740; *CCID*, no. 113 = *AE* 1938, 92; *CIL* III, 1697 = *CIL* III, 8243 = *IMS* VI, 208 = *CCID*, no. 116; *CIL* III, 6290 = *CIL* III, 8084 = *CCID*, no. 109; *CIL* III, 14502.1 = *CCID*, no. 112 = *AE* 1902, 69; *CIL* III, 14503.1 = *CCID*, no. 86 = *AE* 1902, 20; *ILJug* II, 465 = *CCID*, no. 91 = *AE* 1966, 335 = *AE* 1968, 454; *ILJug* II, 466 = *CCID*, no. 95 = *AE* 1966, 336 = *AE* 1968, 453; *ILJug* II, 1416 = *CCID*, no. 115 = *AE* 1966, 340; *ILJug* III, 1438 = *CCID*, no. 126 = *AE* 1981, 739; *AE* 1966, 334; Gabričević 1987; Vasić 1984, 118, pl. 11.

²⁴ Egeta: Vučković-Todorović 1965, 173–182; Yasen: Merlat 1951, 42, no. 47; Ravna (Timacum Minus): Vulić 1941–1948, 93, nos. 198 and 201; Petrović and Jovanović 1997, 61, no. 7.

part of a *signum*.²⁵ Of the 19 inscriptions up to 16 originate from the territory of the Danube *limes* and its closest hinterland. Only three inscriptions originate from the interior of the province.²⁶ Along the Danube *limes* archaeological research has confirmed the presence of two temples dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus at Egeta and Diana.²⁷ On the basis of inscriptions from the area of the Danube border which mention the priests of the Dolichenus cult we can assume the existence of at least one more temple near Viminacium.²⁸ It appears that a temple of Jupiter Dolichenus also existed in the interior of the province, at Timacum Minus, although we do not have any epigraphic confirmation of this claim. During the research of N. Vulić in Timacum Minus a group of sculptures of white marble of an excellent quality was found. In fact, a group of objects from the same place could be from a Dolicheneum. These objects have been published and confirmed by a photo of the excavator posing with the sculptures.²⁹ Vulić found a male marble statue, a female torso, a head of Sarapis, a female portrait, a head, a bull with the remains of the feet of Jupiter Dolichenus on its back, a relief of Silenus, a representation of a ram, a small plaque depicting Zeus and Hera, and column bases with lower parts in the shape of human and zoomorphic figures. All these items were transferred to the Museum of Niš, where they were badly damaged during the Second World War.

Amongst this assembly of finds we would highlight the bull sculpture with the feet of Jupiter Dolichenus as well as the head of bearded deity with conical cap, which for decades might have been wrongly associated with Sarapis, following the interpretation of Vulić. According to A. Jovanović, in his recent works, it appears more likely that it is a depiction of Jupiter Dolichenus.³⁰

Mining aspects of the Jupiter Dolichenus cult in Moesia Superior

As is known, the Upper Moesian province was thought to be a land rich in ores according to the notes of a Roman legislator Saturninus from the 2nd century AD,³¹ similarly to Africa Proconsularis being called the granary.³² In Roman times, the region of the Timok River Basin was characterised by intensive mining activity. It was organised as one of the mining districts of the Dardanian mines in Moesia Superior, *metalli Dardanici*, therefore an Imperial domain led by the prefect of the territory with its headquarters at Timacum Minus.³³

²⁵ Merlat 1951, 45, no. 50.

²⁶ Ulpiana: *ILJug* III, 1416 = *CCID*, no. 115 = *AE* 1966, 340; Prizren: *ILJug* III, 1438 = *CCID*, no. 126 = *AE* 1981, 739; Kumanovo (Lopate): *CIL* III, 1697 = *CIL* III, 8243 = *IMS* VI, 208 = *CCID*, no. 116.

²⁷ Egeta: Vučković-Todorović 1965; Diana: Gilliam 1958; Mirković 1977.

²⁸ Kličevac (Viminacium): *AE* 2005, 1313; Petrović 2004.

²⁹ Vulić 1941–1948, 91–94, nos. 196–205.

³⁰ Jovanović 2007, 183–186.

³¹ Dušanić 2004, 255, n. 44.

³² Justinian, *Digest* 48.19.16, l. 9–10 (Saturninus): “*evenit, ut eadem scelera in quibusdam provinciis gravius plectantur, ut in Africa messium incensores, in Mysia (!) vitium, ubi metalla sunt, adulteratoris monetae*”. For further details on Saturninus’ notes, especially concerning money forging in mining districts, see Dušanić 1995, 135–136.

³³ Dušanić 1977, 75 f.

The existence of a temple dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus and figurative representations of this deity at Timacum Minus, the seat of one of the mining districts of Dardania in Upper Moesia, could be associated with the mining aspects of the Dolichenus cult, similar to the case from Dalmatia witnessed in the inscription from Maslovare in the valley of Japra. This assumption is further supported by inscriptions dedicated to Dolichenus from Gračanica (Ulpiana) and Lopate (statio Lamud) near Kumanovo, also the administrative centres of the Dardanian mines.³⁴ According to B. Dragojević-Josifovska there was a temple dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus in Lopate near Kumanovo.³⁵ At this point we should mention again the altar at Prizren of Surus who originated from the east, and was presumably a member of one of the cohorts in Upper Moesia (maybe Cohors I Aurelia Dardanorum).³⁶ In addition to the dedication to Asclepius, Telesphorus and Hygeia this altar was also dedicated, as we read from the text, to the genius of Jupiter Dolichenus: [Telesphoro Hygiae] || As|clep[i]]⁵o | So[3] | Heracliti Su|rus et pro | Gen(io) I(ovis) O(ptimi) Dolic(h)eni |¹⁰ Paterno deo et Geni(o) | co(ho)rtis votum libies(!) f(ecit). As the author of this text, I am inclined to accept the interpretation and reading of the text of this inscription regarding the occupation of the dedicant proposed by M. Dušanić (M. Milin): [Telesphoro Hygiae] || As|clep[i]]⁵o | So[3] | Heracliti Su|rus [m]et(allarius) pro(curatoris) | Gen(io) I(ovis) O(ptimi) Dolic(h)eni |¹⁰ Paterno deo et Geni(o) | co(ho)rtis votum libies(!) f(ecit).³⁷ According to this restitution of the Prizren inscription, the dedicant of this altar may have been dispatched to the office of the procurator of the Dardanian mines (*metallarius procuratoris*).³⁸ In the Roman epoch the Lissus–Naissus road, in the immediate vicinity of the altar finding place, was primarily *via metallica*.³⁹ If we consider all these arguments, Surus and the dedication to Jupiter Dolichenus from Prizren could be associated with mining activities at the Dardanian mines within Upper Moesia.

However, already in the second half of the 3rd century AD documents concerning the presence of the Jupiter Dolichenus cult in the region of Upper Moesia become very rare. Many scholars agree with this general conclusion.⁴⁰ There are undoubtedly reasons for this decline. In our regions, from the second half of the 3rd century, in general, there were increasingly less inscriptions, while at the same time the process of conversion to Christianity began. However, we believe that even after the Severan dynasty, followers of the Dolichenus cult still existed. The Dolichenus cult could have been preserved in its essential form, especially in more closed and more specific environments, like mining

³⁴ *ILJug* III, 1416 = *CCID*, no. 115 = *AE* 1966, 340 (Ulpiana): *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) D(olicheno) | pro salute d[[d(ominorum) nn(ostorum)] | Imp(eratoris) Aug(usti) | Victor Demetri et De|metrius Ambibi sace[r]]⁵dotes eiusdem dei s(olverunt) v(otum)*; *CIL* III, 1697 = *CIL* III, 8243 = *IMS* VI, 208 = *CCID*, no. 116 (Kumanovo, Lopate = statio Lamud): *[I(ovi)] O(ptimo) M(aximo) D(olicheno) | pro salute | Imp(eratoris) M(arci) Aureli | Antonini Pii |⁵ Aug(usti) et Iuliae | Aug(ustae) matri(s) kast(rorum) | Achilles eorun|dem servus pos(uit) | Kal(endis) Novembri[bus] |¹⁰ Sabino II et Anu|lino co(n)s(ulibus)*.

³⁵ *IMS* VI, 208.

³⁶ Prizren: *ILJug* III, 1438 = *CCID*, no. 126 = *AE* 1981, 739.

³⁷ Dušanić 1984.

³⁸ Dušanić 1984, 31.

³⁹ Petrović 2008.

⁴⁰ Zotović 1966, 49.

areas. Similar examples are known from the regions of nearby Dalmatia, as has already been mentioned for the site Maslovare (Majdanište) in the valley of the river Japra.⁴¹

Conclusion

The monuments of the Dolichenus cult in the Upper Moesia region are most frequently epigraphic in character, while purely figurative forms appear in relatively small numbers. It is important to mention that these are found mainly in the areas where the Roman army settled for a longer period. Here we are dealing, in the first place, with the regions along the Danube border, where the Roman Legions IV Flavia and VII Claudia were stationed. So far we have identified at least four three sanctuaries dedicated to this deity, discovered near Egeta, Diana, Viminacium, and Timacum Minus. The dedicants of the deity (priests, soldiers, tradesmen or craftsmen) originate in the majority of cases from the Orient, the region from where the cult spread. It seems that the local population of Upper Moesia considered this cult to be closely connected with newcomers from the East, in the first place soldiers. This is based on the rare occurrence of monuments dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus in the area beyond the *limes*. However, based on figurative representations and the possible existence of a temple at Timacum Minus, the few inscriptions from the mining areas in the interior of province, which have been found in places that are known as centres of wider mining areas such as Ulpiana, Lopate (statio Lamud) and Prizren and on the basis of an analogy with nearby Dalmatia and Dacia, we can assume that the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus in Upper Moesia was sometimes connected with mining operations and that there could be individuals with a direct or indirect relation to mines among the followers of this cult.

⁴¹ Medini 1982.

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