CHAPTER ONE

MAPPING THE COLLEGIA CENTONARIORUM

This chapter represents an attempt to chart the geographical and chronological distributions of the collegia centonariorum. Failure to consider these distributions, and the lack of geographical and chronological analyses, would result in a methodologically flawed, impressionistic picture of these collegia. The project of mapping out the geographical and chronological distributions, however, is beset with problems, largely relating to the use of epigraphy as evidence. The imprecision and distortion that may result from these problems will be pointed out whenever they occur. It will become clear, in the course of this Chapter, that the geographical and chronological diffusion of this type of collegium had particular patterns, distinct from those of other well attested Roman collegia, especially the collegia fabrum and the collegia dendrophorum. The investigation of both the distributions of the collegia centonariorum and the implication(s) of such distributions has significant bearing on a proper understanding of the origin(s), nature and functions of these collegia. This Chapter, then, lays the foundation for the rest of the book, especially Chapters 2–4.

The Geographical Distribution of the Collegia Centonariorum

Epigraphic evidence indicates the presence of the collegia centonariorum in 84 urban centers, including Rome (See Appendices A and B). In addition, these collegia might have been formed in ten other places (Assisium, Clusium, Ligures Baebiani, Marsi Antinum, Pollentia, Praeneste, Tarraco, Vada Sabatia, Uthina, and the place which is modern Divajeu, Drôme in southern France). The dubious inscriptions are noted on the catalogue (Appendix A) and further discussed in Appendix C. The uncertainty of their relevance usually arises from either the fragmentary conditions of the texts, which prevent readings or restorations with any certainty. Despite these uncertainties, the general picture of the geographical distribution of the collegia centonariorum that emerges from the available epigraphic record is clear enough.
The *collegia* of this type are attested in both large and small cities. These *collegia* clustered in northern and central Italy and southern Gaul (Chart 1.1). They were relatively well represented in the Pannonian provinces, but only sparsely found in the Italian Regio IV (Samnium), Dalmatia, the Spanish provinces, Noricum and Moesia Superior. They have left little trace in North Africa, and Latium, and no trace in Britain, Germania, Moesia Inferior and the Italian Regio II (especially Apulia) and Regio III (Lucania and Bruttium) in southern Italy. It will be further discussed below that this picture of distribution cannot simply be attributed to chance.

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1. Venetia (Regio X, 10 cities), Transpadana (Regio XI, 10 cities), Umbria (Regio VI, 13–14 cities), Aemilia (Regio VIII, seven cities), Liguria (Regio IX, four–six cities), Gallia Narbonensis (six–seven cities), Picenum (Regio V, six cities), Etruria (Regio VII, six cities), and the two Pannoniae (nine cities). Others distributed in Rome, Noricum (one city), Dacia (one city), Moesia Superior (one place), Samnium (Regio IV, one or two cities), Hispania (one or two cities), Dalmatia (two places), and Campania (three cities). Apulia and Calabria (Regio II, one city?), and Africa Consularis (one place?) are not reflected in the Chart, as the identification is not certain. For details, see Appendices A and C.

2. When talking about cities, I use the concept shared by many scholars and summarized nicely by Boatwright 2000: 8: "Roman cities were much more than built-up and densely populated areas. They were always considered individual peoples, a fact reflected in their proper nomenclature as ethnic plurals rather than as place names. They combined an urban agglomeration of buildings and services, including administrative and governmental ones, with the land (territorium or chora) furnishing the basic livelihood for inhabitations of ‘city’ and ‘countryside’ alike.” See similarly Mitchell 2007: 302.