

## **Epigraphy in the 21st century. The “Circle of the Strait”: Revising the paradigm**

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The Strait of Gibraltar extends latitudinally for dozens of kilometres, but is a mere fourteen kilometres across at its narrowest point. The Roman Empire, like the Islamic dynasties that would follow, encountered no resistance as it expanded its territory across the Strait. This easily negotiable waterway, with its distinct geology and morphology, occupied a particularly strategic position, connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and Europe to Africa. For a long time, from the 3rd to the 15th century AD, the strait served to unify the densely populated regions of southern Spain and northern Morocco. Roman military conquests, the establishment of infrastructure and administration, economic and migratory movements, religious beliefs and cultural connections spanning the strait, as well as the social dimensions inherent in these relations, culminated to produce a region that was unique in all the western Mediterranean basin.

The objective of this parallel session is to take stock of our present knowledge, review the progress of ongoing research, and revise as necessary the concept of the “Circle of the Strait”—a title owed to the Spanish archaeologist Miquel Tarradell i Mateu—in light of epigraphic evidence. Methodologically, we propose to test the authenticity of this concept through a series of case studies, focusing on five main aspects: (1) military life; (2) economy; (3) urban life; (4) religion and worship; and (5) migration. We invite to analyze the epigraphic evidence of the southern Iberian Peninsula and of North Africa with the objective to compare the “epigraphic habit” on both sides of the strait between imperial times and late antiquity and to revise the paradigm.

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