

ISIS AND IGABRUM

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Of all the oriental cults found in Spain in the Roman period that of Isis appears to have been one of the most widespread. Her cult is amply attested in Baetica, not least by the recently discovered Iseum at Belo. At Igabrum, in the North of the province, we possess two inscriptions which attest the presence of the cult both of which, as will be seen, pose some difficulties of interpretation.

The first, and unequivocally Isiac, inscription is that which records a dedication by the local ordo to Flaminia Pale. This reads as follows: «PIETATI AUG. FLAMINIA PALE ISIACA IGABRENS(is) HUIC ORDO M(unicipii) M(unicipium) IGABRENSIUM OB MERITA STATUAM DECR(emit) QUAE HONORE ACCEPTO IMPENS(am) REMISIT»¹. «Isiaca» here has been universally taken to mean priestess and usually public priestess, as the municipal adjective, «Igabrensis» immediately follows the title of Isiaca². Strictly speaking however the adjective «Isiacus» need only mean «connected with the cult of Isis». As both sacerdotēs³ and sacerdotēs publici⁴ of Isis are explicitly attested elsewhere,

¹ C.I.L. II.1611 = I.L.E.R. 462.

² A. García y Bellido, *Les religions orientales dans l'Espagne romaine*, Leiden 1967, p. 109, «signifie sans doute sacerdos publica Isidis», M. L. Segura Arista, *La ciudad romana de Igabrum*, p. 151, «son atributos... deben significar sacerdos publica Isidis».

³ C.I.L. III.10908 from Savaria, Hungary, C.I.L. VI.2247-8 from Rome, C.I.L. VI 466 & C.I.L. XIV.4672 from Ostia, C.I.L. V.2806 from Abano in Venetia.

⁴ C.I.L. X.3759, Cn. Stennius Egnatius Primus... Sac(erdos) p(ublicus) Deae Isidis et Serapidis, from Acerra.

«Isiaca» may merely imply that Flaminia was an initiate of the mysteries of the goddess rather than a priestess. This is certainly the meaning of the word on two graffiti from Pompeii where the Isiaci, here clearly meaning simply devotees of Isis, solicit support for candidates for the post of aedile⁵. At Rome a woman of senatorial rank, Fabia Aconia Paulina, calls herself an Isiaca among a list of attributes showing she had been initiated into a variety of mystery religions, none of the other titles concerned imply that she held office in these cults and so «Isiaca» here too is best taken as meaning «initiate» rather than priestess⁶. Similarly the term «Isiacus» occurs at Ostia without priestly connotations⁷. This interpretation of «Isiaca» is also strengthened by the fact that initiates of Anubis, «Anubiaci», existed within the Isiac cult and on an inscription from Ostia a P. Cornelius Victorinus describes himself as both an Anubiacus and Isiacus, here these two titles appear to indicate different grades of initiation in the cult⁸.

Nevertheless the poet Manilius⁹ seems to use «Isiaca» to mean «priestess of Isis», although here we must bear in mind poetic license and the requirements of metre. Flaminia's description as an Isiaca Igabrensis is also curious. However it is not necessary to see these two words as a reference to a single office, namely a municipal priesthood of Isis. Given the devotion that the Isiac cult could inspire «Isiacus» was on occasions simply added to the names and career achievements of an individual, for example the Victorinus mentioned above lists the title immediately after his name and before his scribal titles. In the same way Flaminia may have insisted that the title «Isiaca» be used in the dedication to her. The use of the municipal adjective in the town of origin is not common but not unusual¹⁰ and here may be simply be to indicate that Flaminia was a native of the town rather than a wealthy incola. Flaminia was clearly of an upper class background as her reimbursement of the cost of the dedication shows. She was therefore of a much higher class than the Victorinus mentioned above who was a mere scriba, an occupation normally reserved for poor freeborn citizens. Given her background Flaminia could have been a priestess, but there is no necessary reason why this should have been the case as the cult drew simple adherents from all strata of Roman society¹¹. The reason for the ordo's benefaction is not clear; the «merita» concerned

⁵ C.I.L. IV.6420b, C.I.L. IV.1011.

⁶ C.I.L. VI.1780.

⁷ C.I.L. XIV.352.

⁸ C.I.L. XIV.4290 = I.L.S. 4369.

⁹ Manilius, *Astronomica*, I 918.

¹⁰ See for example a dedication to Apollo by *M. Sentius M.f. Serg. Maurianus Italic.* found at Italic, *B.R.A.H.* 180 (1983), p. 7 and a dedication of Imperial statuary by *C. Annius Prasius Ipolobulesis* at Carcabuey, the ancient *Ipolobulco*.

¹¹ This appeal ranged from emperors such as Domitian to the servile *Sodalitium vernerum colentes Isid(em)* of *Valentia*, C.I.L. II.3730.

could well have been purely secular, such as a donation of corn. Nor does the dedication of the inscription and probable surmounting statue to Pietas Augusta have an explicit Isiac connection. Therefore although it is possible that Flaminia was a priestess of the goddess Isis, our evidence can certainly not be said to prove this, not that this presumed priesthood was an official municipal post, and tends, if anything, to suggest that she was merely a wealthy initiate of the cult.

Although the inscription of Flaminia Pale contains some difficulties in determining her precise rôle in the Isiac cult, that she was connected with the cult is clear. Far more controversial is the interpretation of a second inscription surmounted by a small and badly damaged statue found near Cabra, the site of ancient Igabrum, at «La Chicorra». This inscription reads: T. FLAVIUS V(ic)TOR COLLEG(io?/ii?) [.]iLLYCHINIARIO-(ru)M PRATI NOVI D(onum/edit?) D(edit?/edicavit?)¹². The main interest in the stone lies in the interpretation of the hapax legomenon «Illychiniariorum». However a correct interpretation of the sculpture which surmounts it is also needed and could well help to throw light on the nature of the mysterious Illychiniarii.

The sculpture is of a recumbant figure. The head of this figure has been lost as have its feet, part of its legs, its right arm and left hand. The figure suffered further damage from modern restoration which, interpreting the sculpture as a water nymph, added breasts to the statue. Despite this it is clear that the upper part of the torso was carved as being covered in drapery. The left arm of the figure rests on a jar from which water is flowing and adjacent to this is a crocodile emerging from a small cave. The work is not of high quality and has been excuted in a white, crystalline marble which appears not to be of local origin¹³.

The first major treatment of the piece, that of García y Bellido¹⁴, interpreted the statue, which he dated to the early second century A.D., as a recumbant figure of the goddess Isis, drawing a parallel between it and a small bronze figurine of a reclining Isis Fortuna found at La Cruz del Santo, Sotos de Burgo¹⁵. Noting the importance of lamps in the rituals of Isis, García y Bellido went on to interpret the Illychiniarii as a professional collegium of lamp makers who had adopted Isis as their patron. Isis' connection with lamps does in fact seem strong. One Isiac festival involving lamps, the Lychnapsia, which is listed on the calender of Philocalus as

¹² A.E. 1972, 272 = H.A.Ep. 17-20, 1966-9, n° 2711 = L. Segura Arista, *La ciudad Ibero-romana de Igabrum*, n° 22. The stone is now in the archaeological museum of Corduba, inv. n° 7170.

¹³ A. Blanco Freijeiro, «El Nilo de Igabrum», *Habis* 2 (1971), pp. 251 ss. suggest the marble may be Italian in origin.

¹⁴ «Isis y el collegium Illychiniariorum del Pratum novum (Conv. Cordubensis)» in *Hommages Deonna* 1957, Collection Latomus vol. 28. See also *Les religions orientales dans l'Espagne romaine*, ch. 11, Isis.

¹⁵ See T. Ortego, «Por tierras de Uxama. Hallazgos recientes de época romana». *A.Esp. A.* 22, 1949, pp. 413 ss., esp. pp. 416-8 & figs. 3 & 4.

taking place on the 12th of August seems particularly closely connected with the goddess as it appears that when the original Egyptian festival was adopted into the Julian calendar from the Egyptian mobile calendar the date used co-incided with the traditional birthday of the goddess¹⁶.

This interpretation of the statue was strongly challenged by A. Blanco Freijeiro¹⁷. Blanco believed that the statue, after its modern accretions had been removed, was, in fact, clearly masculine in form and that the jar and crocodile found beneath its left arm indicated that it was a depiction of the river Nile. This interpretation of the statue has found widespread acceptance and has led, in the main, to the stone being rejected as an Isiac monument¹⁸. Blanco went on to suggest that the inscription beneath the statue should in fact read *ϩSillychiniario(ru)m* and that this in turn was an engraver's error for *Siliginiariorum*¹⁹. The latter group, the bakers of a fine form of bread, *panis siligineus*, are attested as a group at Rome²⁰. Blanco deduces from the inscription that there was an official guild of bakers in Igabrum, «una corporación oficial», possibly licensed on the same conditions as those laid down by Trajan for the bakers of Rome and having to contribute a daily fixed amount of bread to the *annona*.

There are however several serious problems with Blanco's interpretation. The first of these problems is simply the scale of the engraver's error envisaged. This requires that the engraver has not made an error in the carving of a single letter, a frequent occurrence, but has garbled the entire word, something far less frequent.

A second and more serious problem is why a collegium of bakers would wish to be associated with the Nile. Blanco believes that this problem can be solved if the Nile here is taken not as a symbol of Egypt, but rather as identified with the mythical agricultural hero, Triptolemus, who introduced cereal production to the world and hence a symbol of the Imperial *annona*. Such symbolism would be natural, he believes, in a corn producing area such as Igabrum. However the connection between the Nile and Triptolemus is very tenuous. Blanco can only produce a comment of Athenaeus²¹, likening the action of the Nile to that of Triptolemus, but without making a firm identification between the two, and refers to the identification being made in the art of Alexandria. However given that Alexandria was an Egyptian town such an identification of the Nile and Triptolemus there

¹⁶ E. S. Seden, The «Lychnapsia Philocaliana» and the birthday of Isis, *J.R.S.* 27, 1937, pp. 165-7.

¹⁷ See n. 10.

¹⁸ E.g. by J. Alvar, «El culto a Isis en Hispania» in *La religión romana en Hispania*, ed. J. Arce, p. 314, n. 22, «También es importante la eliminación de la estatuilla de *Pratum Novum*... que es en realidad una representación del Nilo», and by M. Bendala Galán, «Las religiones místicas en la España romana» in *op. cit.*, above pp. 286-7, «hay que descartar la estatuilla como monumento isiac».

¹⁹ The possible erosion of an initial letter is accepted as a possibility by the commentary of A.E. without a firm conclusion being drawn.

²⁰ *C.I.L.* VI.22 = *I.L.S.* 3816 «*corporis pistorum siliginiariorum*».

²¹ Athenaeus, *Deipn.* V.203.

could have seemed natural to the inhabitants given their reliance on the Nile for the success of their agriculture. The identification therefore could have been for simply local reasons and there is no reason to deduce from this evidence that the two were identified throughout the empire in this way. Moreover if the guild of bakers envisaged by Blanco was an official part of structure of the annona as he believes, this symbolism appears inappropriate. Blanco himself notes that the «Annona» personified on an inscription found at Rome appears as a female figure and not the Nile. This inscription is a dedication to «Annona sancta» by a member of the *corpus pistorum siliginiariorum*, which tends in itself to suggest that the Nile/Annona symbolism suggested by Blanco had not taken root outside Egypt. Moreover this form of representation of «Annona» as a female figure, is that which is found on coins referring to the annona²². On these «Annona» always appears as a female figure and is normally associated not with the Nile, whose depiction never appears, but with the goddess Ceres.

It also appears highly unlikely that a group of bakers associated with the annona would have been found in small provincial town such as Igabrum. Apart from the serious question as to whether the annona was in fact rigidly organized in the early second century A.D., there is no evidence that the Imperial annona was concerned with anything other than the feeding of the population of the city of Rome itself. Clearly it would be impractical to import baked bread to Rome from Igabrum and so a collegium of official bakers appears to be out of the question. The actions of Trajan concerning bakers are listed in a part of Gaius' Institutes which deals with how informally freed freedmen, «*Latini Iuniani*» could obtain full citizenship. The reference makes it clear that the conditions for bakers apply only to those in the city of Rome itself, «*si Latinus in urbe triennio pistrinum exercuit...*». Moreover there is no reference here to Trajan authorizing a guild of bakers as Blanco envisages, rather he is merely opening another road by which individual *Latini Juniani* could obtain full Roman citizenship²³. Trajan's actions therefore cannot be seen as providing proof of a parallel official guild of bakers at Rome linked to the annona dating from roughly the time of our inscription. If anything Trajan's actions appear to imply that the task of baking of bread for the annona was still in the hands of individual bakers at this period. Moreover Trajan's legislation refers solely to baking, «*pistrinum*», not to the baking of a particular form of bread, *panis siligineus*. Therefore even if Trajan had authorized a collegium of bakers at Rome there is no evidence that this would have been specifically a collegium of *siliginiariorum*.

A possible modification of Blanco's theory would be to suggest that the *Siliginarii* of our inscription were not bakers of bread (it is noticeable that

²² G. Rickman, *The corn supply of ancient Rome*, Oxford 1980, pp. 74-5, 260-7.

²³ Gaius, *Inst.* I.34.

the word «pistor» appears on the inscription at Rome, but not on that at Igabrum) but rather just millers of flour which was then despatched to Rome. This solution has the advantage of avoiding the problem of having bakers of the annona situated in a provincial town, but there is still the problem of why such high grade flour, clearly easily spoilt, would be milled in the provinces and then sent to the capital, something for which we again have no evidence, rather than the corn itself being sent to Rome to be processed there which seems much more likely.

Another possible modification of Blanco's argument would be to suggest that the Siliginiarii here are not part of the Imperial annona, but of a municipal annona. We have evidence that such institutions existed in Roman Spain²⁴. However there is no evidence that this form of annona was anything other than a office which required the purchase of grain for distribution to the poor at subsidised prices from private sources rather than employing bakers and millers itself. Such an interpretation is born out by our epigraphic evidence which always refers to donations of money to the annona and by chapter 75 of the Lex Irnitana which forbids the hoarding of commodities. Finally although the Nile might seem an appropriate motif for the Imperial Annona it seems an incongruous symbol for a municipal based annona at the other end of the Mediterranean.

J. Gil, while agreeing with Blanco's interpretation of the statue as a depiction of the Nile, disagrees with his interpretation of the Illychiniarii and offers a far more convincing interpretation. Gil believes that the word derives in fact from the Greek «ellyphnion» or lamp wick²⁵. The Illychiniarii therefore should be a guild of wick makers. Gil goes on to show that the normal material such wicks were made of in the ancient world was papyrus. From this he is able to explain the Nilotic sculpture which surmounts the inscription far more easily than Blanco as, since papyrus was originally an Egyptian plant which grew on the banks on the Nile, such symbolism would have a natural reference to the wick makers' trade. Gil further suggests that the Pratum Novum of the inscription refers in fact to the plantation of papyrus used by the wick makers.

This solution to the problem seems better than that of Blanco as the relationship between the Nilotic sculpture and the collegium concerned is immediately apparent. Demand for the guild's product would have been high even in a small town and so the presence of wick makers does not seem incongruous as does that of a guild of bakers of high quality bread. However problems still exist.

The first of these is that the marshy conditions need for growing papyrus do not exist in the region of Cabra. Nevertheless it could be argued that

²⁴ The epigraphic evidence has been collected by J. F. Rodríguez Neila, «Notas sobre las 'annonae' municipales de Hispania», *Hispania Antigua* 5 (1975), p. 319.

²⁵ J. Gil, «Illychiniarius», *Habis* 4 (1973), pp. 181 ss. This interpretation has been accepted by, amongst others, J. M. Santero Santurino, *Asociaciones populares in Hispania romana*, Sevilla, 1978, pp. 122-3.

such conditions could have been created artificially and that the Pratum Novum was just such an artificial plantation. This counter argument would also help to explain why the wick makers chose to name themselves not after the city itself but a district within its boundaries.

A more serious objection however is that there appear to be linguistic problems in the derivation of Illychiniarius from «ellychnion». The presence of an «i» between the «ch» and «n» of the word shows that it is probably derived from the archaic Latin «ly *chin* us» derived from the Greek «lychnos» rather than from «ellychnion». This is because the addition vowel «i» found in *Illy chin* iarii is a feature of Greek words borrowed into the Latin language in the archaic period which was consequently dropped. The Latin form of «ellychnion» found, on the other hand, is in fact «ell *ychn* ium» lacking this addition «i» which therefore suggests that the word was adopted into the Latin language in the Augustan period at the earliest²⁶. The presence of the archaic «i» in «Illychiniarius» therefore tends to suggest that the word has been derived from «lychnos» (i.e. simply the word for lamp rather than lamp wick) in its Latin form «lychinus» rather than from «ellychnion». If this is the case the particular connection of the collegium with lamp wicks as opposed to lamps in general is clearly broken.

A further problem also exists for Gil in his acceptance of Blanco's interpretation of the statue as a depiction of the Nile. Despite the crude nature of the statue and its later ill treatment, the top half of the torso appears to have been covered in drapery. Were the statue a representation of the Nile this would be surprising as river gods are normally depicted semi, if not entirely, naked in classical iconography²⁷. There must therefore be a serious question as to whether the statue is in fact a depiction of the Nile. If the figure is, on the contrary, female, as its drapery would suggest, García y Bellido's identification of it as Isis seems justified given the carving of the crocodile²⁸ and its parallelism with the

²⁶ See L. Segura Arista, *Op. cit.*, n. 8, p. 108.

²⁷ This form of iconography extends to the examples used by Blanco in his article, both examples of the Nile he produces are depicted seminaked. Further examples include the statues of the Nile found at Naples and Capua in Italy, the former possibly belonging to a temple of Isis. (see V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte des divinités orientales en Campanie*, Leiden 1972, p. 70 & figs. 22-3). For Spanish examples of this form of iconography of river gods see A. García y Bellido, *Las esculturas romanas de España y Portugal*, Madrid 1949, n° 108 (Mérida), 109 (Itálica) and 110 (Coria) and in a different medium the rivers, including the Nile, depicted on the so-called Cosmographic mosaic from Mérida.

²⁸ The crocodile appears to have been an Isiac symbol, if only for its connection with Egypt and the Nile with which Isis never lost her association (see for example the dedication to Isis Nilotes from Rome, *C.I.L.* VI.32458. A crocodile was dedicated to Isis by Juba II of Mauretania, Pliny, *N.H.* 5.10.51, an Isiac altar found at Turrus Libisonis in Sardinia depicts a crocodile, *A.E.* 1932, 63, as does the base of a statue of Isis found at Sarsina in Umbria, M.-C. Buchischofsky, *La diffusion des cultes isaiques autour de la mer Adriatique*, p. 44 & pl. 23b. Harpocrates, part of the Isiac pantheon, is also depicted with crocodiles, see R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, London 1971, plate 51. The fact that Horus was sometimes believed in Egyptian mythology to have assumed crocodile form while looking for the parts of his father, Osiris', scattered body may also be relevant to the Isiac cult.

Isis of La Cruz del Santo and a further bronze figurine of Isis Fortuna of uncertain provenience, but probably from Úbeda ²⁹. Again if this is, in fact, the case, the strong connection between the statue and the profession of the collegium as wick makers reliant on papyrus for their trade posited by Gil is considerably weakened, although Isis' connection with lamps could still be seen to provide a link, albeit a much more tenuous one between the two.

Gil's theory therefore, while persuasive, is not as secure as it might seem at first glance. The cumulative problems of where papyrus for the wick makers' trade would be produced in Igabrum, the nature of the statue, and, above all, the problems of the derivation of «Illychiniarius» proposed must cast strong doubts on its validity.

Segura Arista ³⁰, in the latest study of the inscription notes the weaknesses of Gil's theory and proposes the following solution. For her the Illychiniarii were, in fact, a guild of quarrymen, probably publicly owned slaves, who worked in what Segura Arista believes were the municipally owned quarries near Igabrum. This group obtained their name from the fact that they worked underground by the light of lamps. The connection between the guild and the statue of Isis would then be Isis' connection with lamps as seen above. Segura Arista goes on to suggest that the collegium could also have had a religious role and played a part in the rites of Isis. The Pratum Novum could either be the area where the quarries were sited, analogous to the pagus marmorarius found at Almadén de la Plata ³¹, or possibly a donation to the collegium as a cult site by T. Flavius Victor. Segura Arista also points to the fact that Isis and Serapis were the tutelary gods of the quarries at Gebel Fatierah and Gebel Duchan in Egypt.

This theory is attractive in that its interpretation recognizes that the statue is probably of Isis and not the Nile, ties the cult to a local feature of the town, namely quarrying, and appears to give a parallel case where Isis is connected to the trade of quarrying. However problems still remain. The largest of these is the fact that there is no evidence that the Roman quarries at Igabrum were in fact worked from underground. The link to the Illychiniarii can therefore only be speculative and it seems unwise to use this unique term to postulate the existence of underground quarries. Segura Arista recognizes this problem and suggests that if the quarrymen of Cabra did not themselves work underground it is possible that the term Illychiniarius was a generic term for quarrymen derived from sites where there was such underground working. However the absence of this term from those we know of such as marmorarius and lapicida appears to make this suggestion unlikely. The parallel with the quarries of Egypt is also not as

²⁹ See *A.e.A.* 39, 1966, p. 143.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, n. 2, pp. 105 ss.

³¹ *C.I.L.* II.1043 = 5205.

strong as it might first appear to be. Isis and Serapis were widely revered national gods in Egypt and so it could well have been natural for the quarrymen there to adopt them as their tutelary deities without there being any special reference to the trade of quarrying being involved in their decision.

A further problem with the theory is that the marble from which the piece is carved is clearly not local. It would seem natural that T. Flavius Victor in honouring a collegium of quarrymen, to which he himself may have belonged, would have commissioned a piece in the stone which they themselves has quarried.

Segura Arista's theory therefore rests on extremely shaky foundations, the most important of which being a speculative belief that underground quarries existed in Cabra, or that they were widespread enough for the word *Illychiniarius*, if it was connected with the workers in such quarries, again something unproven, to have spread to become a general phrase for quarry workers. Given the fact however that the word only occurs at Igabrum the term does not appear to have been generally adopted.

The fact that the inscription is a dedication to the collegium by an individual might also tell against Segura Arista's theory. It may well have been regarded as suspicious for an individual to court the favour of a group of public slaves. It could be argued that T. Flavius Victor could have been a municipal *libertus* of this group and hence there could be no suspicion attached to his dedication. However his name does not appear to be that of a municipal freedman, who normally took some form of «Publicus» as their name or an adjectival form of the name of the town which formally owned them³². Given the low status of quarrymen as opposed to stonemasons, it might seem unlikely that such slaves would, in fact, normally be freed rather than simply live and die in the quarries. This low status also raises a question as to why anyone should wish to court the favour of such a group in the first place.

All the above theories about our inscription therefore appear to have their drawbacks. One reason for this may well be that while some, probably erroneously, reject García y Bellido's interpretation of the statue as a representation of Isis, all accept his interpretation of the *Illychiniarii*, whatever they believe this group's trade to have been, as a collegium of traders or workers. This interpretation necessarily leads to a search for a connection between the theme of the statue with the trade of collegium. However another kind of collegium existed in the Roman Empire entirely unconnected with trade, the religious collegium. Given the importance of lamps in the cult of Isis it is quite possible that the *Illychiniarii* should be seen as the «Lamp bearers» in the rituals of the goddess, i.e. as a religious and not a trade collegium, similar to the *collegia* of *Dendrophoroi* found in the cult of Cybele. In Apuleius' description of the *navigium Isidis* we read that the

³² See J. Halkin, *Les esclaves publics chez les romains*, Roma 1965, pp. 147 ss.

image of the goddess was preceded by a large crowd carrying torches and lamps, these could well have been Illychiniarii of the type found at Igabrum³³.

The Greek derivation of the word also causes problems if it is being used to describe a form of employment in this, a Latin speaking, area of the empire. There appear to be good Latin forms for quarryman or miner and the Vipasca tablets show that in these professions Iberian terminology also persisted. There is also a Latin form for lamp seller, *lucenarius*, attested on epigraphy³⁴. It would seem that these terms would be more natural for the Latin speakers of Igabrum than the rather exotic Greek derived *Illychiniarius*. However if, on the other hand, *Illychiniarius* refers to a group linked to the worship of Isis, the Greekness of the word is easily explained given the Alexandrine origins of the cult and its use of Greek derived terminology.

If the religious collegium theory is correct, there would be no gap between the nature of the collegium and the statue to explain as both would clearly refer to the Isiac cult. Nor would there be a problem as to whether the statue was in fact a depiction of Isis (probably the correct interpretation) or the Nile, as the Nile played a major role in the cult of Isis, many of whose temples contained a cistern or other container to keep Nile water in³⁵.

An economic solution to the problem of the *Illychiniarii* therefore would be to see them as a religious collegium connected to the cult of Isis whose members were drawn from a particular district of the town of Igabrum, possibly the goddess was sited. That groups within the Isiac cult formed their own collegia is testified to by the Apuleius' reference to a collegium of *pastophoro*³⁶. If Victor was in fact making a gift to the collegium and not merely a member of it, his action has a parallel attested in Nîmes where A. Iulius Leonas made a gift to the *Anubiaci*³⁷. This parallel further reinforces the view that groups within the Isiac cult enjoyed some degree of life in their own right.

Such a reading of our inscription is strengthened by the existence of the inscription of Flaminia Pale, discussed above which appears to be contemporary with it, we know therefore that the Isiac cult was active in the town at the time of the inscription's erection. A dedication to a religious collegium by one of its members would also have none of the problems that a dedication to a group of public slaves would have had as discussed above.

³³ Apuleius, *Met.* 11.9.

³⁴ *C.I.L.* XV.6263.

³⁵ See R. A. Wild, Water in the cult of Isis and Serapis (*EPRO* 87) *passim* and Juvenal, *Sat.* VI.526. The Nile frequently symbolised the resurrected Osiris or Horus in the rites of cult, see for example Pyramid texts, ed. K. Sethe n° 628b & 628c and Heliiodorus, *Ethiopica* 9.9.5. V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte des divinités orientales en Campanie*, p. 70 & pl. 22-3 believes that the large sculpture of the Nile found in Naples came from an Isiac temple, but the evidence is not conclusive.

³⁶ Apuleius, *Met.* 11.29.

³⁷ *C.I.L.* XII.3043, A. *Iulius leonas donum quod promiserat Anubiatis...*

The religious collegium interpretation therefore seems to be correct. It fits in well with what we know of the rites and symbolism of the Isiac cult, which is independently attested in the town in this period, and avoids the serious problems posed by assuming that the Illichiniarii were a trade guild. Our inscription therefore should be seen as a second document concerning the cult in Igabrum and restored to its rightful place in the corpus of Isiac monuments found in Roman Spain.