

NEPTUNE AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ITS CULT IN THE NORTHERN *LIMES* AREA

ANDREA CUMURCIUC

Abstract: The article presents the epigraphic items and figurative representations depicting god Neptune in the northern provinces of the Roman empire, namely Britannia, Gallia, Germania, Noricum, Raetia, Pannonia and Dacia. The analysis of the mentioned materials is made upon provinces, and therewith, upon object categories. The aim of the study is to clarify local aspects of the cult, yet it approaches only the official side of the issue, reason for which the items belonging to the minor art were not included herein. It could be ascertained that the cult was less popular in the northern part of the Empire, among the worshipers predominating individuals from the military environment or the political elite of the provinces. As such, the cult has a public and military character, being often used in imperial propaganda. The cult of Neptune is often overlapped by that for the Danube and Rhine; however it is also the protector of categories of craftsmen whose operations involved water.

Keywords: Neptune; Roman religion; votive altars; figurative representations.

Rezumat: Articolul prezintă piesele epigrafice și reprezentările figurative închinat zeului Neptun în provinciile nordice ale Imperiului Roman, respectiv în Britannia, Gallia, Germania, Noricum, Raetia, Pannonia și Dacia. Analiza materialelor menționate se face pe provincii și, în cadrul acestora, pe categorii de piese. Scopul studiului este acela de a clarifica aspecte locale ale cultului, dar el urmărește doar latura oficială a problemei, motiv pentru care piesele aparținând artei minore nu au fost incluse în articol. S-a putut stabili faptul că acest cult se bucură de o popularitate redusă în zona nordică a Imperiului, printre dedicații predominând persoanele din domeniul militar sau din elita politică a provinciilor. Prin urmare, cultul are un caracter public și militar, fiind adesea utilizat în propaganda imperială. Cultul lui Neptun este adesea suprapus cu cel al Dunării și Rinului, dar este și protectorul unor categorii de meseriași care își desfășoară activitatea cu ajutorul apei.

Cuvinte cheie: Neptun; religie romană; altare votive; reprezentări figurative.

Neptune is one of the oldest Italian divinities, a god who succeeded to maintain popularity over the entire duration of the Roman state until Christianity became the official religion. Records of its cult are present in all provinces of the Empire, yet with different frequencies and connotations. We shall analyze herein the specificities of the cult in the Northern provinces based on epigraphic and figurative monuments discovered in Britannia, Gallia, Germania, Noricum, Raetia, Pannonia and Dacia.

The term of "Neptune" seems to be of Etruscan origin, coming from "Nethuns", "Nethunus", the root *neptu* meaning "moist". Another possible explanation of the origin of the name is the Indo-European root *nepot* or *nept*, meaning "descendant", explanation based on the existence of the Indo-Iranian deity, *Apām napāt*, descendant of water¹.

¹ Arnaldi 1997, 5.

Neptune was a god of water, especially of springs, rivers and lakes. It is not excluded that he was a divinity of the sea from the very beginning, yet he was definitely not exclusively a god of the sea and navigation. He becomes a marine deity after having been assimilated to Poseidon, which most likely occurred in the 7th century BC². During the Archaic period though, Neptune was worshiped in Rome as a divinity of inland waters by a population who mainly dealt with agriculture. As an argument in favour of his original character of divinity of inland waters, one must mention the celebration of his annual holiday, *Neptunalia*, on July 23, in full drought. In addition, the temple of Neptune in Rome, on which there are records dating it to 206 BC, was built in Circus Flaminius, in the area most frequently flooded by the Tiber³.

Regarding Neptune's iconography, one may notice images of the god rendered by reliefs, statues, mosaics or coins, after the pattern of Poseidon, standing with one foot on a rock, on a ship prow, leading a chariot pulled by marine figures and having the trident and dolphin as attributes⁴.

The importance of the cult of Neptune increased considerably once with the break of the Punic Wars. The trident appears on *aes signatum* issued in Rome between 260 and 242 BC, as a possible symbol of the naval victories obtained by the Romans in the First Punic War⁵. Starting from mid 3rd century BC, Neptune was worshipped publicly as divinity of the sea, his place as divinity of inland waters being taken over by the Nymphs, Fons and Tiberinus⁶. During the imperial period, Neptune's image was used within the imperial propaganda as symbol of Roman naval victories. Neptune appears on coins issued under Augustus, Vespasian, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Commodus and Septimius Severus⁷. Still, compared to other major divinities in the Roman pantheon, Neptune appears relatively rare on coins. This is due to the introduction in 19 BC of the cult of Fortuna Redux, who takes over Neptune's attributes related to the protection of those travelling⁸.

In Roman Britannia, Neptune owns a small number of epigraphic monuments. A votive altar was discovered at Birdoswald and is dedicated to Neptune by *Reginius Iustinus*, who entitles himself "tribune". As mentioned by the dedicant, the monument was put upon an oath, which is not detailed though⁹. Another altar, dedicated to *Deo Neptuno*, was found at Castlesteads¹⁰, similarly to that from Newcastle, on river Tyne, identified close to the Roman bridge. From the same area was also recovered an altar for Oceanus, having the same dedicants¹¹. The monument for Neptune is dedicated by legion VI Victrix, having represented on the front side a trident and a dolphin¹². The two monuments were likely placed on the bridge, as sign of a successful

² LIMC VII/1.

³ Arnaldi 1997, 21.

⁴ LIMC VII/2.

⁵ Arnaldi 1997, 23.

⁶ Arnaldi 1997, 55.

⁷ Arnaldi 1994, 596.

⁸ Arnaldi 1997, 58.

⁹ CSIR-GB I/6, 89.

¹⁰ CIL VII 893.

¹¹ CSIR-GB I/1, 71.

¹² RIB 1319.

crossing of the legion. The monuments' location on the bridge is noteworthy, since thus Neptune may be deemed god of inland waters and Oceanus, god of the sea. In Castlecary, close to the Roman fort, another altar dedicated to Neptune by a military unit was identified. This is the first cohort of *Varduli*, formed of Roman citizens, who raised the monument under the command of prefect *Trebius Verus*¹³.

A few figurative representations of the deity were also discovered in Britannia. An altar identified at Cramond, of which only the upper part was preserved, renders the head of a bearded and long-haired god. Two crab claws were depicted on the head, and below, appeared two figures of tubular shape, which, based on analogies, were interpreted as dolphins¹⁴. A sculptural fragment coming from a statue of Neptune was identified at Cirencester. The statue represents the head and shoulders turned to the left of a male character. The nose of the statue is broken, yet the beard and rich hair point to an aquatic divinity. The typology of the sculpture may be established from the preserved fragment, the divinity being rendered reclined, leaning most likely on an urn¹⁵. Although the item appears published as a representation of Neptune, given the atypical position of the divinity, its identification with a river god seems more adequate. A relief fragment depicting Neptune was discovered at Housesteads, in the latrines from the south-eastern corner of the Roman fort. Only the god's feet and part of the body of a marine creature were preserved. The god's left leg rests on the body of the sea animal, its presence pointing to Neptune, and thus excluding the possibility for its identification with a river god¹⁶. From the same settlement comes another relief of Neptune, accompanied by three Nymphs. Neptune sits in the right corner of the relief, legs stretched to the left. Behind him is depicted an aquatic plant, onto which the god seems to be leaning. The divinity is rendered bearded with curled hair, holding a dolphin in the right hand and a trident in the left. On the left side of the image are rendered three female characters, standing, having only the lower part of the body dressed and each holding a *patera*. In the centre of the image appears a circular hole, the trace of a pipe, accounting for the use of the relief as part of a fountain decoration¹⁷. Another relief depicting Neptune together with Victoria and Mars was discovered at Corbridge. In the middle of the image appears a winged Victoria, sitting on a globe and holding with both hands a *tabula ansata*. Underneath, in the left corner of the relief, appears Neptune, and in the right corner - Mars. Neptune has only the lower part of the body covered, is rendered with crab claws on the head and holds a large anchor in the left arm. Mars appears sitting in the right corner, without weapons and pointing to the *tabula ansata*¹⁸. The image obviously conveys a political message, a reference to a Roman military victory, obtained with the cooperation between land and naval forces. A relief fragment depicting Neptune was also discovered at Bath. The preserved part of the relief renders a hand holding

¹³ RIB 2149.

¹⁴ CSIR-GB I/4, 62.

¹⁵ CSIR-GB I/7, 89.

¹⁶ CSIR-GB I/6, 87.

¹⁷ CSIR-GB I/6, 88.

¹⁸ CSIR-GB I/1, 46.

a trident¹⁹. Neptune's image discovered on the territory of a spring sanctuary seems to be indicative of the inland waters nature of the deity. Another relief fragment also depicting a hand holding a trident was identified on the territory of the Roman villa at Wiltshire²⁰.

In Gallia Narbonensis, Neptune appears on four votive monuments. The altar discovered at Antibes is dedicated by *Veratia Montana*, who mentions no further details²¹, that in Arles, put by *Lucius Veratius Verus*²², that in Substantion erected by a tribune of legion II, whose name did not preserve²³, and that in Genova, placed by *C. Vitalinius Victorinus*, soldier in legion XII²⁴. In a single inscription, Neptune appears with the appellative *deus*²⁵, in a single case bears epithet *Augustus*²⁶, and on a single altar is associated with the *Nymphae*²⁷, which would account for his nature of god of inland waters.

In Germania Superior, Neptune appears on two votive altars. Among the dedicants count: at Lausanne, *T. Nontrius Vanatactus*²⁸; at Avenches, *Aprilis*, slave to *C. Camillus Paternus*²⁹; at Ettlingen - *Cornelius Aliquandus*³⁰; at Heidelberg - *Valerius Paternus*, architect and *Aelius Macer*³¹, and at Brohl, *C. Marius Maximus*, centurion in *classis Germanica*³². In the rest of the inscriptions, the name of the dedicants did not preserve³³. Neptune is associated in a single case with *Silvanus*, in the inscription dedicated by slave *Aprilis*, association which seems to point to a nature and inland waters deity and in a single inscription, that dedicated by the centurion in the German fleet, appears beside *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*. Obviously, in this second case, the dedication is official and, in loyalty to the Roman state, the centurion makes a dedication to *Jupiter* and then to the protective divinity of the craft he practiced. Neptune appears as protector of sailor collegia in two cases, at Ettlingen³⁴ and Lausanne³⁵; in two cases, his cult is associated to that imperial, at Ettlingen and Heidelberg, and a single inscription mentioned an *aedes* for Neptune in Heidelberg. Regarding the inscription from Lausanne, one should mention that it was discovered in the territory of a sanctuary, located within the city walls, close to the basilica, sanctuary consecrated to Neptune by the sailors on Lake Lemman³⁶. Therefore, one may establish that

¹⁹ CSIR-GB I/2, 27.

²⁰ CSIR-GB I/2, 110.

²¹ CIL XII 168.

²² CIL XII 660.

²³ CIL XII 4186.

²⁴ CIL XII 5878.

²⁵ CIL XII 5878.

²⁶ CIL XII 660.

²⁷ CIL XII 4186.

²⁸ AE 1939, 102.

²⁹ AE 1991, 1257.

³⁰ CIL XIII 6324.

³¹ CIL XIII 6403.

³² AE 1923, 32.

³³ CIL XIII 5158, 11693; AE 1965, 245.

³⁴ CIL XIII 6324.

³⁵ AE 1946, 256.

³⁶ Ciobanu, Bărbuță 2000, 270.

in the continental area, Neptune was regarded not only as a divinity of flowing waters, but of lakes as well.

In Germania Inferior, Neptune appears mentioned on five votive altars. Among his dedicants count *Rufinius Saturninus*, soldier in I Minerva at Köln³⁷; *Octavius Ammius* at Domburg³⁸; the legate of legion I Minerva at Vechten³⁹ and *Octavius Verus Felicissimus* and *Qurtius Vetus* at Köln⁴⁰. Of the five cases, on three altars appears Neptune as main deity, each time his name being preceded by appellative *deus*⁴¹. In the other two cases, Neptune appears in collective dedications beside Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, Minerva, *Genius loci*, Oceanus and Rhenus⁴², respectively *Genius loci*, Mars, Victoria, Mercury and Ceres⁴³. Interestingly, of the five discovered altars, three come from Köln⁴⁴, which is due to the presence of legion I Minerva and the importance it granted to the Rhine, and implicitly, to the cult of Neptune. In addition, one should mention that in three cases, the cult of Neptune is associated to that imperial, at Vechten⁴⁵ and on two altars in Köln⁴⁶, further proving the importance of the Rhine in the protection of the Empire.

A few figurative representations of Neptune also come from the German provinces. On a fragment of a gigantic column of Jupiter in Alzey are rendered in relief Victoria, Neptune, Vulcan, Minerva and Mars. Neptune holds the trident in the left hand and wears on the head a mantle also covering his left side of the body. Neptune's unusual attire is adopted from mosaic representations, where the divinity often appears with a fluttering mantle⁴⁷. A relief fragment depicting Neptune was also found at Mainz. The divinity is rendered in a niche, holding the trident in the left hand and having before him many fish. Stylistically, the item is dated to early 3rd century AD, and it might have been part, alike the first case, of a column of Jupiter⁴⁸. An anepigraphic altar of Neptune was discovered at Worms. The image of the god is displayed in a niche on a side of the monument. Neptune is rendered standing, nude, right leg lifted on a rock. The left hand, raised, holds the trident, and a dolphin⁴⁹ appears rendered in the right hand.

Two inscriptions dedicated to Neptune were identified in Raetia. One comes from Gunzburg and is dedicated by millers⁵⁰, and the other, found at Stepperg, is dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Neptune and Danuvius by an individual calling himself *Toppo*⁵¹. In the case of the first altar, Neptune is the protective deity of

³⁷ CIL XIII 8239.

³⁸ CIL XIII 8803.

³⁹ CIL XIII 8811.

⁴⁰ AE 1981, 660.

⁴¹ CIL XIII 8239; AE 1981, 660; IKoeln 184.

⁴² CIL XIII 8811.

⁴³ AE 1981, 660.

⁴⁴ CIL XIII 8239; AE 1981, 660; IKoeln 184.

⁴⁵ CIL XIII 8811.

⁴⁶ AE 1981, 660; IKoeln 184.

⁴⁷ CSIR-DE II/1, 6.

⁴⁸ CSIR-DE DE II/4, 85.

⁴⁹ CSIR- DE II/10, 34.

⁵⁰ CIL III 5866.

⁵¹ CSIR-I, 1, 65.

a craft practiced with the aid of flowing water. The same character of god of inland waters is attached to the association with the Danube in the second inscription. A figurative representation of Neptune is also known in Raetia. It is a limestone statue fragment discovered at Faimingen. The head and lower part of the legs are missing, yet one may notice that the left leg was raised. The depicted character is nude, except for a mantle covering part of his back. Identification with Neptune was made based on the dolphin held in the left hand⁵². The find spot of the item seems to provide a few clues concerning the cult. In Faimingen, there was a famous sanctuary of Apollo Grannus, healing god whose cult originated in the belief in a Celtic god of springs, Grannus. It is very likely that the statue of Neptune also came from this sanctuary, where water fulfilled a considerable function, circumstances whereby Neptune would designate a local water god.

Three altars of Neptune were discovered in Noricum. The monument in Trojane is dedicated by *C. Castricius Optatus*⁵³, that in Celeia is a collective dedication made by all inhabitants⁵⁴, and that in Cetium is dedicated by a certain *Aurelius, vir perfectissimus*, who records water supply to Tragensamum⁵⁵, place which appears on Tabula Peutingeriana, however which was not identified in the field. Setting water supply process under Neptune's protection is indicative of his nature as god of inland waters, similarly to the inscription from Celeia concealing a critical event caused by inland waters, likely a flood.

An interesting situation related to the cult of Neptune is found in the territory of the *Lapydes*, an Illyrian tribe, established between the upper and mid courses of rivers Una and Korana⁵⁶. In 1895 a series of votive altars were identified close to spring Privilica, of which four dedicated to *Bindo Neptuno*⁵⁷, and one to *Bindi Neptuni*⁵⁸. The monuments were erected by local chieftains, bearing the title *praepositus* or *praepositus et princeps*. Figurative representations also appear on two votive monuments. Two goats are noticeable on both sides of the altar, and on the other, anepigraphic, appears the representation of a divinity. In the case of the second altar, a human character is rendered on one of the sides, holding a dolphin in the right hand and a trident in the left hand. On the other side of the altar, under a laurel garland, lies Triton holding a dolphin⁵⁹ in his hand. Conclusively, the local god Bindus was identified with Neptune, and the cluster of monuments evidence the existence of a sanctuary of the god there. The sanctuary from Privilica is a sanctuary of the springs, located inland, hence we cannot consider Bindus Neptune a sea god, but rather a god of freshwater. Regarding the cult of Bindus, the votive altar discovered in Noricum⁶⁰ is also noteworthy, which means that his followers also lived outside the territory

⁵² CSIR-I/1, 158.

⁵³ CIL III 5137.

⁵⁴ CIL III 5197.

⁵⁵ CIL III 259.

⁵⁶ Popovič 2000, 423.

⁵⁷ CIL III 14323, 14325-14327.

⁵⁸ CIL III 14327, 1.

⁵⁹ Popovič 2000, 423.

⁶⁰ CIL III 5483.

of the *Lapydes*. In fact, indications related to this god were also identified in Dacia, which we shall further discuss herein.

Neptune's cult is relatively more spread in the Pannonian provinces. Ten votive altars were discovered in Pannonia Superior. Among Neptune's followers count: *Lucius Servilius Sabinus* in Nauportus⁶¹; *Hostilius Ergiano* in Emona⁶²; *Iulius Lupus* in Pusztaapati⁶³; *L. Antonius Sabinianus*, legate of legion I Adiutrix and his spouse, *Aurelia Aeliana*, in Arabona⁶⁴; *M. Asinius Masinus* in Emona⁶⁵; *Cassia Clementilla* still in Emona⁶⁶; *Medus*, a slave, in Neviodunum⁶⁷; veterans of legion I under the command of *Aurelius Secundus* as *primus pilus* in Vindobona⁶⁸; *C. Vibius Celer*, centurion in Vindobona⁶⁹; *Ti. Claudius Martinus* in Nagyvaszony⁷⁰. In five of the ten cases, Neptune bears epithet *Augustus*⁷¹, indicative of the relation to the imperial cult. Neptune appears associated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Salacia, Nymphae and Danuvius⁷², with the Nymphae⁷³ and Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, Minerva, Liber Pater and Diana⁷⁴. The inscription in Nauportus records the construction of an *aedes* and a portico for Neptune, and the inscription from Arabona, dedicated to several gods, confirms the reconstruction of a temple destroyed by decay. Unfortunately, it may not be established, on the basis of the inscription, to which god the temple was dedicated to. In a single case, that in Neviodunum, the altar for Neptune records a sailor, indicating the god as protector of trade on continental waters. The same nature of god of inland waters also results from the association of Neptune to Nymphae and Danuvius.

In Pannonia Inferior, Neptune's name appears on eight altars. Among the dedicants count: *C. Iulius Geminus Capellianus*, province governor at Aquincum⁷⁵; *L. Alfenus Avitianus*, another governor of Pannonia Inferior, at Csaba⁷⁶; *Antonius Aulianus*, prefect of cohort V Lucensium at Crumerum⁷⁷; *Flavius Secularis*, tribune in Bononia⁷⁸; *L. Valerius Italus*, member of a sailors guild at Aquincum⁷⁹; *M. Ulpius Silvanus*, *signifer* in legion II Adiutrix at Aquincum⁸⁰ and *Marcus Omv...* also

⁶¹ CIL III 3778.

⁶² CIL III 3841.

⁶³ CIL III 4124.

⁶⁴ CIL III 4363.

⁶⁵ CIL III 10765.

⁶⁶ CIL III 13400.

⁶⁷ CIL III 14354.

⁶⁸ CIL III 14359.

⁶⁹ CIL III, 14359, 29.

⁷⁰ AE 1996, 1244.

⁷¹ CIL III 3778, 3841, 4124, 10765; AE 1996, 1244.

⁷² CIL III 14359, 27.

⁷³ CIL III 13400.

⁷⁴ CIL III 4363.

⁷⁵ CIL III 3486.

⁷⁶ CIL III 3637.

⁷⁷ CIL III 3662.

⁷⁸ CIL III 10248.

⁷⁹ CIL III 10430.

⁸⁰ TitAq-02, 934.

from Aquincum⁸¹. Neptune is associated with Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno and Silvanus⁸², Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno and Mars⁸³, Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Serapis⁸⁴ and Nymphae⁸⁵. Of the eight altars, four were discovered at Aquincum and one at Crumerum, settlement located on the Danube bank. This clearly shows that Neptune's cult overlapped that of rivers, in this case, of the Danube. The large number of the inscriptions dedicated by individuals exercising public, civil or military offices expresses their preoccupation for the province safety and implicitly that of the Empire, whose guarantor was the Danube under Neptune's protection. The same explanation may be given also to the association of Neptune's cult to that imperial, visible on two altars⁸⁶. The official character of the cult arises from the inscription on the altar discovered at Sirmium⁸⁷, which was located in a municipality space, as evidenced by the final phrase *decreto decurionum*.

From Pannonia Superior also comes a figurative representation of Neptune. On a relief discovered at Carnuntum, Neptune is accompanied by Victoria. The goddess is rendered in long attire, standing right foot on a globe and holding a palm leaf. To her right is depicted Neptune, entirely nude, holding the right foot on a ship front and holding a dolphin in the right hand and the trident in the left hand⁸⁸. The monument symbolises a Roman naval victory, which, due to the find spot, most likely occurred on the Danube.

A few votive altars dedicated to Neptune were also discovered in Dacia. *P. Catius Sabinus*, tribune of legion XIII Gemina, dedicates in Apulum a collective altar for Penates, Lares militares and Lares protectors of roads, Neptune, Salus, Fortuna Redux, Aesculapius, Diana, Apollo, Hercules and Spes⁸⁹. The unusual association of the gods seems to indicate that the monument was erected in acknowledgement of a successful travel, which at least partially occurred on waterways. Other two altars were discovered at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. The first is dedicated by *Philomusus*, an *adiutor tabularii*, addressing Jupiter and Neptune⁹⁰, and the second altar is dedicated by *Q. Axius Aelianus*, a *procurator augusti*, who erects a collective monument, likely located in the asklepieion, for Aesculapius, Salus, Epona, Venus, Neptune, Salacia, Cupid and Fons⁹¹. Three altars for Neptune were discovered at Alburnus Maior. The dedicants are as follows: *Nassidius Primus*⁹², *Surio Sumeletis*⁹³ and *Valerius Nico Platoris*⁹⁴. Compared to the other dedications in the province, in the

⁸¹ TitAq-02, 942.

⁸² TitAq-02, 934.

⁸³ CIL III 10430.

⁸⁴ CIL III 3637.

⁸⁵ CIL III 3662.

⁸⁶ CIL III 3637, 3662.

⁸⁷ CIL III 10219.

⁸⁸ CSIR-I/3, 154.

⁸⁹ IDR III/5, 299.

⁹⁰ IDR III/2, 247.

⁹¹ AE 1998, 1101.

⁹² AE 1990, 830.

⁹³ AE 1990, 845.

⁹⁴ AE 2003, 1507.

case of these altars, Neptune is the only mentioned god, bearing in two cases epithet *Augustus*. Regarding the origin of the dedicants, they are Illyrians⁹⁵ brought from Dalmatia in order to exploit the ores in the area. As mentioned above, in Dalmatia there was a pre-Roman cult of inland waters, represented by Bindus, who in the Roman period was worshipped as *Bindus Neptunus*. Although there is no mention of Bindus at Alburnus Maior, it may suppose that the name of Neptune concealed an Illyrian origin cult, which became actual due to the importance of water in ore processing. Other two altars identified at Alburnus Maior, dedicated to gods Naon and Maelantonius were also interpreted as references to the same Illyrian deity⁹⁶. It is certain that these dedications put in a sanctuary in the mountain area do not refer to Neptune as the god of sea, but as the god of inland waters, as seen in fact in the rest of the Northern provinces.

According to those presented herein we may draw a few conclusions regarding the cult of Neptune in the studied area. The number of the monuments, both epigraphic and figurative put to this god in all of the analysed provinces is relatively small compared to other major gods in the Roman pantheon. Circumstances are obviously due to the character of this god, generally perceived as the god of the sea in the Mediterranean region. In the northern provinces though, his cult has another character. Among dedicants for Neptune, in the entire northern area, predominate individuals in the military environment or the provincial political elite. They are, in Britannia a tribune, in Gallia a tribune of legion II and a soldier in legion XII, in Germania Superior a centurion in *classis Germanica*, in Germania Inferior a legate of legion I Minerva and a soldier in the same legion, in Pannonia Superior a legate of legion I Adiutrix, a veteran in the same legion and a centurion, and in Pannonia Inferior - two governors of the province, a tribune, a prefect of cohort V and a *signifer* in legion II Adiutrix. The public and military character of the cult also results from the inscriptions dedicated by an entire unit in Britannia and an entire city in Noricum. The association of the military field with Neptune's cult, as well as the use of this cult in the imperial propaganda is visible on the reliefs identified in Britannia and Pannonia Inferior, on which Neptune is associated to Victoria and Mars, as symbol of Roman naval military victories, but also by the association of Neptune with the imperial cult, visible in the German and Pannonian provinces.

Interestingly, most of the epigraphic monuments come from the two German provinces and the Pannonias. The situation is due to the presence of the Rhine and the Danube, rivers that played an important role in the defensive system of the Empire, whose cults overlap that for Neptune. The same association between Neptune and Danuvius is visible in fact also in Raetia.

Beside the military and political aspect, Neptune's cult has also a "civil" side in the Northern provinces. Thus, Neptune is the protector of certain categories of craftsmen, who practice their activity with the aid of water. Sailors erect altars for Neptune in Germania Superior, Pannonia Superior and Pannonia Inferior, miners in Dacia, millers in Raetia, while in Noricum water supply is put under the protection of the

⁹⁵ Nemeti 2004, 93.

⁹⁶ Nemeti 2004, 93.

same god. In what Neptune's cult locations are concerned, the god is provided with an *aedes* at Heidelberg, in Germania Superior and Nauportus, in Pannonia Superior.

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Andrea Cumurciuc

cumurciuca@gmail.com

Donath str., no. 44, Cluj-Napoca