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Who worshipped Mithras?

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MANFRED CLAUSS, *CULTORES MITHRAE. DIE ANHÄNGERSCHAFT DES MITHRAS-KULTES* (HABES [Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien] Band 10, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1992). Pp. 335, 25 tables, 19 maps. ISBN 3-515-06128-2. DM 92,-

Manfred Clauss is something of an ancient-historical phenomenon. Hardly has he left the Catholic University of Eichstätt in Upper Bavaria for the Freie Universität Berlin, than he has moved to the chair at Frankfurt aM. One has the impression that C. H. Beck's ancient history list would barely exist without him — since 1983 he has published 4 books, on Sparta, the history of Israel (1986), on Mithras (1990) and an Introduction to ancient history in the series C. H. Beck Studium (1993). *Vulgarisation*, to be sure, but without doubt *haute*: he possesses not only energy but the sharpness and breadth of knowledge combined with close attention to detail that makes for a good introductory text. *Cultores Mithrae*, on the other hand, which shares these virtues, reveals him in a more specialist mode, harking back to his work on the Roman army, the late Empire, and the Roman epigraphy of the Odenwald.

Listing Mithraists

The book may be characterized as a long, minutely detailed, appendix illustrating and justifying pp. 31-50 of his *Mithras*, which discuss the cult's geographical distribution and social catchment. It is indeed more than a little forbidding: there is very little discursive text, just an Introduction of 7 pp. and 26 pp. of conclusions. The bulk consists of tables, maps and lists: the name of every recognized Mithraist (997 of them) is listed alphabetically by province and where possible under the ancient name of the site. The results for each province or zone are presented in tabular form at the beginning of each section.¹ Important sites such as Carnuntum, Poetovio, Aquincum and Sarmizegetusa receive a page or two of discussion; otherwise the results for each province are evaluated at the end of the relevant section, and for the empire as a whole in the concluding essay.

If the book can hardly be read through, except by the 2 or 3 other people in the world with a detailed knowledge of the topic, it can certainly be consulted with profit. Indeed, anyone working on any Mithraic material would be well advised to do so. For, making use above all of the materials assembled through the organizing energy of M. J. Vermaseren in the series *Études préliminaires aux religions orientales*, C. has in effect produced the prolegomena to a much-needed revised edition of Vermaseren's *Corpus inscriptionum et monumentorum religionis Mithriacae* (1956-60) (hereafter V. and CIMRM).² He includes all sites, with a reference to the non-epigraphic material from each. The tables make it possible to see at a glance³ where Mithraic temples have been found, and the number of 'reliefs' (which includes free-standing sculptures of Mithras killing the bull), inscriptions, uninscribed altars, other cult furniture, and individuals found at each location or settlement. The provincial/zone figures are summarized in a table on p.261.

1 The Greek-speaking East, save Moesia Inf. and Thracia, is considered as a unit; likewise North Africa, including (perhaps oddly) Cyrene. Rome and Ostia are treated severally and separately from Italia, which excludes Cisalpina.

2 "An indiscriminating work" (C. M. Daniels, "The role of the Roman army in the spread and practice of Mithraism," in J. R. Hinnells (ed.), *Mithraic studies* [Manchester 1975] 2, at 249) — but still indispensable.

3 Once one has mastered the sigla: the most important footnote is p.16 n.1, where they are explained.