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Tertium genus?* Representations of religious practitioners in the cult of Magna Mater

The representations of practitioners in the cult of Magna Mater/Cybele hold a special position in Roman imperial imagery. The male images in particular exhibit characteristic somatic features and types of clothing as well as striking attributes, connected to certain rituals, religious duties or to the expertise of divination. The images oscillate indeterminately between genders. The effect is to construct a *tertium genus* by visual means. It seems that this marked otherness was chosen deliberately as a pictorial scheme to accommodate the specific religious status of the cult of Magna Mater and its practitioners.

The cult of Magna Mater featured many elements which would have been perceived as strange and exotic, such as shrill music, intensive smells and ecstatic dances, in the course of which the participants whipped themselves in frenzy.¹ We may assume that contemporaries also viewed the sexual status of some of the cult-functionaries, the *galli*, as ambivalent. They were believed to follow their mythological prototype, Attis, by castrating themselves.

The literary tradition offers surprisingly many references to *galli*.² Their tenor however is monotonous, for they play unsubtle variations on a familiar stereotype: by deliberately emasculating themselves, *galli* renounced their procreative capacity and altered their physical appearance, thereby acquiring an ambivalent gender-status and sexual identity. They thus literally embody their specialised relation with the divine; their religious role, once chosen, irrevocably determines

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1 See e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 6.234.

2 Sanders (1972) has collected most of the relevant material.

their individuality and their social status. They are effete, perfumed creatures wearing flamboyant garments;³ they make a mockery of themselves, follow deviant sexual practices and thus exist on the margins of normal society.⁴ These stereotypical claims were often applied to other functionaries in the cult of Magna Mater, irrespective of their specific office.

Even today, one can still find such factoids more or less unquestioningly repeated. Yet most of the ‘sources’ in question are highly polemical or ironic perceptions by others, not by the subjects themselves. Yet there are some personal testimonies by functionaries in the cult that do give us some idea of their self-image or self-perception, namely images commissioned by themselves or by their relatives.⁵ Their distribution is striking: with one exception, all are from Italy, indeed mainly from Rome and Ostia.⁶

Yet this evidence, which derives mostly from funerary contexts, has for the most part been interpreted exclusively in the light of the literary sources.⁷ As a result, they are generally read quite straightforwardly as ‘illustrations’ of the stereotype: they are supposed to show the protagonists as feminised, taking Attis as their role-model.⁸ Such interpretations, which ignore a number of typological and iconographic elements of these images, make the mistake of *attributing meaning* to them rather than *deducing information* from them. Even the criteria for distinguishing between different religious offices are often very vague. Hence, most of the images in question have been considered indiscriminately

3 See e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 6.219; August. *De civ. D.* 7.26; Juv. *Sat.* 6.511–521.

4 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.19; Lucr. 2.610–28; Ov. *Fast.* 4.179–90; Sen. *Vit. beat.* 26.8; Val. Max. 7.7.6. See also the expression in one of the new *defixiones* from the joint temple of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz: *ita uti galli Bellonarive abscederunt concideruntve ... nec ... in numero hominum sunt*: *AE* 2005: 1126 ll.3–5 = Blänsdorf 2012, 97–105 no.6. Some of these texts list the ‘followers of Bellona’ (*Bellonarii*) and, in one case (*AE* 2005: 1123 ll.10, 12 = Blänsdorf 2012, 64–75 no. 2), *magali* (a new term) alongside the *galli*, cf. Blänsdorf 2012, 13 and 70f.

5 I use the somewhat clumsy term ‘functionaries’ for these cult-personnel, since there is so much uncertainty about the status of the *galli* – can we properly refer to them as ‘officials’, which would be the obvious alternative? My original choice, ‘participants’, might apply to any worshipper, whereas I am concerned here only with individuals who held some sort of recognised rank or station within the cult, excluding *dendrophori* and *cannophori*. Like other contributors to this volume, I have not felt able to satisfy the desire of the Lived Ancient Religion group to avoid the traditional term ‘cult’, although I accept that it may under certain circumstances be misleading. Moreover, I have sometimes felt forced to fall back on the adjective ‘Metroac’, which is an ugly Gallicism, but is sometimes difficult to avoid.

6 The tomb-reliefs from Phrygia, whose interpretation is controversial, cannot be discussed here; see Cremer (1986); Koch (1990, 120–121); Rumscheid (2000, 86).

7 E.g. Helbig (1966); Beard (1996); Hales (2002); Mekacher (2005); Sbriglione (2012).

8 See e.g. Hales (2002); Mekacher (2005, 97).

as representations of ‘priests’ (*sacerdotes*), of *galli*, and/or of *archigalli*. An informed analysis of these visual media is still a desideratum.

In this paper, the relevant images are interpreted against the background of contemporary imagery: what is emphasised? What deviations from the norm are present? What are their semantic connotations? What iconographic modes and markers are used to depict these individuals and their religious and social roles? How do they communicate their standing in the public realm (at any rate, insofar as funerary representations count as such)? My starting assumption is that the pictorial language of the imperial period was not limited to simple dichotomies such as Roman/exotic or male/female, but was capable of expressing an elaborate set of different meanings.⁹

1. Images with an inscription that explicitly links the monument to the cult of Magna Mater

There are in all just four such monuments that can definitely be assigned to the cult-personnel of Magna Mater. All derive from a funerary context, and all bear a portrait or likeness of the deceased.¹⁰ The inscriptions carefully record the religious offices or cult functions held. To take the two women first: Laberia Felicla was *sacerdos maxima matris deum m(agnae) I(daeae)*, high priestess of the Great Mother of the Gods of Mt. Ida (cat. no. 11 in the Appendix below).¹¹ This is the

⁹ Beard (1996); Varner (2008); Birk (2010).

¹⁰ For some grave monuments on behalf of cult personnel of Magna Mater from Rome and its environs *without* an image of the deceased, see e.g. the funerary of C. Camerius Crescens, *archigallus Matris deum magnae Idaeae et Attis populi Romani*, and his *liberti* now in the Vatican Museums: *CIL* VI 2183 = *ILS* 4161 = Vermaseren (1977, 69–70 no. 261) = Mekacher (2005, 99 no. 98); the funerary of Iulius Charelampes, *sacerdos Matri<s> deum coloniae Ostiensium*: *CIL* XIV 4627 = *ILS* 9509 = Vermaseren (1977a, 132 no. 420), who, according to his (half-)brother, Calpurnius Iovinus, who was responsible for the monument, led the March procession of the *dendrophori* nineteen times (*induxit arbores XVIII*). For votives dedicated by *archigalli*, see e.g. the two marble bases of Q. Caecilius Fuscus, *archigallus coloniae Ost(i)ensis*: *CIL* XIV 34–35 = *ILS* 4111–12 = Vermaseren (1977a, 125–126 no. 401–402); and the famous *modius* of the *archigallus* M. Modius Maximus from Ostia: *CIL* XIV 385 = *ILS* 4162 = Vermaseren (1977a, 123–124 no. 395) = Rieger (2004, 146–147; 282 no. MM 4 fig. 119).

¹¹ *CIL* VI 2257 = *ILS* 4160 = Vermaseren (1977a, 67 no. 258). Beside her is an altar showing an eagle. On priestesses of Magna Mater in general, see van Haepelen (2011, 471–473).

only certain portrait of a priestess of Magna Mater.¹² Whereas this relief is quite well-known, the ash-urn of the *tympanistria* Culcia Metropolis (no. 5) is often ignored, due to its conventional decoration.¹³ Drums were an important part of the musical offering in the cult of the Great Mother of the Gods. As for the men, L. Valerius Fyrmus (no. 12) was *sacerdos Isidis Ostensis (sic) et Matris deum transtiberinae*, priest of Isis in Ostia and of the Mother of the Gods in her sanctuary ‘across the Tiber’, i. e. in what is today known as Trastevere.¹⁴ The fourth item, the funerary relief of C. Iulius Bassus (no. 13), has not hitherto been mentioned in this context. Friederike Sinn ingeniously complemented the missing lower left edge of the altar with a fragment, which, although lost, is preserved in a drawing.¹⁵ Now the inscription is fully restored¹⁶ and we know not only the names of the deceased and the commissioner, namely Bassus and M. Aquilius Primigenius, but also the religious office of Bassus: he was *archigallus Tusculanorum*.¹⁷

All four of these objects were found in Rome (nos. 11 and 13) or Ostia/Portus (nos. 5 and 12); only in two cases do we know at least something about their orig-

12 The seated statue in Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum 57 AA 19 (Wrede 1981, 220–221 cat. no. 78 pl. 9,3), which portrays a Roman matron dressed as Magna Mater/Cybele, is surely to be understood as a *consecratio in formam deorum*, but not necessarily as a priestess.

13 *AE* 1940: 131 = *IPOstie* A92 = Vermaseren (1977a, no. 444) = Sinn (1987, no. 542) = Helltula (2007, 211–212 no. 182): *D(is) M(anibus). Culciae / Metropoli / tympanistriae / M(atris) D(eum) M(agnae) utriusq(ue) / portus*. On musicians in the cult of Magna Mater, note van Haepere (2011, 475).

14 *CIL* XIV 429: *L. Valerius L. fil(ius) Fyrmus / sacerdos Isidis Ostens(is) / et M(atris) d(eum) tra(n)stib(erinae) fec(it) sibi*. On male priests of Magna Mater, see van Haepere (2011, 471–473). On the sanctuary of Magna Mater *transtiberinum*, so far known only through epigraphy, see Meiggs (1973, 366); Rieger (2004, 299 *MM 84); Steuernagel (2004, 78; 237). Against recent arguments that it is to be identified with the Vatican shrine, Erpetti (2009, 201–202) argues that it must have been situated near Ostia. On cult-officials both of Isis and Magna Mater: Vidman (1970, 140); and for the cult of Isis in Ostia, Steuernagel (2004, 212–227).

15 Sinn (1991, 43–45).

16 *CIL* VI 19875: *D.M. / C. Iulio Basso / M. Aquilius / Primigenius / [...] bernali suo b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit) / [...] vix(it) ann(os) XXXI / [...] usculanor(um)*. The fragmentary relief was found before 1867. The missing lower left edge with the inscription was found separately in 1894. Borsari (1895: 104) gives a sketch of the fragment. It was read in *CIL* VI 32466 as: [...] / I[...] / coniu be[...] / cum quo vi[...] / archigallo Tus[...] / et sibi. Friederike Sinn recognised that *CIL* VI 19875 + 32466 belong together. She convincingly argues that the fourth letter in the second line of the fragmented lower left edge has been misread as I. It should be read as T. Therefore the relevant word is not *coniugi*, but *contubernali*. Combining *CIL* VI 19875 + 32466, the inscription can be restored as: *D(is) M(anibus) / C. Iulio Basso / M. Aquilius / Primigenius / contubernali suo b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit) / cum quo vix(it) an(nos) XXXI / archigallo Tusculanor(um) / et sibi*. On the relation between C. Iulius Bassus and M. Aquilius Primigenius see below, § 3.4.

17 On *archigalli*, see van Haepere (2011, 473–474).

inal setting in a necropolis (nos. 5 and 13).¹⁸ The altar of Fyrmus (no. 12) is the earliest example in our group (second half of the first century CE), followed by the ash-urn of Culcia (no. 5), dating from the reign of Hadrian. The reliefs of Laberia Felicla and Bassus were made around 150 CE (no. 11) or slightly later (no. 13).

Turning now to the ways in which these religious officials are represented or, in one case (no. 12: *fecit sibi*), had himself represented. In the case of the *tympa-nistria* Culcia Metropolis (no. 5), the inscription alone refers to her role within the cult of Magna Mater.¹⁹ The decoration of the ash-urn includes no iconographic elements connected to the cult. The same is true of her rather inconspicuous image, a modest bust in front of a sea shell, supported by two cupids. The cupids, the shell, and the doves in the pediment connect the deceased rather to the sphere of Venus, following the conventional codes of praising female virtues.²⁰

The relief of Laberia Felicla (no. 11), on the other hand, shows her as a respected matron, as beautiful as Venus, dutifully performing pious service. Images like this were familiar for the Roman viewer: offering and praying women belong to the standard repertoire of contemporary imagery, often used in a rather generic way as a formula of *pietas*.²¹ In her case, however, the iconography does evoke Laberia Felicla's role as a religious professional. Like Culcia, she is shown in front of a large sea shell, but in her case the trunk is depicted, at any rate from the hips. She pours wine onto a small altar from a patera held in her right, and with her left hand she holds up a laurel garland. She wears a sleeved garment under a *tunica*.²² A mantle is draped around her waist in a bulge and falls down over her left forearm. The back of her head is covered, though the published photographs do not allow a decision between a mantle or a veil. *Vittae* (woollen head-bands) hang down to her breasts. She wears a necklace with a pendant apparently in the form of the bust of a bearded god, probably Jupiter. Such images, worn as ornament on the breast, are often mentioned in literary sources as typical for religious functionaries in the cult of Magna Mater.²³ Like Galatea, the

¹⁸ See the relevant catalogue-entries in the Appendix below.

¹⁹ See n. 12 above.

²⁰ For female portraits framed by a sea-shell see e. g. the relief of Felicla (no. 12) or, without any connection to the cult of Magna Mater, a funerary relief in Rome, Villa Albani inv. no. 179: Wrede (1990, 19 fig. 5).

²¹ Alexandridis (2004, 74–81).

²² Contrast Vermaseren (1977a, 68): “She is wearing a sleeved chiton and a himation”.

²³ Hdt. 4.76; Polyb. 21.6–7. On the pectoral/*prothetidion* see Graillet (1912, 237; 298); Sanders (1972, 1021–1022); Müller (2006).

priestess of Isis on a nearly-contemporary funerary relief,²⁴ Felicla is depicted with specific garments and attributes, which are associated with the cult she serves (long sleeved *tunica*, pendant shaped like a bust) and with the sacral sphere in general (*vittae*, *patera*, altar).

The images of Laberia Felicla (no. 11) and Culcia (no. 5) refer to their religious offices by means of inscriptions and attributes. Overall, however, they conform to the standard representations of women. By contrast, the representations of the two male functionaries differ quite markedly from standard representations of males.

Lucius Valerius Fyrmus (no. 12) is wearing a girded *tunica* with a long *kolpos*, for which there are some parallels in sepulchral imagery.²⁵ His long mantle is secured by a brooch on the right shoulder, for which there are likewise parallels in funerary contexts.²⁶ However, his *anaxyrides* and his headdress²⁷ – a tall hat whose crown is bent forward, and with side-flaps hitched up above the ears – are quite unfamiliar in such contexts: Roman citizens are never depicted in this way on their tomb-altars. In contemporary imagery the combination of these motifs is used to assert an origin from, or to evoke the idea of, Asia Minor.

Fyrmus acted as *sacerdos* of Isis as well as of Magna Mater. Attributes such as the lotus flowers and the ritual vessels may refer to the cult of the first, while the *flagellum* (whip) in his right hand clearly alludes to the rituals performed for the latter. The bird on the right border may be a cock, but we should not take this as a play on the word *gallus*, since Fyrmus explicitly calls himself a *sacerdos*.²⁸ It is to be read rather as a reference to the cult in general, where depictions of cocks are common enough: figurines of cocks, for example, were used as votives.²⁹

However, whereas the attributes are related both to Isis and to Magna Mater, the image of Fyrmus emphasises his relation to the latter. He is not depicted with a shaven head, which would be typical for Isis priests, but wears an eye-catching

²⁴ Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Loggia Scoperta, inv. no. 840 (ca. 150 CE): Spinola (1999, 174 no. 2).

²⁵ Cf. e.g. the tomb-altar of Q. Flavius Criton and his son Q. Fl. Proculus, *miles cohortis XII urbanae* (CIL VI 2911), now in the Museo Gregoriano Profano (Vatican): Sinn (1991, 72–73 no. 39 figs. 116–117).

²⁶ See below.

²⁷ It is a great pity that Fyrmus's face (no. 10) is damaged, since he was probably depicted as clean shaven. In the second half of the first century CE, however, this fashion was standard in male portraiture and the absence of a beard has no special connotation.

²⁸ Contrast Vermaseren (1977a, 133): Fyrmus is “unquestionably a *gallus*”.

²⁹ See e.g. the terracotta figurine of a cock from the temple of Magna Mater on the Palatine: Vermaseren (1977a, 27 no. 126 with pl. 126).

pointed hat, which no doubt alludes to the Phrygian *mitra*, which was worn by some Metroac cult officials.³⁰

If the image of Fyrmus can be said to be unusual thanks to its combination of clothing, cult-utensils and attributes, the relief of the *archigallus* C. Iulius Bassus (no. 13) must have struck a contemporary viewer as bizarre. Like L. Valerius Fyrmus, Bassus bears the *tria nomina* – that is, like other *archigalli*, he was a Roman citizen.³¹ However, his image is strikingly different from the standard male portrait, not only of Roman citizens, but of any social stratum.

The image is framed by two flaming torches. The mask of a lion, the animal-companion of Magna Mater, is depicted above Bassus' left shoulder. The right hand is raised in a gesture of adoration, while the left is lowered and holds a *patera*. His garments cannot be identified completely, since the relief shows only the upper trunk from the waist. But he clearly wears some kind of mantle above his *tunica*, which falls loosely forward over both shoulders. Such drapery is not usual in the case of male subjects.

In contrast to Fyrmus (no. 12), Bassus is not wearing a hat but a hair-veil, which covers the back of his head and falls down behind his shoulders, secured by a head-band with an ornament at the front. Such items are highly unusual in male portraits. Equally striking is the fact that the hair is covered completely, for even priestesses such as the Vestals are depicted with the hairline visible, despite their elaborate headdresses and lavish *infulae*.³² Another remarkable feature of this relief is the fact that Bassus' face is beardless, for since the time of Hadrian a well-groomed beard belongs to the typical features of male representation in visual art. I return to this point later.

Now we have examined these four examples (nos. 5, 11–13), which are explicitly linked to the cult of Magna Mater by the epigraphy, I turn to a further group whose iconography hints at a connection with Magna Mater.

³⁰ Juv. 6.511–521.

³¹ On the citizenship of *archigalli* Van Haepelen (2011, 474). It cannot however be excluded that he was a Junian Latin, since the mere *tria nomina* tell us little about precise legal status.

³² See e.g. the well preserved statue in the Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps, inv. no. 639: Fittschen and Zanker (1983, 92–93 cat. no. 134 pl. 160). On the headdress of the Vestal Virgins, see Siebert (1995); Mekacher (2006, 44–49).

2. Images assigned to the cult of Magna Mater solely through iconography

There are eight such monuments in all. Seven of these come from Rome or its immediate environs: the city itself (nos. 8–9), Ostia (nos. 2–4 and 6) and near Lanuvium (no. 10). Only one example, that from Caesarea (Iol) in Mauretania Caesariensis (no. 1), derives from outside Latium.

The earliest of this group, the famous relief in the Centrale Montemartini (no. 10), is Hadrianic. The statue in the Musei Capitolini (no. 9) dates from the Late Antonine period, while the bust in the Musei Capitolini (no. 8), the sarcophagus lid (no. 2) and two reliefs (nos. 3–4) from Ostia are all of third century date (the latter indeed from the second half). The latest in date, from Caesarea, has been dated to c.400 CE (no. 1).

I take first the figure of a recumbent man on a sarcophagus lid from the necropolis of Isola Sacra (no. 2). His garment shows many features we have already discussed. He lies supine on a *kline*, which is covered with a cushion and a sheet, with his head supported by his left hand and his left leg bent. By his feet stands a round *cista* ‘mystica’ of the kind found on no. 10 (see below). Like Fyrmus (no. 12), he is fully dressed in shoes, *anaxyrides* (trousers) and a long sleeved *tunica* like that of Laberia Felicla (no. 11), but in this case with a fringed bottom hem and a sash. As in the case of Bassus (no. 13), he has a mantle draped over both shoulders. His headwear is only partially preserved; the lower edge is clearly separated from the hair by deep drilling. This, together with its erect appearance, suggests a crown.³³ The pine branch in his right hand alludes to the myth and the cult of Attis.

There is at least one ring on each finger of his left hand (supporting the head), but not the thumb.³⁴ The right wrist bears a large bracelet with a representation of the goddess seated on a throne. Two rather late inscriptions mention such bracelets (Lat. *occabus*) as a regular part of the *insignia* of *sacerdotes Matris Magnae*.³⁵ On that basis, we can assume the deceased to have been a *sacerdos*.³⁶

³³ Compare Vermaseren (1977a, 141); Rumscheid (2000, 56–57).

³⁴ There are several literary references to heavy use of jewellery by functionaries in the cult of Magna Mater, e.g. *Anth. Pal.* 7.709.3; *Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom.* 36.13; *Rhet. Her.* 4.49.62. Rings decorated with Metroac images have been found in the Eastern Mediterranean, cf. Naumann (1983, 276 cat. nos. 662–664). We can take them to have been typical ornaments in the cult.

³⁵ The only inscriptions that refer to the *occabus* plus crown as the typical insignia of *sacerdotes Matris Magnae* are *CIL X* 3698 (Cumae) and *CIL XIII* 1751 = *ILS* 4131 (Lugdunum), both

Vermaseren argued that this monument intentionally alludes to figures of recumbent Attis, such as the famous statue donated by C. Cartilius Euplus to the *Campus Matris* by the Porta Laurentiana in Ostia,³⁷ or another well-known relief from the town.³⁸ They belong to a small group of images of the reclining god.³⁹ On the other hand, this recumbent position is very common in funerary contexts, so that one would have expected an allusion to Attis to be clearly signalled, which they are not. Images of reclining Attis and our figure have hardly anything in common apart from the outstretched legs: posture, positioning of the arms and the upper body, as well as the clothing, are all significantly different. Moreover the deceased is portrayed as mature if not actually elderly, which seems hardly reconcilable with the youthful god.

Two smaller reliefs were found in the necropolis of Isola Sacra (nos. 3–4) at the same time as the sarcophagus-lid. One of these shows a man standing in front of a statue of Attis, with a torch in each hand. The other relief apparently depicts the same person⁴⁰ offering incense on a *thymiaterion* before a statue of Magna Mater seated on a throne. Both figures wear identical clothing: *calcei*, *toga contabulata*⁴¹ and *tunica manicata*. The main attributes too are the same: on both reliefs the man has not only an *occebus* around his right wrist but also a crown with busts of Magna Mater and Attis on his head. There is archaeological evidence for such crowns in the Metroac cult.⁴²

mid-third century CE. See also van Haepelen (2011, 472). On priestly gear in the cult of Magna Mater, see also Rieger (2007, 94–97).

36 So Rieger (2004, 146). Most writers take him to be an *archigallus*, e.g. Calza (1932); Vermaseren (1977a, 140–141 no. 446 and 1977b, 100); Helbig (1972, 12–14: *archigallus coloniae Ostiensis*). More cautiously, Sbriglione (2012, no. 2.3): *archigallus*, *gallus* or other servant of the goddess.

37 Vatican, inv. no. 10785: Vermaseren (1977^a, 123 no. 394 pl. 244); Vermaseren (1977b, 61 with pl. 44); Vermaseren and de Boer (1986, 36 no. 312*); *Imperium der Götter* (2013, 108), etc.

38 Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 163: Vermaseren (1977, 119 no. 384 pl. 239 a); Vermaseren and de Boer (1986, 37 no. 316*).

39 Vermaseren and de Boer (1986, 36–37 no. 312*–324) collect a dozen images of reclining Attis.

40 Most scholars have identified him as an *archigallus*, e.g. Vermaseren (1977a, 141–142 nos. 447–448); Vermaseren and de Boer (1986, 27 no. 96*); Delgado (2005, 139 no. 253*); Helbig (1972, 12–14) calls him *archigallus coloniae Ostiensis*; Sbriglione (2012, no. 2.4) *gallus* or *archigallus*. Rieger (2004, 146) contents herself with calling him a high-ranking priest.

41 Goette (1990, 59–60; 146 no. 122) identified the garment as a *toga contabulata*, but his view has hitherto been ignored.

42 See e.g. a crown with protomai of Attis and Cybele (second or third century CE): Berlin, Antikensammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, inv. misc. 8169, illustrated in colour in: *Imperium der Götter* (2013, 98). For the pairing of crown and *occebus* as priestly insignia, see n. 35 above.

Guido Calza's suggestion that the figures on the reliefs represent the same person as the sarcophagus lid has now assumed the status of a factoid.⁴³ It is, however, far from certain. The facial features are quite similar, but this is due to the so-called 'Zeitgesicht', that is, the current workshop-conventions for representing faces. And an *occabus* on the right wrist is an insufficient basis for claiming identity. We should instead stress the differences, notably in the clothing: the priest in the sacrificial reliefs is depicted as *togatus*, quite unlike the man on the lid, whose mantle is draped around both shoulders with a fringe and a sash.⁴⁴ In other words, these monuments are in some ways similar but do not necessarily represent the same person.

The clothing connects the reliefs from Ostia with a statue of a *togatus* from Caesarea Mauretaniae (no. 1), which is our only example that does not derive from Rome and its environs. Since it was found not in a necropolis but within the city area, it may have been a dedication or a statue erected in public space, but this is far from certain. The statue represents a beardless man standing close to an altar. A drawing of the year 1856 indicates that the left hand, now missing, held a round container, possibly an *acerra* used for holding incense.⁴⁵ Like the sacrificant on no. 4, the statue is clad in a garment looped over the left arm.⁴⁶ The *lacinia* (tip clearly indicates that the garment is the short *toga contabulata* that becomes usual in late antiquity.⁴⁷ However, while the draping of the garment is not unusual, a belt above a *toga* is, so far as I know, unparalleled for men – belts are only typical on female sculptures.⁴⁸ The statue also features *calcei* and a laurel wreath. Since the right arm is missing from the biceps down, we cannot decide if the figure once wore an *occabus*.⁴⁹ The surviving evidence suggests the figure is wearing a *tunica manicata* beneath the toga.

The long knotted *infulae* reaching down from the back of his head over his shoulders and right down to below his knees remind us of Felicla (no. 11). The rendering of the hair is unusual: short strands are shown under the wreath,

43 Calza (1932). A factoid is an idea or claim or that, through frequent repetition by those who know no better, has assumed the status of truth.

44 Goette (1990, 59–60. 146 no. 22); *contra* Helbig (1972, 12–14 no. 3003), Steuernagel (2004, 238).

45 Cf. the relief from Ostia (no. 4): the *togatus* is offering on a *thymiaterion*.

46 For this motif see also the relief of Felicla (no. 11).

47 Müller (2008, 665) however thinks he is wearing a *tunica manicata* and a *pallium*.

48 I know of only one other example of a male figure wearing such a girdle, namely a grave relief from Ostia showing a boy with an 'Isis curl' wearing a belt above his toga, see Goette (1990, 73 n. 361a); Landwehr (2008, 71 Beilage 3d).

49 On both of the reliefs from Isola Sacra, the long sleeved *tunica* more or less touches the upper rim of the *occabus*.

not unfamiliar in male portraits of this time,⁵⁰ but the hair on top of the head is shown in a so-called ‘Melonenfrisur’, a typical style for women.⁵¹

We turn now to three examples which are linked together by the flamboyant dress-code of the individuals depicted (nos. 8–10).

A bust of the third century CE, found in Rome, shows a beardless male (no. 8). Its original function is unclear, but it may have been the upper part of a tomb-altar.⁵² Both the right hand raised in a gesture of adoration and the (upper) garment recall the relief of Bassus (no. 13). The figure wears a long sleeved *tunica*,⁵³ a mantle draped loosely over both shoulders, a hair-veil and *infulae*. Unlike the case with Bassus, the hair is not covered completely, for there are two thin strands of hair showing beneath the headwear and reaching down to the cheeks, which is highly unusual for male portraits. The most significant difference from Bassus, however, is the rich jewellery adorning the headwear, the neck, the chest, the finger and the forearms. The pendant on the *torques* shows a bust of Magna Mater,⁵⁴ so both ornament and its decoration evoke her. The fingers of both hands are covered in rings. The decoration on the lost object in his left, perhaps a *flagellum*, which shows an altar flanked by two lions, likewise evokes Magna Mater. There can thus be no doubt that the bust represents a functionary in this specific cult, even if his religious office can not be specified precisely.⁵⁵ The same is true of the following sculptures.

A slightly over-life-sized statue, found without the head in Rome in the 17th century and restored then as an Attis, dates from the late Antonine period (no. 9). In fact, as the *flagellum* on his left arm makes clear, it represents a cult-function-

50 As Landwehr (2008, 99 n. 2) points out, it is difficult to tell whether the strands are falling down or are combed upwards. In her opinion, the image shows short strands falling over the forehead.

51 For Attis making his long hair filthy as he goes mad, see Ov. *Fast.* 4.238: *longaque in immundo pulvere tracta coma est*, cf. *iactatis ... comis* (244), explicitly referring to the *galli*.

52 Cf. e.g. the funerary altar of P. Albius Memor: Boschung (1987, 87 no. 317 pl. 8).

53 Although the available photos make it impossible to be sure, it looks as though he is wearing two garments, one over the other.

54 The goddess is wearing typical attributes: a mural crown and a circular pectoral. The winged Eros, who is flying towards her, is rather unusual in the iconography of Magna Mater. The same is true for Atargatis – Dea Syria. *Contra Pietrangeli* (1951, 19–20); Fittschen and Zanker (2014, 80).

55 *Pietrangeli* (1951, 19–20 no. 28 pl. 3): priest of Atargatis; Vermaseren (1977: 65–66 no. 250): *gallus*; Mekacher (2005: 98): ‘stadtrömischer Gallus’; Simon (1997, 763 no. 123): *archigallus*; Sbriglione (2012, no. 3): *gallus* or *archigallus* (?); Fittschen and Zanker (2014, 79–80 no. 72 pl. 91): priestess or priest of an oriental cult (Atargatis – Dea Syria?).

ary of Magna Mater.⁵⁶ Like nos. 2, 8 and 13, he wears an over-mantle loosely draped over both shoulders. The hemline of the garment beneath his left elbow suggests we are dealing with a distinct piece of clothing which was worn in addition to the garment draped around the hips. The over-mantle was not drawn over the head, but ended at the neck. It is not possible to say whether there was a hair-veil. Around his neck, the man wears a necklace made of astragals and a *torques*. Below it, there hang two circular medallions and a large metal pedimented plaque decorated with images of Magna Mater and Attis.

The next case, a well-known Hadrianic relief showing the upper trunk of an unbearded man (no. 10), is rather similar.⁵⁷ The breast ornament, however, which is decorated with an image of Attis, is considerably smaller than those we have already noted. Like the reclining figure on the sarcophagus lid (no. 2) and Labe-ria Felicla (no. 11), this man wears a long sleeved *tunica* and a garment hung around his waist. As in the case of nos. 8–9 above, he wears a *torques*, in this case with lion-head finials, and, finally, a kind of jewellery we have not seen before, namely large ear-rings.

Long knotted *infulae*, as in the case of nos. 1 and 11, descend from the hair to the chest. He wears a head-veil with a broad band to which three large circular medallions are attached, the central one figuring a bust of Jupiter, while the two lateral ones show a bust of Attis, in three-quarter view, looking towards the spectator. In contrast to the relief of Bassus (no. 13) and the bust (no. 8), where the veil and the headband covered the hair, his hair can be seen falling in waves from the centre parting, just as we find in contemporary female hair-styles.⁵⁸

In his right hand the figure holds up a poppyseed-capsule from which three laurel twigs emerge (perhaps a form of *aspergillum*). In his left, he has a bowl of fruits, including a pine cone. A horrid-looking *flagellum* with a handle ornamented top and bottom with a head of Jupiter hangs over his left shoulder, with numerous astragals knotted into all three leather straps. In the panel to the spectator's right, various cult objects and attributes of Magna Mater are depicted, from top to bottom a *tympanum*, crossed *auloi*, one curved the other straight,

⁵⁶ E. Simon in: Helbig (1966, 31–32 cat. no. 1183): priest; Mekacher (2005, 99–100 no. 103): 'stadtrömischer Gallus'; Vermaseren (1977, 64–65 no. 249); Simon (1997, 762 no. 121): *archigallus*; Sbriglione (2012, no. 2): Attis?, in the odd belief that the inscription is antique.

⁵⁷ On the male characteristics of this image, see below. Identifications vary: Vermaseren (1977, 153 no. 466): 'priest'; Helbig (1966: 29–30 no. 1176) and Rumscheid (2000: 54): *gallus*; Mekacher (2005: 99 no. 102): 'local *gallus*'. Simon (1997: 762–3 no. 122*) and Fittschen and Zanker (2014: 108): '*archigallus*'.

⁵⁸ On comparable female portraits Fittschen and Zanker (2014: 108 n.3). On female hairstyles worn by male Metroac cult practitioners, see n.49 above.

and a *cista* with pyramidal lid represented as hanging from a peg. On the other side, in the upper left corner of the relief, a small pair of *cymbala* is shown above the laurel twigs.

Our last example in this group, a statue found in a funerary context in Ostia (no. 6), is unpublished and I can only refer to the one brief description that has been published.⁵⁹ The head is lost, but the wrinkled neck indicates that the person depicted was elderly. A band of astragals in the left hand and a fragmentary *flagellum* on the left shoulder make the connection to the cult of Magna Mater obvious. The clothing is described as a '*peplos*', though in the absence of a photo its identification has to remain open. Nevertheless the very choice of the term indicates that the statue is not wearing a toga or any typical male garment, but a form of dress characteristic of women.

3. The imagery of Metroac cult-functionaries – a conspectus

3.1. Contexts

It is most unfortunate that we know virtually nothing about the original context either of these or the other grave monuments of these cult-functionaries.⁶⁰ There are hints, however, that at least some tombs were situated side by side or at least close to each other. The sarcophagus lid (no. 2) and the two reliefs from the necropolis of Isola Sacra (nos. 3–4) were found together at the Via Severiana. The grave inscriptions of Salonia Euterpe, *sacerdos* of Magna Mater in Portus, and M. Cutius Rusticus, flute-player in the same cult, are inscribed side by side on a single marble slab.⁶¹ An *ager religiosorum* is documented in Quarto/Campo fle-

⁵⁹ Helbig (1966: 32): "Eine unveröffentlichte Statue eines Eunuchenpriesters der Magna Mater/Cybele, im Peplos, mit Astragalkette in der Linken und den Resten einer Geißel (mit Löwenköpfen ...) an der linken Schulter, befindet sich im Magazin des Museums von Ostia. Der Kopf ist nicht erhalten (wohl aber der faltige Halsansatz), deshalb wurde der Cybelepriester bisher nicht erkannt. Nach dem Fundort handelt es sich um eine Grabstatue".

⁶⁰ We can surely exclude the so-called 'Catterick gallus' (see n.74 below) from consideration here.

⁶¹ *CIL* XIV 408 = Vermaseren (1977a: 139 no. 442). Two funerary monuments of *fanatici* of Bellona, a cult related to that of the Magna Mater (see n. 4 above), were found close by one another, namely the relief of L. Lartius Anthus, *cistophorus* of Bellona Pulvinensis (see n.63 below) and the funerary of Q. Caelius Apollinaris, *fanaticus* of the same goddess (*CIL* VI 2232 = *ILS* 4181): Fittschen and Zanker (2014, 109 n. 1).

greo (now part of Naples), conceivably for the *religiosi* of the Metroac cult.⁶² These hints allow the inference that, at any rate in some cases, the grave monuments bear a relationship to one another, thus creating a form of in-group communication, even if they were also visible to all visitors to the necropolis.

If we now review all this imagery, the most obvious conclusion is that the cult-functionaries are not represented uniformly. As the ash-urn of the *tympanistria* Culcia Metropolis shows (no. 5), functionaries in the cult could name their religious office in the inscription, but at the same time prefer a conventional portrait. The alternative, as our other examples show, was to draw upon a recognised set of characteristic features, which appear repeatedly though none of them is invariably present.

3.2. Features and clothing

These attributes will by now be familiar to the reader. They include *infulae* and *vittae* (nos. 1, 10–11), *flagellum* (nos. 6, 8?, 9–10, 12), torches (nos. 3 and 13), *cymbala* and *tympanum* (no. 10). Many of our subjects are wearing rich ornaments, such as *corona* (nos. 2–4), diadem (no. 13), ear-rings (no. 10), *torques* (nos. 8–10), a pectoral (nos. 8–11), the *occabus* (nos. 2–4), bracelets (no. 8) or rings (nos. 2 and 8).

Some images can be linked on account of a similar attitude or gesture (nos. 8 and 13) or because of their clothing. Trousers appear twice (nos. 2 and 12). In three cases, the subject wears a *toga contabulata* (nos. 1, 3–4). Distinctive clothing patterns include the mantle draped symmetrically over both shoulders (nos. 2, 8–9, 13) as well as hair-veils (nos. 8, 10, 11?, 13).

Despite the iconographic and typological variations between these images, the male functionaries have one feature in common, at least where the head survives: they are all beardless. As I have already mentioned, this can be classified as a ‘strong’ iconographic marker of difference. Since the time of Hadrian, the standard representation of a Roman male shows him bearded, so that depicting a male without a beard had a specific semantics. The hairlessness of Isiac priests, for example, evokes the ritual shaving of the cranium and face. As for

⁶² *CIL* X 1894 = Vermaseren (1978, 9 no. 16). However, the funeraries of this section of the Campo flegreo, which were collected by Camodeca (1980: 87–99), reveal no other possibly relevant cases. For a *religiosus* of Magna Mater at Larinum (Reg. II), who erected a funerary for himself and a *sacerdos* of Mater Magna, his *patronus* (though the *gentilicia* are different), see *CIL* IX 734 = *ILS* 4170 (Dessau thought the two inscriptions might be related) = Vermaseren (1978, 42 no. 105). See also Steuernagel (2004, 239 with n.1229).

the male functionaries in the cult of Magna Mater, beardlessness may allude to the hormonal consequences of the eviration.⁶³ It makes no material difference whether the subjects in reality had no beard, i.e. were indeed eunuchs, or employed the feature to make a symbolic statement about their ‘true’ status.

3.3. Religious offices

In the case of four of our images, an inscription explicitly states the religious office of the deceased. This is of little help to me here, since three of them show no iconographical overlap with the more interesting cases in my § 2: the image of the *tympanistria* Culcia Metropolis is completely conventional, and the images of Laberia Felicla (*sacerdos maxima*) and L. Valerius Fyrmus (*sacerdos*) are share some attributes with those in § 2. Only the *archigallus* C. Iulius Bassus (no. 13) shares distinctive features (hair-veil and headwear) with two other images in that group (nos. 8 and 10).

However the iconographic elements allow us to specify the religious office of the subjects only to a certain degree. The pectoral is typical of the Metroac cult, but the literary sources do not state explicitly that it was specific to a certain religious office. On the other hand, the epigraphic evidence does seem to confirm that *occabus* and *corona* were, or came to be, the *insignia* of *sacerdotes* in the cult.⁶⁴ This would mean that we could identify three individuals who are wearing *occabus* and *corona* as priests (nos. 2–4). Although this is indeed plausible, we should bear in mind that the only certain image of a *sacerdos* (L. Valerius Fyrmus, no. 12) displays neither the *occabus* nor the *corona*. The obvious inference is that the iconography of Metroac *sacerdotes* was not fixed but varied both in time and space.⁶⁵

There is however one specific ritual expertise that seems to be visualised in the monuments. The *archigallus* Bassus (no. 13) is depicted with huge eyes. The same is true, to a lesser degree, of the *togatus* from Caesarea (no. 1) and the individual on the relief from Lanuvium (no. 10). Since divination played an impor-

⁶³ In this context the image of L. Lartius Anthus (see n.61), which is in many ways similar, is quite revealing, since he sports a beard: Fittschen and Zanker (2014, 108–110 no. 111 pls. 115–116). Though *fanatici* thrashed themselves till the blood came, they were not required to be castrated.

⁶⁴ See n.35 above.

⁶⁵ No. 12, which dates to Neronian-Flavian times, is from Rome, whereas nos. 2–4 are from Isola Sacra. All three however seem to date from the third century CE.

tant role in the cult of Magna Mater,⁶⁶ these wide-open eyes may perhaps be read as a reference to prophetic power. But I think it rather unlikely that such monuments were made for ordinary *galli*, as has often been suggested. Not only is this group of functionaries almost completely absent from the religious epigraphy, not one funerary inscription identifies the deceased as a *gallus*.⁶⁷ Given their life-style, we should not expect that *galli* were in a position to order expensive grave monuments or that such monuments were set up on their behalf – they simply did not have the money required for such outlays.

In sum, while it is clear we cannot classify the subject's cult-role in every case, there are a few characteristics that allow us to differentiate between them. A well-known wall painting from Pompeii (no. 7) may help us to understand the modes of differentiation better. It does not belong to our group of representations commissioned by the functionaries themselves or their relatives. We do not know if the person who commissioned the painting had a specific relation to the Magna Mater cult. What makes the image relevant for us is the fact that it shows many Metroac cult-functionaries in a narrative context.

The painting was produced shortly before 79 CE. It depicts a procession in honour of Magna Mater. The cult-statue of the goddess is being carried through the streets, followed by her entourage. Slightly to the right of centre of the image, we see a male in a representative *toga* who is clearly foregrounded as the main officiant. Two persons in short white tunics are standing to his right, one playing the 'double-flute'. Behind these three, there are several men, crowded together, all dressed in long, loose, colourful garments, whom we may identify as *galli*.⁶⁸ To the right of the painting, four men are standing by the statue on its *ferculum*, about to lift it up. Each one holds a long, thin carrying strap. Their clothes recall those of Fyrmus (no. 12). Although it seems unlikely that they are wearing *anaxyrides*, their belted tunics with wide *kolpos* and the draping of the mantle are quite similar.

This wall-painting shows clearly that specific functions and roles in the cult of Magna Mater could be differentiated by visual means: musicians are depicted with short tunics and *galli* probably with coloured garments. In the context of our funerary representations, it is also relevant that *togati* could play an impor-

⁶⁶ Van Haeperen (2011, 483–484). *Galli* and *archigalli* practised divination as well.

⁶⁷ Van Haeperen (2011, 476). Quite apart from their absence from funerary inscriptions, *galli* hardly appear as benefactors or as dedicators of votives.

⁶⁸ On the literary evidence for the garments worn by *galli*, see n.3 above.

tant part in processions, and that the men whose duty it was to carry the divine image could be rendered in a similar fashion to the *sacerdos* Fyrmus.⁶⁹

3.4. Male/female semantics

If we cannot establish a clear cut typology, it is nevertheless true that the images display an abundant iconography, which evokes specific semantic fields. Striking attributes such as the pectoral, the *anaxyrides* or the *torques*, and objects such as the *flagellum*, are items clearly connoted as foreign, un-Roman. We also find details highly unusual for male images in a representative context, namely the beardless faces, the hairstyles, and the exceptional garments, veils, *infulae* and jewellery.

Some images, such as those of the *sacerdos* Fyrmus or the three *togati* from Ostia (nos. 2–4, 12), which seem also to represent priests, do not emphasise feminine characteristics even though the subjects are unbearded. On the other hand, in other cases almost every iconographic element seems to be out of place for the representation of a man. This is true of the funerary relief of Bassus (no. 13), the relief from Lanuvium (no. 10), the bust (no. 8) and the statue from the Capitol (no. 9). The clothing of the unpublished statue from Ostia (no. 6) seems also to be characteristically female. The statue from Caesarea (no. 1) also belongs to this group, since the subject is clad in the *toga contabulata*, but also wears *infulae*⁷⁰ and a belt around the waist, which is quite unparalleled for adult male *togati*. Moreover, it combines male and female elements in the coiffure by combining a ‘Melonenfrisur’ with short hair above the forehead. At least one of these cases is explicitly stated to represent an *archigallus* (C. Iulius Bassus, no. 13), whose large eyes, as we have seen, probably indicate his ritual expertise in divination. The same is true of two other items in the group (nos. 1 and 10). On the basis of these iconographic similarities, I would urge that these other examples (1, 6, 9, 8–10) are to be understood as *archigalli* too.

The crucial question now concerns the relation between the social discourse about these functionaries and the images we possess. As everyone knows, the literary discourse of imperial Rome mocked the ‘feminine’ behaviour and attire of Metroac cult-functionaries. The images are therefore often read as depictions of effete eunuchs dressed in women’s garments, as representations of cross-

⁶⁹ Van Haepelen notes that in the literary tradition both *galli* and *sacerdotes* may carry the divine image (2011, 471–472; 484).

⁷⁰ Landwehr (2008, 97) points out that *infulae* were used in various cults, but that it is mainly priestesses who are depicted with this attribute.

dressers. But in my view the sheer variety of detail shows that it is simplistic to read these monuments as mere visualisations of prejudices known from literary sources. These subjects, or their friends, are making their own specific choices of how to represent themselves in the public realm.

One striking example is the well-known relief from Lanuvium (no. 10). We can usefully contrast this image of a male cult-official with that of a female one, Laberia Felicla (no. 11), since they are comparable in terms of date, origin, size and quality. The two individuals are shown wearing similar clothing and attributes, for example, long sleeves, hair-veil and *infulae*. All of these features, together with the beardless face⁷¹ and the striking hairstyle, are highly unusual for contemporary depictions of men. Nevertheless, it would be too simple to conclude that the person is represented ‘as a woman’. Neither the facial nor the bodily features nor the garment are really ‘feminine’. Take the physiognomy, which has often been described as effeminate: the hairless cheeks may appear soft, but other elements of the face are not to be found in contemporary female portraits. Women’s noses are usually thinner,⁷² the eyes smaller, the foreheads smoother. Jug-ears are completely out of place for female portraits, whereas the ears of this subject protrude in an extreme fashion. As for the clothing, there are no analogies in either female or male clothing to the way the mantle is draped in several layers tightly around the waist. The bagginess of the *tunica* folds may suggest a certain fullness of the upper trunk, but there is no indication of bulging breasts, as it would be the case with female figures.⁷³ Women are not typically represented wearing a long-sleeved *tunica*; the man’s sleeves are longer than those of Felicla, and the seam at the wrist is folded back to form a sort of ruff. And while Felicla’s *tunica* has a rolling, slightly overlapping neckline, that from Lanuvium has a straight V-neck.

In contrast to Felicla, the subject on the relief from Lanuvium is wearing several different kinds of body-ornament in addition to the pendant on his breast. Besides the *torques* round the neck and the headwear with the three medallions,

71 Soft facial features and venus rings are also cited as evidence for the alleged female characterisation. This is methodologically problematic: before wearing a beard became fashionable in the early second century CE, unbearded men with no connection to the cult of Magna Mater whatsoever were depicted with very similar features, e. g. the funerary relief of L. Licinius Pergrinus (BCAR 1985, 434; now Rome, Musei Capitolini, Museo Nuovo Capitolino: Arachne no. 16257; not in Helbig).

72 The bust of a young woman with a thickened nose in Rome, Museo Capitolino inv. no. 201 is a rare exception: Fittschen and Zanker (1983, 76–77 no. 100 pl. 125–127).

73 This absence is indicated by the fact that the fold runs straight down from the shoulder without indicating a bulge.

it is especially the earrings which have prompted modern scholars to think he is represented ‘as a woman’. The point of representing the subject with protruding ears was to evidently to emphasise the earrings to the viewer. On the other hand, jewellery is not at all a characteristic female attribute on funerary and votive monuments in the imperial period, nor is it common in actual burials.⁷⁴ At any rate as far as Italy is concerned, women are rarely depicted wearing rings, earrings or necklaces.⁷⁵ For the contemporary viewer, images showing jewellery had rather a geographical connotation than a gender-specific one: they were seen as characteristic of the eastern part of the Empire.⁷⁶

To sum up: the relief from Lanuvium would have been potentially unsettling for a contemporary viewer because the subject jars against expectations both of male and of female representation. The subjects represented in this and my other examples (nos. 1, 6, 8–10, 13) can be said to ‘oscillate’ between genders, being represented deliberately in accordance neither with conventional male nor female iconography but so as to display a certain ambiguity of gender characteristics. They are represented in a manner way strikingly different from conventional iconography, a manner that is appropriate only for them, members of a *tertium genus*. Such ambivalence is paralleled in some imperial literature, where eunuchs are viewed not as men but not as women either.⁷⁷

Although the elusive status of eunuchs usually evokes moralising disgust in literature,⁷⁸ the imagery, for obvious reasons, refers to it affirmatively. For they had been commissioned by the depicted themselves or by people sympathetic

74 In the case of a burial of the fourth century CE at Cataractonium (Catterick, Britannia), the male skeleton was wearing a rich jet necklace, a jet bead bracelet, a shale armllet and a copper-alloy anklet: Wilson (2002, 1:176–178 fig. 95, on grave 951 with skeleton 952). Two stones had been placed in the mouth of the deceased. It has been suggested that the burial might be that of a devotee of Magna Mater: Wilson (2002, 2:41–42). Other male burials with single pieces of jewellery are known from Roman Britain, but none with such a variety of objects: Wilson *ibid.*

75 Alexandridis (2004, 71–74). See e.g. the portraits on the sarcophagi Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 1522 (c.200–250 CE); Rome, Museo Barracco inv. no. 245 (late Constantine period): Fittschen and Zanker (2014, 163–164 no. 189 pl. 168).

76 Krumeich (2001); Alexandridis (2004, 72). For male portraits with earrings, see Krumeich (forthcoming 2016). On mummy portraits, women are often adorned with jewellery: Borg (1996, 167); and likewise on Palmyrenian reliefs, especially from the beginning of the third century CE, see e.g. Munich, Glyptothek inv. no. 470: Fuchs (2002, 52–53 no. 13 fig. 16).

77 E.g. Prudent. *Perist.* 10.1071–73: *uterque sexus sanctitati displicet; medium retentat inter alternum genus: mas esse cessat ille nec fit femina*; August. *De civ. D.* 7.24: *hic ita amputatur virilitas, ut nec convertatur in feminam nec vir relinquitur*.

78 E.g. SHA *Alex. Sev.* 23.7: *tertium genus eunuchos esse dicebat*. See also Tert. *Ad nat.* 1.20.4; Val. Max. 7.7.6; Juv. 6.513: *semivir*; *Anth. Pal.* 6.219. See Sanders (1972, 1024, 1030); Murray (2000, 301); Cordier (2002); Rieger (2004, 167).

to them. They were meant as representative images with a positive connotation. The alterity of these representations is related to the religious offices of the protagonists and to their sociocultural standing, reflecting the specific personal circumstances of the functionaries in the cult of Magna Mater. There were married men among the *sacerdotes*,⁷⁹ but *galli* and *archigalli*, castrated or not, were always unmarried.⁸⁰ They lived in groups together with other cult members; some, however, lived alone or as a male couple. The conventional Roman family was not an option for them.⁸¹ The case of the *archigallus* Bassus (no. 13) shows clearly how a nonconformist life-style found its expression in funerary representation. His relief was commissioned by his *contubernalis* M. Aquilius Primigenius. As the two inscriptions tell us, they had lived together for 31 years. Such an open reference to a non-conjugal, probably homosexual,⁸² relationship, is rare on Roman funerary monuments. Both image and text thus refer to a special way of life closely connected to the religious role of the subject.⁸³

This role, as well as the life-style, of Bassus and other such functionaries was highly distinctive. Carefully chosen 'deviant' images achieve a specific aim in this context, reflecting as they do the specific religious status of the Metroac cult-functionaries, especially that of *archigalli*, and their ambiguous gender-status.

4. Conclusion

The monuments discussed here show the readiness and ability of the protagonists and their relatives to take account of their unusual representational

⁷⁹ See e.g. the funerary inscription of C. Iulius Spiclus, *sacerdos* of Magna Mater and Aesculapius, married to Ulpia Metropolis, *tympanistria publica*: IPOstie 142 = Helttula (2007, no. 178) = Vermaseren (1977a, 140 no. 445). The inscription also mentions their children and grandchildren.

⁸⁰ It is unknowable whether every *gallus* was actually castrated. All that is certain is that they were believed to be castrated and that the *communis opinio* was that they were eunuchs. Some scholars, e.g. van Haepelen (2011, 474), believe that *archigalli* were not castrated. However Sinn (1991, 44–45 with n.18) has shown convincingly that a key item in this debate, the inscription on the Bassus relief (no. 13), has always been misunderstood. Castrated *archigalli* are explicitly mentioned in literary sources, see e.g. Firm. Mat. *Math.* 3.6.22; Serv. *ad. Aen.* 9.115. All this inclines me to doubt whether this is really just a case of confusion, as van Haepelen suggests.

⁸¹ Sanders (1972, 1020; 1030).

⁸² Sinn (1991, 44).

⁸³ A different choice was made by the person who commissioned an early imperial grave-monument in the northern necropolis of Anazarbus (Cilicia) for a eunuch who had served as a *tropheus* at the court of Trakondimotos I and is shown wearing civic dress: Kelp (2008).

needs by creating extraordinary images. Moreover they show that such innovations in iconography are bound to historical and socio-cultural dynamics. The imagery is documented mainly in Rome and its environs. It is surely not by chance that almost all of our images are Hadrianic or later, when broader strata of Roman society engaged themselves in the cult of Magna Mater⁸⁴ and the fashion for growing beards opened up a new means of visualising not only the religious role but also the alternative self-fashioning of the subjects.

Appendix: Catalogue of the material evidence

The list is arranged alphabetically by the modern name of the city where it is now kept.

1) Statue of an unknown Metroac functionary (fig. 1)

Cherchel, Museum inv. no. 107.

From Caesarea Mauretaniae. Found in 1845 between the theatre and the central baths.⁸⁵

Date: about 400 CE.⁸⁶

H.: 110 cm.

Conservation: The left hand, and the right arm below the biceps are lost. Originally attached with dowels.

Bibliography: Gauckler (1895, 141–143., pl. XV, 3); Vermaseren (1986, 53 no. 146 pl. 39); Landwehr (2008, 95–101 no. 320 pl. 60–61 fig. 29 Beilage 11); Müller (2008).

2) Marble sarcophagus-lid depicting a *sacerdos* lying on a *kline* (fig. 2)

Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 158.

From the necropolis of Isola Sacra, on the Via Severiana, Portus (now Fiumicino), near tomb 75; found together with nos. 3 and 4.

Dimensions: 40 x 220 x 110 cm.

Date: second half of the third century CE.

Conservation: well preserved, apart from the damaged headdress.

Bibliography: Calza (1932); Squarciapino (1962, 13–14); Helbig (1972, 12–14 no. 3003); Bergmann (1977, 140–141); Vermaseren (1977a, 140–141 no. 446 pl. 282–283); Vermaseren (1977b, 100 with pls. 66–67); Rumscheid (2000, 56–57; 149–150 cat.

⁸⁴ Mekacher (2005, 97); van Haepelen (2011, 472). On the increasing reputation of the Magna Mater cult among the urban élite of Ostia from the second century CE onwards Rieger (2004, 128–172); Steuernagel (2004, 241–242).

⁸⁵ Landwehr (2008: 95).

⁸⁶ Landwehr (2008: 99), arguing convincingly for a late date. The statue has traditionally been dated to the second or third century CE, cf. e.g. Vermaseren (1986, 53 no.146); Müller (2008, 665).

no. 75 pls. 35,3; 36,1); Hales (2002, 93–94 fig. 2); Steuernagel (2004, 237–238; 240 n. 1237); Sbriglione (2012, no. 2.3); *Imperium der Götter* (2013, fig. on p. 108).

3) Marble relief portraying a *sacerdos* (fig. 3)

Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 159.

From the necropolis of Isola Sacra, on the Via Severiana, Portus (now Fiumicino); found together with nos. 2 and 4.

Dimensions: 62 x 40 x 9 cm

Date: second half of the third century CE.

Conservation: lower left section lost.

Bibliography: Helbig (1972, 12–14 no. 3003); Vermaseren (1977a, 141–142 no. 447 pls. 284–286); Vermaseren (1977b, 100 with pl. 68); Vermaseren and de Boer (1986, 27 no. 96* [= 395]); Goette (1990, 59–60; 146 no. 22); Rumscheid (2000, 56; 58 cat. no. 77 pls. 36, 3–4); Rieger (2004, 146–147); Steuernagel (2004, 238; 240 n.1237); Delgado (2005, 139 no. 253* a); Sbriglione (2012, no. 2.4); *Imperium der Götter* (2013, 128 cat. no. 54 with colour figure).

4) Marble relief depicting a *sacerdos* (fig. 4).

Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 160.

From the necropolis of Isola Sacra, on the Via Severiana, Portus (now Fiumicino); found together with nos. 2 and 3.

Dimensions: 62 x 40 x 9 cm.

Date: second half of the third century CE.

Conservation: well-nigh perfect.

Bibliography: Helbig (1972, 12–14 no. 3003); Vermaseren (1977a, 142 no. 448 pls. 287–289); Goette (1990, 59–60; 146 no. 22); Simon (1997, no. 124*); Rumscheid (2000, 56; 58 cat. no. 76 pl. 36,2 [detail]); Steuernagel (2004, 238 fig. 6 [drawing]; 240 n.1237); Delgado (2005, 139 no. 253* b); Sbriglione (2012, no. 2.5); *Imperium der Götter* (2013, 128 cat. no. 53 with colour fig.).

5) The ash-urn of *Culcia Metropolis* (fig. 5)

Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 1319 = Calza Sc. Sarc. 366.

Found in the necropolis at Portus.

Dimensions: 23 x 32 x 26 cm

Date: early Antonine.

Conservation: well preserved.

Inscription: *D(is) M(anibus). Culciae / Metropoli / tympanistriae / M(atris) D(eum) M(agnae) utriusq(ue) / portus.*

Bibliography on the inscription: *AE* 1940: 131 = *IPOstie* A92 = Helttula (2007: 211–212 no. 182)

Bibliography on the ash-urn: Vermaseren (1977a: 140 no. 444 pl. 280); Sinn (1987: 223 no. 542 pl. 80e).

6) Funerary statue of an unknown Metroac functionary

Ostia, Museo Ostiense, Depot.

From Ostia.

Date: uncertain.

Conservation: the head is missing.

Bibliography: unpublished. Brief notice in Helbig (1966: 32).

7) Painting on the façade of a *taberna* (fig. 6)

Pompeii, via dell'Abbondanza, to the right of the entrance.

Date: first century CE.

Conservation: surface partially damaged.

Bibliography: Spinazzola (1953: 213–222 with figs.); Vermaseren (1977b: 66 and 108, with fig. 46); Rumscheid (2000: 54); Rieger (2004: 156); Delgado (2005: 139 no. 254); *Imperium der Götter* (2013: fig. on p. 96, in colour).

8) Bust of an unknown Metroac functionary (fig. 7)

Rome, Musei Capitolini inv. no. 2971.

Presumably from Rome or its environs, exact provenance unknown.

Dimensions: 44 (without plinth) x 45 x 23.5 cm.

Date: mid-Severan.⁸⁷

Bibliography: Pietrangeli (1956, 19–20 no. 28 pl. 3); Vermaseren (1977a, 65–66 no. 250 pls. 142–143); Simon (1997, 763 no. 123*); Mekacher (2005, 100 no. 104); Sbriglione (2012, no. 2.2 fig. 2); Fittschen and Zanker (2014, 79–80 cat. no. 72 pl. 91).

9) Funerary statue of an unknown Metroac functionary (fig. 8)

Rome, Musei Capitolini Centrale Montemartini inv. no. MC 3047/S.

Found in Rome in the 17th century, exact provenance unknown. Formerly Coll. Cardinal Mazarin, then in Marseilles, then in the Coll. Nicolas-Joseph Foucault near Paris, then in the collection of the 11th Earl of Pembroke, Wilton House. Back to Rome in 1961.

H.: 189 (Helbig) / 191 cm.

Date: late Antonine.⁸⁸

Conservation: The head does not belong to the body. Right forearm and left hand are missing (originally fixed with dowels). Both feet damaged.

Modern inscription: ΑΤΤΙΣ.

Bibliography: Gow (1960, 90 fig. 1 pl. 8,1); Cat. Christie's, London 03.07.1961 no. 147; Helbig (1966, 31–32 cat. no. 1183 [E. Simon]); Vermaseren (1977a, 64–65 no. 249

⁸⁷ On the date, see the convincing arguments of Fittschen and Zanker (2014: 80).

⁸⁸ *Contra* Vermaseren (1977, 65): “probably third century A.D.”.

pls. 140–141); Vermaseren 1977b, 99 with fig. 65; Simon (1997, 762 no. 121); Roller (1999, 295 fig. 70); Hales (2002, 91–92 fig. 1); Mekacher (2005, 99–100 no. 103*); Sbriglione (2012, no. 2.1 fig. 1).

10) Funerary relief of an unknown Metroac functionary (fig. 9)

Rome, Musei Capitolini, Centrale Montemartini, Magazzino Teatro del Opera inv. no. 1207. Found in 1736 between Genzano and Lanuvium.⁸⁹

Dimensions: 120 x 120 cm.

Mat.: Luna marble.

Date: Hadrianic.⁹⁰

Conservation: exceptionally well preserved.

Bibliography: Stuart Jones (1926, 254–257 no. 32 pl. 100,3); Pietrangeli (1956, 20–21 no. 29 pl. 2); Helbig (1966, 25–26 no. 1176 [E. Simon]); Vermaseren (1977a, 152–153 no. 466 pl. 296–197); *LIMC* Zeus/Iuppiter no. 130*; Simon (1997, 762–763 no. 122*); Beard, North and Price (1998, 2: 211); Rumscheid (2000, 54–56; 86; 148 no. 73 pl. 34,3); Mekacher (2005, 99 no. 102); Müller (2006, 132–133 fig. 1); Sbriglione (2012, no. 2.6 fig. 3); *Imperium der Götter* (2013, 129 cat. no. 55 with colour image on p. 103); Fittschen and Zanker (2014, 107–108 no. 110 pl. 115).

11) Funerary relief of Laberia Felicla (fig. 10)

Rome, Musei Vaticani, Galleria delle statue inv. no. 552.

From Rome, provenience unknown.

Dimensions: 104 x 74 x 27 cm.

Date: mid-second century CE (Spinola).⁹¹

Inscription: *Laberia Felicla / sacerdos maxima / Matris deum m(agnae) I(daeae)*. The cognomen is sometimes falsely given as ‘Felicla’.

Conservation: Head, neck, lower parts of the arms, hands, *patera*, lower part of the altar and much of the garland are all restored

Bibliography on the inscription: *CIL* VI 2257 = *ILS* 4160 = Vermaseren (1977a, 68–69 no. 258).

Bibliography on the relief: Amelung (1908, 614–615 cat. no. 403); Vermaseren (1977a, 68–69 no. 258 pl. 150); Vermaseren (1977b, 109 with pl. 41); Spinola (1999, 26–27 cat. no. 26); Rumscheid (2000, 55); Mekacher (2005, 99 no. 101*); Rüpke (2005, 1089 no. 2155); Sbriglione (2012, no. 1).

12) The tomb-altar of L. Valerius Fyrmus (fig. 11)

Rome, Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano, Reparto di Ostia inv. no. 10762.

Found by the otherwise unknown Signor Cartoni near Ostia in 1824, in the area of ‘La Torretta’

⁸⁹ On the provenience, see Fittschen and Zanker (2014: 107).

⁹⁰ Fittschen and Zanker (2014: 108) argue convincingly for this date.

⁹¹ *Contra* Vermaseren (1977) and Mekacher (2005), both of whom date it to the first century CE.

(now 'Pianabella') near the chapel of S. Ercolano.

Dimensions: 99 x 51–63 x 43–50 cm.

Date: Neronian-Flavian.⁹²

Conservation: face damaged.

Inscription: on the upper border [D.] M. [s.], on the *tabula*: L. Valerius L. fil(ius) Fyrmus / sacerdos Isis Ost(i)ens(is) / et M(atris) d(eum) tra(n)stib(erinae) fec(it) sibi.

Bibliography on the inscription: *CIL* XIV 429 = *ILS* 4406 = Vidman (1969: 252 no. 543); *RICIS* 503/1123 with pl. XCV. See also Erpetti (2009: 196–202).

Bibliography on the altar: Graillot (1912, 247 pl. 6); Squarciapino (1962, 2; 15); Vidman (1969, 252 no. 543); Malaise (1972, 68–69: Ostia 6); Meiggs (1973, 366); Vermaseren (1977a, 133–134 no. 422 pl. 266); Vermaseren (1977b, 108); Schillinger (1979, 258 no. 648); Sinn (1991, 70–72 no. 37 figs. 114–115); Rieger (2004, 299 *MM84); Steuernagel (2004, 237).

13) The funerary relief of C. Iulius Bassus (fig. 12 and 13)

Rome, Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano, Sez. 15 inv. no. 9826.

Larger part probably found in Rome, Via Latina before 1867. Lower left corner (now lost) found in April 1894 on the left side of the Via Latina, beyond the third mile-stone (Località Torre Fiscale), near tombs made of brick.

Dimensions: 53 x 38 x 5.5 cm.

Date: 150–170 CE (Sinn).

Inscriptions:

On the acroteria: *D(is) // M(anibus)*.

Beneath the image (*CIL* VI 19875): *C. Iulio Basso / M. Aquilius / Primigenius / [...] bernali suo b.m.f. / [...] vix. ann. XXXI / [...]usculanor(um)*.

Lower left corner (*CIL* VI 32466): *[...] / II[...] / coniu be[...] / cum quo vi[...] / archigallo Tus[...] / et sibi*.

Reconstruction (Sinn): *C. Iulio Basso / M. Aquilius / Primigenius / contubernali suo b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit) / cum quo vix(it) an. XXXI / archigallo Tusculanor(um) / et sibi*.

Bibliography on the inscription: *CIL* VI 19875; *CIL* VI 32466 (lower left corner, now lost); Borsari (1895, 104); Di Stefano Manzella (2003, 188 no. 2581).

Bibliography on the relief: Vermaseren (1977a, 151 no. 462 [lower left corner]); Sinn (1991, 43–45 no. 18 with drawing B; fig. 49).

Note: Students of the Isiac cults have regularly identified the figure I take as a portrait of Bassus as one of Isis holding a patera, an interpretation that goes back at least to Adolf Michaelis in *CIL* VI 19875. See e.g. Vidman 1969, 218 no. 454: *Superne inter duas faces Isis pateram tenens*;

⁹² Sinn (1991, 71) argues convincingly on stylistic grounds against a dating in the second century CE, which had been proposed e.g. by Vermaseren (1977, 134). EAGLE however still dates it 100–200 CE.

Malaise 1972: 128 Rome 54; *RICIS* 501/191 with pl. XCI: “au dessus de l’inscription est figurée Isis tenant une patère, entre deux torches”.

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Fig. 1: Cherchel, Museum: Photo Hans R. Goette.



Fig. 2: Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 158: C. Faraglia (neg.), D-DAI-Rom-36.620.



Fig. 3: Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 159: C. Faraglia (neg.), D-DAl-Rom-36.622.



Fig. 4: Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 160: C. Faraglia (neg.), D-DAl-Rom-36.623.



Fig. 5: Ostia, Museo Ostiense inv. no. 1319 – Calza Sc. Sarc. 366: Archivio Fotografico del Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica.



Fig. 6: Pompeii, via dell'Abbondanza, façade painting: su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo.



Fig. 7: Rome, Musei Capitolini inv. no. 2971: <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/marbilder/685615>.



Fig. 8: Rome, Musei Capitolini, Centrale Montemartini inv. no. MC 3047/S: Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Capitolini, foto Araldo De Luca, © Roma, Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali – Musei Capitolini.



Fig. 9: Rome, Musei Capitolini, Centrale Montemartini inv. no. 1207: <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/marbilder/6678564>.

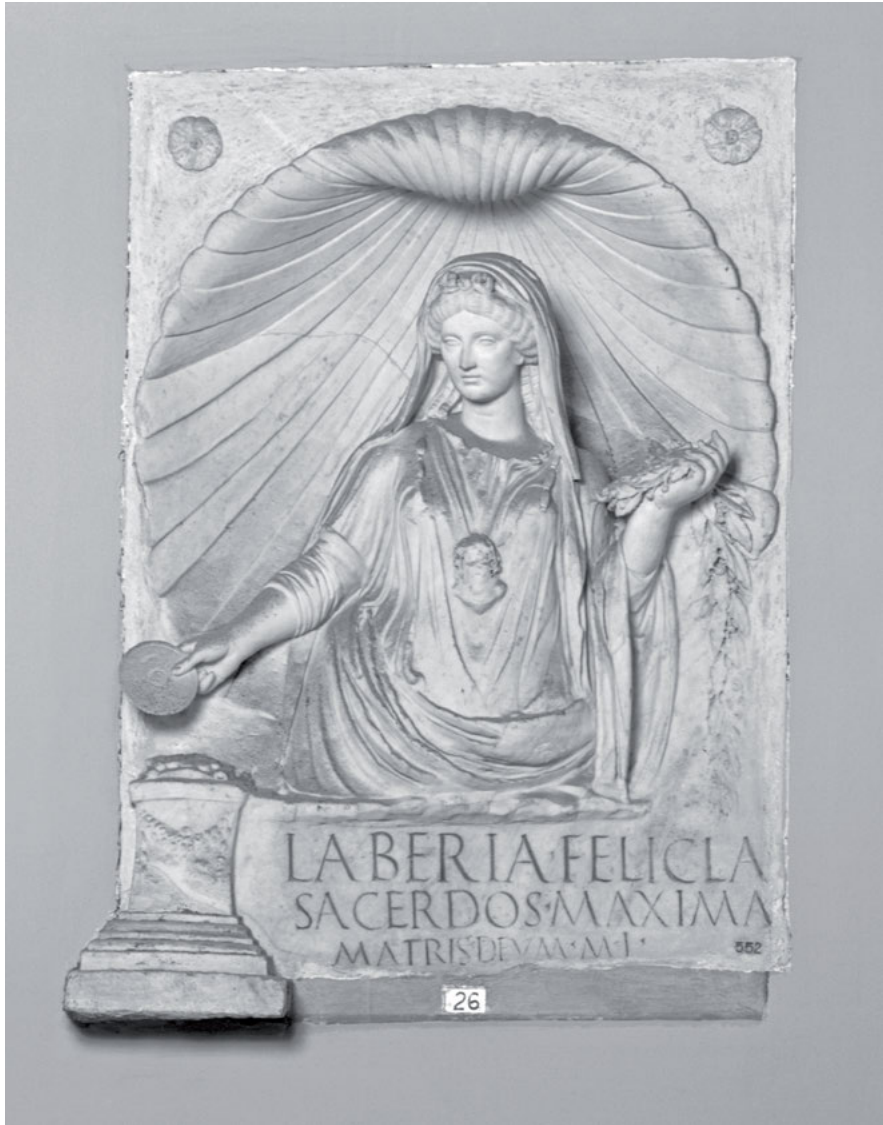


Fig. 10: Vatican, Galleria delle statue inv. no. 552: K. Anger (neg.), D-DAI-Rom-97Vat.679B.

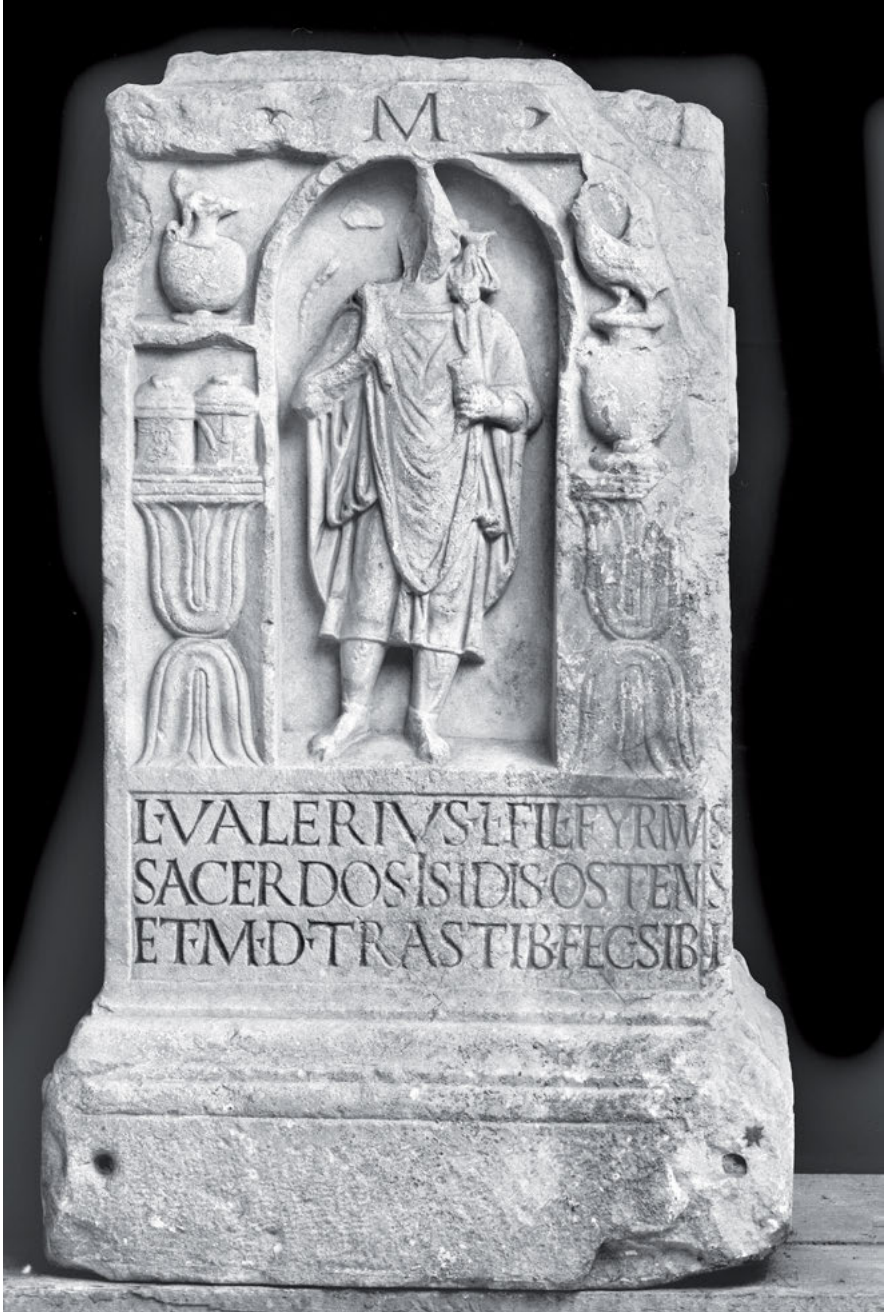


Fig. 11: Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano, Reparto di Ostia, inv. no. 10762: <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/marbilder/6674791>.



Fig. 12: Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano, Sez. 15 inv. no. 9826: <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/marbilder/7247263>.

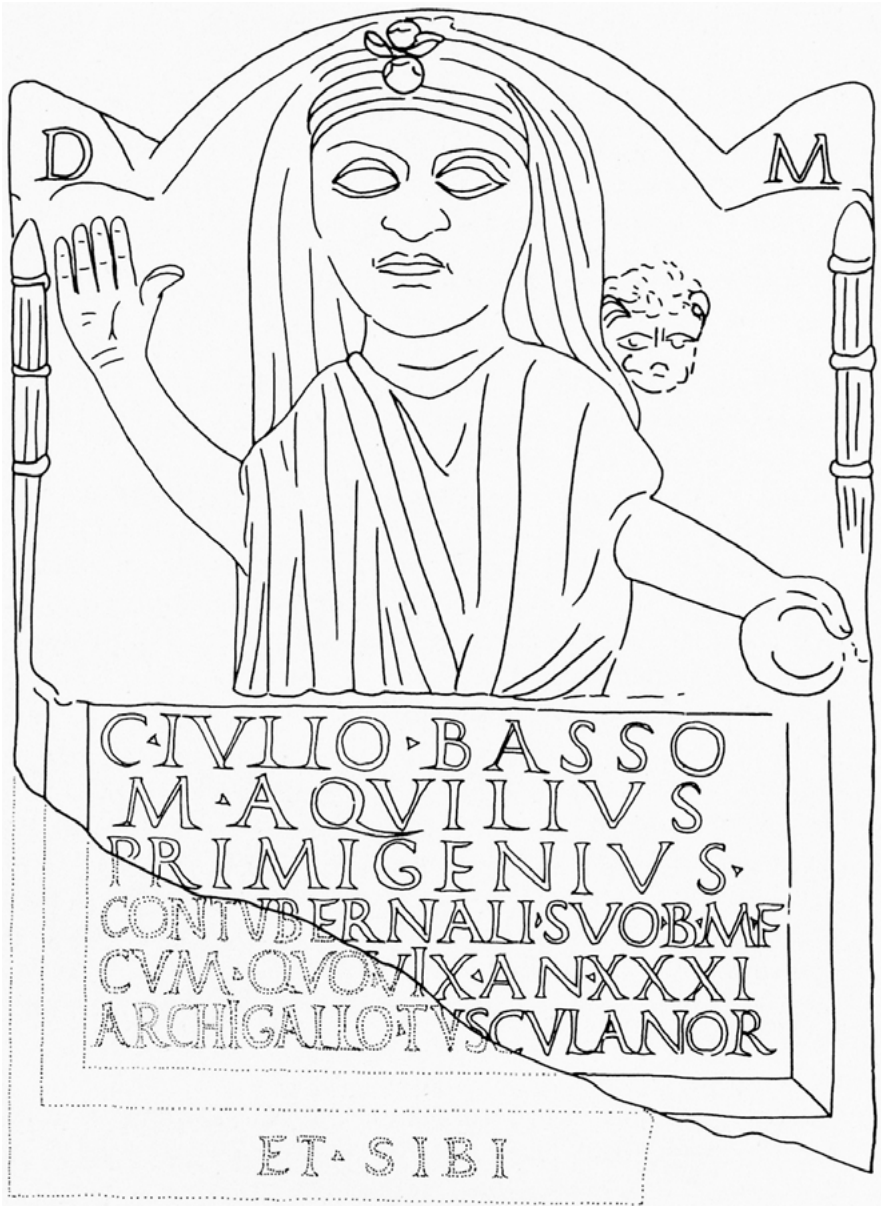


Fig. 13: Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano, Sez. 15 inv. no. 9826, reconstruction. Image: Sinn (1991: 44 drawing B).