Sacerdotes piae: priestesses and other female cult officials in the western part of the Roman Empire from the first century B.C. until the third century A.D.
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Chapter 2: Female priesthood: an overview

Introduction

In order to show the great variety of religious roles held by women, in this chapter I will provide a general overview of the inscriptions in the catalogue. The first section lists the most common religious titles of priestesses (in chapter 4 those of women with ancillary functions will be discussed). In the second section, I will deal with questions concerning the numbers of female religious officials who are attested on inscriptions, the place and time these inscriptions were erected, and how this relates to the epigraphic habit. This section also discusses the women whose religious titles do not clarify which deity they served. I will describe the tools than can be used to discover the possible cults in which these women held their offices.

The last section deals with the various gods and goddesses that were served by women: which divinities did women serve as priestesses? Where are these priestesses attested? Furthermore, the commonly held view that most deities were served by sacerdotes of their own sex will be checked: is it justified to link the gender of a deity to that of its religious personnel? We have seen in chapter 1 that it is incorrect to speak of ‘women’s goddesses’ because virtually all Roman deities were worshipped by both men and women, but was this also true for religious officials? With the answers to all these questions, I hope to reach a better understanding of the phenomenon of female religious officials. This provides us with a background to interpret the cult of Ceres that will be the subject of the next chapter, and the various aspects of (female) priesthoods that will be discussed in the last two chapters.

1: Religious titles

Various different religious titles were carried by women. Here, I will only mention the most important ones recorded in the catalogue. Usually, the greatest variety can be found in the additions to these titles, for example those used in the cult of Ceres (sacerdos Cereris; sacerdos Cерерum; sacerdos Cерialis etc., see chapter 3). I will not discuss these additions here. In Rome, the title sacerdos was often used for priest(esse)s of cults that were recognized by the state and were of Greek (or eastern) descent, like those of Ceres and Magna Mater. The title flamen was reserved for ancient Roman priesthoods.¹ In the provinces, the situation was different, as the example of the imperial cult shows: priests could be called either flamen or sacerdos, depending on the time and the place where they

¹ Fishwick and Shaw (1987) 132. Yet the Vestals were also sacerdotes.
served.² Other cults could show the same divergence in priestly titles, for example the cult of Bacchus: the priests and priestesses of this god were called *sacerdos, antistes or magister sacrorum.*³ It is likely that this variety of titles originated from local traditions, although this is hard to state with certainty, for little if anything is known about the survival of native priesthoods under Roman rule. However, when these indigenous priesthoods did not disappear, the priests were usually called *sacerdotes,* though Latin translations of indigenous priestly titles, like *praefectus sacrorum* in Lepcis Magna, were also used.⁴ It is also likely that the status of the town where the priest(esse)s in question served, played a role: peregrine societies show a greater diversity of religious titles than *coloniae and municipia,* who had less freedom to organise their religious life.⁵

1.1: Sacerdos and its variants

The title most frequently used for priestesses was *sacerdos,* the same word that was used for many of their male colleagues.⁶ It can be found on inscriptions dating from the first century BC to the third century AD and erected in all main areas represented in the catalogue. According to Flobert, a *sacerdos* was the main agent in the process of sacrificing; he or she was the one who accomplished the *sacra* or the sacred ceremonies.⁷ A local African variant of *sacerdos* was *sacrd* (see chapter 3), and the terms *sacerdotalis* and *sacerdotia* were also used.⁸ Women called *sacerdotalis* are attested in Raetia and Pannonia Superior, while the *sacerdotiae* that are included is the catalogue, lived in Rome and Hispania Baetica. Spickermann suggests that, in case of *CIL* 13, 1754 from Lugdunum (not included in the catalogue for this woman likely served Magna Mater, as a *taurobolium* is recorded), the title *sacerdotia* may refer to a recently created office.⁹ However, there is nothing in the other inscriptions recording *sacerdotiae* that supports the view that their priesthood was only recently created. A last variant of *sacerdos* is – possibly – *sacetics.* This title is recorded only once, in Cumae in Italy. Camodeca writes that *sacetics* was probably used to indicate an official in the cult of Ceres, which was important in Cumae (see chapter 3).¹⁰

The title *sacerdos* (without the name of a deity added) has caused some controversies. Many examples can be found in the catalogue. For matters of convenience, I will refer to these priestesses as

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sacerdotes stricto sensu. It has been suggested that in some cases a sacerdos stricto sensu was not a 
priest(ess), but a worshipper with an active role.\(^{11}\) This is of special relevance to the African evidence, 
for in this area, many sacerdotes stricto sensu (both male and female) are attested. Rives writes that 
this suggests a difference between these sacerdotes and ordinary worshippers, but also that the position 
of sacerdos was easily obtainable. He thinks it is possible that the sacerdotes were no priests but 
initiates, or cult personnel with specific tasks, acting within a collegium.\(^{12}\)

However, in my opinion there are several reasons to state that at least in most cases sacerdotes 
stricto sensu were priest(esse)s. The first is that the general word for indicating a devotee or initiate 
was sacraeus or sacrata.\(^{13}\) In addition, several inscriptions of sacerdotes stricto sensu record that the 
local ordo has granted something to the sacerdos (e.g. land for a public burial), and it is unlikely that it 
would do so for an ordinary worshipper.\(^{14}\) A third argument is the existence of sacerdotes publicae, 
perpetuæ, primæ, magnæ etc. in whose title very often no indication is given of the deity served, 
implying that mentioning the name of a god or goddess in the title of a priest(ess) was not obligatory. 
Lastly, in some cases the inscriptions of sacerdotes are accompanied by reliefs on which priestesses 
are depicted, identifiable by their clothing and attributes.

1.2: Antistes and antistita

Two antistes and one antistita are recorded in the catalogue. There are two difficulties related to the 
title of antistes, the first being its exact meaning, and the second the cults in which it was used. 
Generally, it is assumed that the title antistes refers to a chief priestess or female overseer of a 
temple,\(^{15}\) and that it was mainly used in ‘foreign’ cults or in sacra peregrina.\(^{16}\) According to Flobert, 
the word antistes was close to its etymology of ‘chief’, and was less common than sacerdos as 
reference to a priest or priestess.\(^{17}\)

The three antistites recorded in the catalogue lived in the first and second century AD in 
Arelate in Gallia Narbonensis (one of the antistes and the antistita) and in Divodurum (Gallia 
Belgica). Spickermann suggests that the two antistites from Arelate served Cybele or Isis.\(^{18}\) Bona Dea 
is proposed as another option, because there is other evidence from Arelate of a female religious

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\(^{11}\) Ladage (1971) 17; Savunen (1997) 142.


\(^{13}\) Much has also been speculated about another religious term related to sacerdos, i.e. that of sacraeus/sacrata. 
Picard (1954) 162-163, suggests that sacrati were also priests, but of lower social ranks than sacerdotes. This is 
not backed by the evidence: inscriptions show that sacrati could have a distinguished political career. For 
example, a man from Thuburnica had been aedile, quaestor, duumvir, flamen and sacrataus (CIL 8, 25702). See 
also chapter 4, footnote 124.

\(^{14}\) E.g., cat.no. 145; 114.

\(^{15}\) See e.g. Spickermann (1994b) 237.

\(^{16}\) Ladage (1971) 46; Brouwer (1989) 371; Spickermann (1994b) 237.

\(^{17}\) Flobert (1988) 175.

\(^{18}\) Cat.no.252 from Arles (second century AD) records an antistita of Bona Dea, Cybele or Isis. The 
accompanying relief of cat.no.253 (Arles, first century AD) shows a priestess wearing a garland and carrying a 
burning torch in her right hand, Spickermann (1994b) 238.
official in the Bona Dea cult. There are, however, many examples of other cults in which (male) antistites served, so in my opinion there is no reason to suppose that the female antistites could not have served in one of those other cults.

One example of such a cult is especially interesting in relation to female priesthoods: that of Ceres. In Africa a priest of Ceres was called antistes, and Valerius Maximus calls the priestess Calliphana, who is also mentioned by Cicero, an antistes in service of Ceres (see also chapter 3). Cicero provides us with additional evidence. He describes ‘priestesses of Ceres, and female attendants of the temple [that of Ceres in Catena], women of great age, noble and of proved virtue’ (sacerdotes Cerceris atque illius fani antistitae, maiores natu, probatae ac nobiles mulieres). This shows that at least in Catena a difference was made between sacerdotes and antistitae – and accordingly, that the antistitae were no priestesses, but overseers of the temple.

But there is evidence which shows that the word antistes in other cases could be used as synonym for sacerdos. In his Rudens, Plautus generally uses the word sacerdos to indicate the priestess of Venus, but once he refers to her as antistita. Macrobius calls the sacerdotes of Bona Dea in Rome antistites, while Symmachus addresses a certain Primigenia as ‘apud Altam Vestalis antistes.’ In Livy 1.20.3 the Roman Vestals are also called antistites. Therefore, I think it can be concluded that the exact meaning of the term antistes or antistita varied between towns and cults, that it could mean priestess but also overseer of a temple, and that more convincing arguments are needed to be able to state that the antistites from Arelate – and Divodurum – served Magna Mater, Isis or Bona Dea.

1.3: (Mater) Sacrorum

Apart from mothers of children, women could be called matres in a different context: several matres sacrorum (‘mothers of the sacred rites’) have been attested epigraphically. Two inscriptions stem

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19 Cat.no.251; Turcan (1972) 57; Spickermann (1994b) 237-238.
20 ILAlg 2.3.8000.
21 Valerius Maximus, 1.1. In Narbonese Gaul, no evidence of male antistites has been found, Spickermann (1994b) 240. In Philippi (Macedonia), a woman named Valeria Severa had been antistites Dianae Caszorlae (CIL 3, 14206,13 = AE 1899, 48; not included in the catalogue).
22 Cicero, Verr. 2.4.99. Cf. Verr 2.4.111.
23 In Livy 23.24.12, also a distinction is made between sacerdotes and antistites (male).
24 E.g. in 330; 404 and 430; 440; 479; 655.
25 3.2.624.
27 Matres of cities and matres of collegia, see: MacMullen (1980) 211; Hemelrijk (2010). Mothers of cities sometimes held priesthoods (in the imperial cult; the priestesses in my corpus were no matres coloniae or municipii) - Hemelrijk (2010) 457. Mothers of collegia did not hold priesthoods, Hemelrijk (2010) 462. Hemelrijk (2010) 456 note 8, suggests that the word ‘mother’ as a term of respect may have been used for priestesses in daily practice.’ She refers to Plautus, Rudens 263, where a sacerdos Veneris is addressed as such (and again in 289). Admittedly, the play is a comedy and set in Cyrene, but I think the differences with reality in Rome cannot have been too great, because the acts and lines in the play should be comprehensible for the audience. This applies also to other parts of the play, see footnote 157; chapter 4, footnotes 60 and 170.
from Tubusuctu and Carthage in North Africa, and two others were set up Gaul and Germania.29 These last two can be dated to the first century AD.30 Hemelrijk writes that the title mater sacrorum ‘suggests some role in supervising religious rites, especially sacrifice, though her precise function is unknown.’31 Spickermann thinks, referring to a dedication to Mercurius by a mater sacrorum from Bordeaux, that probably a priesthood of a local mystery cult is meant, comparable to that of pater sacrorum of the Mithras cult.32 The other matres sacrorum acted (also) in unknown cults, apart from those attested on the inscription from Carthage.33 These three women were matres sacrorum of Jupiter Hammon Barbarus Silvanus (see also below). Their names are included in a list of sacerdotes, which probably means that they were a specific kind of priestesses with specific tasks.34

What can be concluded from this short discussion of priestly titles, is that sacerdos was the most common, used in all parts of the Empire. It was used in a great variety of cults to indicate the main religious officials. Other titles – those of antistes and mater sacrorum – were much rarer, and in many cases it is unclear in which cults they were used, though it seems that they were not only reserved for local cults or cults in which one had to be initiated. The exact meaning of both antistes and mater sacrorum still remains unclear.

2: Distribution and Romanization

The total number of inscriptions in the catalogue that record priestesses and other female cult officials in the western part of the Empire is 296. This number is more or less comparable to that of priestesses

28 Some women were addressed as sacrorum; they seem to have been active in the cult of Isis (as devotees?), and are mostly attested in Rome. Therefore I have not included them in the catalogue. See: AE 2005, 246; CIL 6, 2245 = CIL 6, 6058 = SIRIS 435; CIL 11, 574 = ILS 4410 = SIRIS 587; CIL 12, 263 = ILN 1, 16. Also men were called sacrorum Isisid: CIL 6, 2244 = ILS 4408 = SIRIS 436; CIL 9, 6099 = ILS 4178 = SIRIS 467; CIL 11, 819 = ILS 4409 = SIRIS 592.
29 In an inscription from Cologne (Cat.no.296), a woman is called mater nata etfacta, which may refer to a role in the cult of Dionysus, see: Spickermann (1994b) 143-144, 232.
30 Delgado Delgado (1998) 112-113, writes that the mater sacrorum of Tubusuctu was either active in the cult of an indigenous divinity, served by mystery rites, or acted in a non-African cult. Tubusuctu was founded by Augustus with veterans coming from Narbonese Gaul, Macedonia, Galatia and Italia. The veterans from Narbonensis, the area where other matres sacrorum are attested, could have brought their own cults with them. Delgado Delgado links the inscription from Tubusuctu with the cult of the Matres recorded on German inscriptions: he thinks the name of the priestess – Fabia Audicaena Turesis, to be read as Turicensis – indicates that she originated from Turicum in Germania Superior, the other area where matres sacrorum are attested.
31 Hemelrijk (2009) 264. On an inscription from Teanum Sidicinum a ministra sacrorum publicorum is recorded. This woman held her religious office in the cult of Juno Populonia. Her title and the fact that in the same town two sacerdotes of Juno Populonia are attested, suggests that women with comparable titles to that of mater sacrorum could hold ancillary religious offices, Cat.no. 130.
32 Cat.no.255; Spickermann (1994a) 127; Spickermann (1994b) 230.
33 Cat.no. 265; Spickermann (1994b) 230-231; CIL 12.263 = ILN nr. 16 (Fréjus, before Claudius; possibly cult of Isis, therefore excluded); Spickermann (1994b) 233. Cf. the mater nata et facta of cat.no. 296. Cadotte (2007) 420, states that pater and mater sacrorum were local African titles.
34 Cat.no.163.

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of the imperial cult.\textsuperscript{35} About 278 \textit{flaminicae} have been attested on inscriptions. This shows clearly that the imperial priesthood was the single most important religious office open to women, spread everywhere in the Empire, while the priesthods of the deities in the catalogue were obviously installed according to local preferences or to specific regulations in colonial charters.\textsuperscript{36}

The number of 296 is about 15\% of the number of male priests and other male religious officials that I came across in the \textit{corpora} and electronic databases during my search for priestesses (i.e. circa 2000 \textit{sacerdotes}, \textit{antistites} etc. in the Western part of the Empire, excluding priests of the imperial cult). As I have not looked systematically for male priests and have not included \textit{pontifices}, \textit{augures} and members of other priestly colleges that originated from Rome, I presume that many more priests are attested epigraphically than these 2000. Accordingly, there is likely to be an even higher ratio of priests to priestesses than is suggested by my sample.

In order to see whether this percentage (which is a ratio of circa 1:6.5) is in line with that of other public roles of women, it can be compared to the ratio of women to men who acted as benefactors and to that of priestesses to priests of the imperial cult. In Italy, northern Africa and Spain, circa one in five or six of the benefactors was female.\textsuperscript{37} This is roughly comparable to the ratio of priestesses to priests. Possibly the slightly higher number of benefactresses can be explained by the fact that everyone who possessed some wealth could give benefactions, while gaining a priesthood was limited to a smaller group of people (see also chapter 5). However, the numbers on which these ratios are based are relatively small, so the difference between them is negligible. The difference with the ratio of \textit{flaminicae} to \textit{flamines} on the other hand, is more striking. For every \textit{flaminica}, about 4.5 \textit{flamines} have been found, which means that in this group relatively more women are attested than in the group of priestesses in the catalogue to priests. It is possible that the more local character of the priesthoods held by the women in the catalogue compared to that of the imperial cult is the explanation for the difference.

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Hemelrij suggests that the divergence in numbers between \textit{flaminicae} and \textit{flamines} can be explained by the fact that the cult of the emperor was much more widespread than that of the empress and other women of the imperial family.\textsuperscript{38} The question is whether a similar explanation can be given for the ratio of 1: 6.5 of the other priestesses to priests.\textsuperscript{39} Indeed, some cults of which only male priests have been attested – like that of Jupiter Optimus Maximus – were empire-wide, but several of the deities served by women were also worshipped in wide areas, like Venus. Therefore, I think that the explanation has to be sought in other factors. In the first place, women are underrepresented in the

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\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{35} See: Hemelrijk (2006b) 180.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{36} E.g. Venus, who received an official cult in the \textit{Colonia Iulia Genetiva}, according to the \textit{Lex Ursonensis}. See also Crawford (1996).}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{37} Hemelrijk, forthcoming.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{38} Hemelrijk (2006b) 188.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{39} When the priestesses of Magna Mater and Isis – the two main groups I have excluded – are included in the calculation, the ratio of priestesses to priests hardly changes.}
epigraphic record in general, as has been pointed out in the previous chapter. Secondly, the number of priesthoods open to men seems to have been much higher than that open to women – although we shall see in section 3 that priestesses acted in a wider range of cults than has often been thought. While priests have been attested for nearly all deities that were also served by priestesses, the reverse was not the case. Jupiter Optimus Maximus has already been mentioned, but many more examples can be found. To list but a few: Mars, Neptunus, Mens Bona, several local Genii and Sulis from Britain seem to have been served by men only. Of course, this could be a matter of survival of the evidence, but even if these deities would have had female sacerdotes, their number must have been very small.

A last factor is the limited number of provinces in which priestesses are attested epigraphically. Inscriptions recording male priests have been found in a much wider area, including provinces far from Rome. Obviously, the possibility that there were areas where female priesthoods existed, but were not documented, or of which no inscriptions survive, cannot be excluded. However, as the number of male priests also dwindles the further from Rome one goes, I think another explanation is needed than just a lack of sources. In my opinion the difference can be linked to the level of Romanization. Holding a Roman-style priesthood (and erecting an inscription) required a certain ‘level’ of Romanization of both the individual\textsuperscript{40} and his or her local community.\textsuperscript{41} And although we have seen in the first chapter that women did not by definition live outside the sphere of Romanization, I think that in the more remote and less urbanized areas they were slower than men in adapting Roman values – as Rothe’s discussion about dress in the Rhine-Moselle region has shown (see also chapter 1). Therefore, in the less Romanized areas only male priests have been attested, while relatively many inscriptions were erected by and for priestesses in the areas closer to Rome: ‘Die Beteiligung der Frauen an den Götterkulten in den einzeln Provinzen entspricht damit dem “Süd-Nord-Gefälle”des Reiches. Nur im Mittelmeerraum bestanden wirtschaftliche, urbane und soziale Verhältnisse, die Denen in Italien ähnlich waren.’\textsuperscript{42} In the next section where the geographical spread of the priestesses will be discussed, this will be confirmed.

2.1: The geographical and chronological spread

In figure 1 below, the percentages of inscriptions recorded in the catalogue are shown, ordered by province. By far most inscriptions stem from Italy, Rome and Sicily (53%). As could be expected, northern Africa comes second. Africa Proconsularis provides 16%, Numidia and the Mauretanian provinces 17%. From Hispania – i.e. all Spanish provinces, but in practice this means mainly Baetica – stem only 6% of the inscriptions, while Gaul provides 4%, of which virtually all inscriptions were erected in Narbonensis. The remaining 4% stem from the Rhine and Danube area (Dalmatia, Moesia

\textsuperscript{40} Spickermann (1994a) 7.
\textsuperscript{41} Woolf (1998) 86, 88-89: about Gaul, but also applicable elsewhere.
\textsuperscript{42} Spickermann (1994a) 380, 381 (quotation).
inferior, Germania superior and inferior, from Pannonia superior and one last from Raetia) and an unknown province.\textsuperscript{43}

![Geographical distribution of inscriptions (n=296)](image)

Figure 1: Geographical distribution of inscriptions (n=296)

As has been mentioned, by far most inscriptions stem from Italy (47\%) and Rome (6\%). Most of the local Italian inscriptions were set up in the Augustan region 1 (Latiun and Campania), followed by region 4 (Sannium). Figure 2 shows the density of inscriptions per Augustan region. It is clear – and unsurprising, for it follows the general epigraphic density – that the areas closest to Rome and in southern Italy have yielded most epigraphic material, while in the north (regions 8-11) very few priestesses are recorded on inscriptions.\textsuperscript{44}

Both the distribution per province and that per Italian region are largely compatible to the general spread of Latin inscriptions.\textsuperscript{45} Therefore, I think it is unlikely that indigenous pre-Roman priesthoods that were open to women have influenced the spread of the inscriptions recording priestesses to a significant extent. Of course, this does not mean that in certain cases these native priesthoods will not have continued to exist – in a modified form – under Roman rule, as was the case with e.g. some priesthoods held by men in Tripolitania, or the religious offices in the Ceres cult(s) in North Africa, which had Punic, Greek and Roman roots (see the next chapter).\textsuperscript{46} Greek roots were

\textsuperscript{43} This order is largely comparable to the list recording the epigraphic density, based on monumental inscriptions per square kilometre, provided by Harris (1989) 268.

\textsuperscript{44} Region 10 (Venetia et Histria) is an exception, but this is the result of special archaeological circumstances: most inscriptions from this part come from the sanctuary of Bona Dea in Aquileia.


\textsuperscript{46} Not much is known about pre-Roman priestly officials due to a lack of sources – and when sources are available that are proof for the existence of priestesses, the link with religion in the Roman period is not clear. Cf. Gordon (1990c) 242. References to druids from imperial times sometimes mention women, but these sources are
likely also present in other priesthoods held by women: various priestesses have been attested on Greek inscriptions from Magna Graecia, who served deities that had equivalents in the Roman pantheon, like Demeter and Hera.\footnote{E.g. IG 14, 702 from Pompeii and I.Napoli 1.34 from Naples (priestesses of Demeter Thesmophoros); IG 14, 1285 from near Rome (priestess of Hera).} However, as the Latin inscriptions in general show the same pattern as those recording priestesses these Greek and indigenous roots are not needed to explain the spread.\footnote{Hemelrijk, forthcoming 2013, links the distribution of flaminicae and benefactresses, two groups comparable to the priestesses of this thesis, to Romanization and the spread of urbanisation, Roman citizenship and economic prosperity. These factors may also have contributed to the geographical distribution of priestesses, who are also mainly attested in cities (Cf. Spickermann (1994b) 240), but it is hard to tell because for much of this (Romanization, the spread of citizenship, economic prosperity) we rely mainly on inscriptions, and these are not an independent variable. The epigraphic habit and the distribution of the priestesses were possibly two sides of the same coin.}

![Figure 2: Distribution of inscriptions per Italian region (n=137)](image)

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the practice of inscribing on stone was largely a habit that spread under Roman rule and had had its own chronological development, independent of the phenomena it recorded. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to look a bit further into the epigraphic habit. Figure 3 shows how geography and chronology are linked in the inscriptions of the priestesses in the catalogue. This figure records the (absolute) number of inscriptions that record female religious officials per province in a certain period of time. Most inscriptions cannot be dated, or can only be assigned to ‘the imperial period’ in general. A few inscriptions were set up during the Republican

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Augustan region} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9 & 10 & 11 \\
\hline
\textbf{Number of inscriptions} & 0 & 10 & 20 & 30 & 40 & 50 & 60 & 70 & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textit{Figure 2: Distribution of inscriptions per Italian region (n=137)}

not clear and untrustworthy, Wightman (1986) 549. Allason-Jones (2011) 437 writes that Tacitus, \textit{Ann.} 14.30, mentions female druids, but this is unconvincing. Furthermore, while there is no reference in the ancient sources to Celtiberian priests (Curchin (2004) 181) Roman \textit{sacerdotes} in Spain, both male and female, were very common. And while Tacitus mentions prophetic priestesses in his \textit{Germania} 8.2, only very few priestesses have been attested in the \textit{Germaniae}. Priestesses in pre-Roman Italy: Livy writes that Etruscan women were active in religion, but they are not defined as priestesses, Livy, 1.34.9; Lundeen (2006) 35-36. Etruscan epigraphic evidence is not helpful, see: Lundeen (2006).
period, or the early years of the reign of Augustus, mainly in Rome and Italy. This fits with the general gradual increase in the number of inscriptions that started during the late Republican period and quickened under Augustus. The peak of the second century is only visible in the African provinces. Interestingly, Rome, Italy, Hispania and the Gaulish provinces have yielded relatively many inscriptions dating from the first century AD. I have no explanation for this strange pattern.

*Figure 3: Chronological distribution per province (n=296)*

When all datable inscriptions recording priestesses are taken together and are divided according to the period in which they were erected, one gets the pattern that is shown in figure 4.

*Figure 4: The number of datable inscriptions per period (n=147)*
The most striking is the early peak of inscriptions in the first century AD (while generally, the number of inscriptions peaked at the end of the second century under the Severi). The peak of figure 4 is mainly the result of epigraphic material attesting to the ancient Italic priesthoods of Venus and Ceres; possibly, the prominence of these priesthoods can be linked to the religious policy of the emperor Augustus.

In sum, the geographical and chronological distribution of epigraphic material that records female religious officials is partly deviant from the normal pattern. Parts of the chronological distribution per province are unusual, just as the first century peak of inscriptions. However, as the number of datable inscriptions in total and that of the inscriptions from the areas with the deviating pattern are very small, we should not overstate these irregularities. Likely, they are the result of a more or less accidental loss or survival of inscriptions (see also chapter 1).

2.2: Sacerdotes stricto sensu

Now the geographical and chronological distributions of the inscriptions have been discussed, it is time to pay attention to the cults in which the women served. A little more than half of the priestesses in the catalogue (ca. 51%) are women in whose title no reference is made to the deity they served.\(^49\) They were simply called sacerdos or magistra, ministra etcetera. As I have already mentioned, I will refer to these women as sacerdotes stricto sensu.\(^50\) Sometimes an extra qualification was added, like publica, magna or perpetua. There are some controversies about these extra qualifications, because their meaning is not fully clear, though perpetual priesthoods have be contrasted to annual ones, and the word publica might stress to the role of the local community in providing the means necessary for the maintenance of the cult – public money – and the fact that the priestess represented this community (see chapter 1). All sacerdotes publicae and primae are attested in Italy, while the sacerdotes perpetuae and annuae have only been attested in Spain (Baetica and Tarraconensis respectively); this can probably be linked to the cult in which they served (see below, section 2.3).

In this section, I will explain the criteria I have used for determining the cults in which these sacerdotes stricto sensu may have served. The results are used in the next part of this chapter, where the various priesthoods held by women will pass under review. It has to be noted though, that in many cases the cult in which a sacerdos stricto sensu served, cannot be discovered.

\(^{49}\) Male sacerdotes stricto sensu are also abundant in the epigraphic material, and sometimes they had the same qualifications (perpetuus, publicus) as their female colleagues. Fiske (1900) 113, has supposed that all Spanish sacerdotes stricto sensu were priests of the imperial cult. In my opinion, his arguments are unconvincing.

\(^{50}\) In the catalogue I have not included those sacerdotes (magistrae etc.) stricto sensu who, regarding the criteria discussed below, served Isis and Magna Mater or were active in the imperial cult.
The text of the inscription

In several cases the text of the inscriptions provides some clues as to which deities were served by the sacerdotes stricto sensu.51 These indications can be the divinity invoked on dedications, cult specific rites or gifts which can be linked to a certain cult and were provided by the priestess or someone assisted by a priestess. To give two examples of the last option: a sacerdos annua who erected an inscription some time between AD 50 and 120, provided the town Castulo (Hispania Tarraconensis) with a gift that consisted of the area with statues in front of the temple of Roma et Augustus.52 This gift suggests that this woman whose name has not been preserved in the inscription, served in the cult of Roma et Augustus. Therefore, this inscription is not included in the catalogue. An inscription from Antium (region 1; AD 85) records a dedication in sacraio Cereris Antiatinae by a certain Claudia Attica. She was assisted by the sacerdos Iulia Procula, who can therefore safely be regarded as a priestess of Ceres.53 The cult specific rites that are mentioned in some inscriptions of sacerdotes stricto sensu have generally led to the decision not to include these inscriptions in the catalogue. Taurobolia and criobolia are two rites virtually exclusively connected to Magna Mater.54 When they were executed by a sacerdos stricto sensu I regarded this sacerdos as priestess of Magna Mater and have therefore excluded the inscription from the catalogue.55

More needs to be said about the relation between the deities that were invoked in the inscription and the sacerdotes. It is likely that priestesses, who made dedications to other gods than the ones they served, explicitly mentioned ‘their own’ deity in their inscription.56 CIL 8, 1140 from Carthage is a good example:57

Junoni / Sallustiae M(arcii) fil(iae) / Lupercæae sacerdot(i) Cer(eries)crum

“To Juno, from Sallustia Luperca, daughter of Marcus, priestess of Ceres/the Cereres.”

51 For an example of a male sacerdos stricto sensu from Rome whose cult can be discovered by looking at the archaeological context and the text of the inscription recording his name, see Brouwer (1989) 385.
52 AE 2004, 753 = CIL 2, 3279 = CIL 3.1, 105.
53 Cat.no. 24.
54 However, one reservation has to be made in relation to taurobolia and the cult of Magna Mater: the first taurobolium ever that is attested on an inscription from the western part of the Empire, was given in honour of Venus Caelestis in Puteoli in AD 134, CIL 10.1596; Dubois (1907) 162; Peterson (1919) 37, 156; Rutter (1968) 231. This inscription belongs to the group of inscriptions from the period between 135 BC - AD 159, a phase in which, according to Rutter, ‘the rite [the taurobolium] was not connected with any particular deity.’ Only in the second period (AD 159 - 290) the taurobolium was adopted into the cult of Magna Mater, and all inscriptions from AD 159 onwards can be linked to the worship of this goddess, Rutter (1968) 226. See also: Alvar (2008) 265, 266.
55 There are a few exceptions, all from Beneventum. In this town Magna Mater was worshipped in a cult together with Minerva Paracentia or Bercinictia. Due to the presence of Minerva, I have decided to include the priestesses of this cult, all sacerdotes stricto sensu, in the catalogue.
56 Another option was to be indicated as sacerdos eius. Augustae / Veneri sacrum / Fulvina Helene / sacerdos eius / d(e) s(uae) p(ecunia) t(larum) / Ceciti, CIL 3, 7254; modern Kato, Achaia, not included in the catalogue.
57 Other examples: e.g., CIL 2, 2416; ILS 6924 (Bracara Augusta, Hispania Tarraconensis). This last inscription is a dedication to Isis Augusta by a perpetual priestess of Roma and the Augusti/-ae. Also: CIL 2.5, 311 = CIL 2, 1611 (Igabrum, Baetica) and CIL 6, 512 = ILS 4154 = SIRIS 447 (Rome); none included.
In analogy with inscriptions like this, I take the deity in honour of whom the sacerdotes (or magistrate, canistriariae etc.) stricto sensu erected a dedication as the one in whose cult they served – unless other evidence indicates otherwise. This implies that I think that the woman in the following inscription, set up in Madauros (Numidia), was a priestess of Tellus Augusta:

Telluri Aug(ustae) / Iulia Mitthia sace(rodos) / l(ibens) v(otum) s(olvit)

“To Tellus Augusta; the priestess Iulia Mitthia solved her vow.”

If this Iulia Mitthia was no priestess of Tellus Augusta, it would be unclear to the onlookers in which cult she held her office, for there are no further indications as to which other deity she might have served. This example is but one of many cases. In several of these inscriptions, the name of the deity is mentioned after the religious office of the woman in question (very often that of magistra), and is followed by a statement about a vow solved or a gift given. Clark has discussed this ambiguity in phrasing in which the name of the deity can be both genitive and dative, when the name is a first or fifth group noun. She has rightly asked the question whether these women were magistriæ of the god, or whether they made the dedication to the god. She states convincingly that this ambiguity may have been inserted on purpose to save space (and so money), and that both interpretations were true at the same time.

Local religious life

The second factor that can help to discover in which cults the sacerdotes stricto sensu served, is the religious life of the towns in which these women are attested. Sometimes there are other cults in which women acted as priestesses, which might – but: need not! – imply that the sacerdotes stricto sensu served in one of these cults. Alternatively, one can determine which cults were the most important in the towns of the priestesses. It is likely that in many cases recording only the fact that one was sacerdos (and especially: sacerdos publica) would be sufficient to link the priestess to the central cult.

This seems to have been the case in Pompeii, where the sacerdotes publicae are generally assumed to have served Venus, the main goddess and protectress of the town. In Pompeii the

58 Cat.no.189. Cf. cat.no.246 probably mentioning a priestess of Fortuna Augusta. And cat.no.185 in which probably a priestess of Venus is recorded.
59 E.g., cat.no.31; 32; 71; 72.
60 Clark (2011) 355-358.
61 Sometimes there is evidence of more than one (important) cult in which women held religious offices, for example in Madauros in Africa Proconsularis, where several priestesses of Ceres/the Cereres, some sacerdotes Tellarum, and a female sacerdos Liberi Patris are attested.
62 However, it is often very difficult to identify the main deities of a municipality. The number of inscriptions referring to a specific divinity only shows his or her popularity. See also Haussler (2011) 393-394.
priesthood of Ceres was also ‘public’, but the titles of the priestesses of this goddess contained the word Ceres. The best example to illustrate this, is the inscription that mentions Eumachia, sacerdos publica, Aquvia Quarta and the Heiai Rufulai (?), the last three sacerdotes Ceres publicae (see also the Epilogue). Another argument in favour of the supposition that the Pompeian sacerdotes publicae served the city goddess is the fact that Eumachia’s well-known statue and accompanying inscription on which she is again called sacerdos publica were placed in her own aedificium on the forum. As this location (the archaeological context, see below) does not clarify the priesthood mentioned on the inscription, it seems obvious that in Pompeii the ‘public’ priesthood was that of the main deity Venus Pompeiana, known to all. Likely, comparable situations can be found in other towns in which sacerdotes publicae are attested.

Reliefs
The reliefs that sometimes accompany the inscriptions of sacerdotes stricto sensu, can be depictions of cult-specific attributes, objects and animals. An example is the relief of a sacerdos magna, described in chapter 3, which suggests that this woman was priestess of Ceres. Other examples of reliefs related to the Ceres cult are mentioned in chapter 4, section 1.1. Sometimes though, carvings can be confusing, especially when the texts are also puzzling. On a dedication to Semele from Colonia Agrippinensium in Germania inferior reliefs that refer to the cult of Dionysus and Magna Mater are carved. In the text a certain Reginia Paterna is indicated as mater nata et facta, while a Seranius Catullus was pater. For the presence of this title of pater, links to a Mithraic community have been supposed. It has also been suggested that Reginia Paterna was mater in the cult of Magna Mater while the man was pater in the Mithras cult or alternatively in that of Magna Mater. Clearly, reliefs should be interpreted with great caution.

The archaeological context
Finally, the archaeological context of the inscriptions – i.e. mainly the location where they were erected – can help to discover the cults of the sacerdotes stricto sensu. When an inscription is found in a temple, it is likely that the deity to whom this temple was dedicated, was the same divinity as the one served by the priestess recorded on the inscription. Derks provides an example of a male flamen, in whose title no divinity is mentioned. The context of the sanctuary where the inscription was set up

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64 Cat.no.94.
66 Vermaseren and Van Essen (1965) 122 (Mithras); Vermaseren (1974) II, 30 (Magna Mater). Griffith writes that a link to Mithras is not straightforward, and certainly not involves the woman, who probably neither was mater in a cult of Semele; Griffith (2006) 64-65. Regarding these uncertainties, this inscription is included in the catalogue in the category of uncertain cases.
67 However, when no central inscription has been discovered and no large number of dedications to one god, it is uncertain which deity was worshipped in a certain sanctuary, Haensch (2007) 185.
makes clear that Lenus Mars must have been the god served by the *flamen.*
Unfortunately though, in most cases concerning the inscriptions in the catalogue, very little is known of the archaeological context. Only votive inscriptions found *in situ* or together with other inscriptions that offer additional information, provide the necessary religious context. An altar from Glanum (modern Saint-Remy-de-Provence) in Gallia Narbonensis that records a *ministra strictu sensu,* is a good example. The inscription reads: *Auribus / Loreia Pia / ministra* (To the Ears, [given by] the *ministra* Loreia Pia). Brouwer has pointed out that the altar resembles a dedication to Bona Dea from Arles, erected by the *ministra* Caiena Attica. Furthermore, another altar from Glanum that mentions a *ministra* was erected in honour of ‘the Mistress’ (*Dominae),’ and it is known that Bona Dea was called *Domina* elsewhere. Finally, at the find spot of Loreia Pia’s altar which was called the ‘temple of Bona Dea’, other dedications to the goddess have been found. For these reasons, Brouwer concluded that Loreia Pia must have been *ministra* of Bona Dea.

The criteria offered here for discovering the cult of the *sacerdotes stricto sensu* can best be used together. Unfortunately, this is often impossible and in many cases it remains unknown or at least highly uncertain in which cult these priestesses acted. Similar uncertainties concern the women who were addressed as ‘priestesses of a certain town.’ These *sacerdotes* and their cults will be discussed in the next section.

2.3: Priestesses of cities and perpetual priestesses

Various women served as priestess of a city – that is: they do not mention a specific cult but were called for instance *sacerdos Ilipensis,* or *sacerdos coloniae Thaenitanae.* It is not clear what this title exactly means, but it has many parallels in the titles of male priests, who can be found for example in the area around Rome. Although by far most priestesses of cities are attested in Hispania Baetica, three examples stem from other places. The first priestess, a *sacerdos [---] Atiniatium* lived – obviously – in Atina in Italy (region 3), while the second, the above mentioned *sacerdos coloniae Thaenitanae,* stemmed from Thaenae in Africa Proconsularis. The last one is more exceptional, as the

69 Cat.no.256, Haeussler (2011) 404 compares the mysterious ‘Ears’ to the Celtic theonym *Roklosia,* which could mean: ‘hearing deities.’
70 Cat.no. 251.
71 Cat.no.257.
73 Cat.no.243.
74 Cat.no.216.
75 See: Wissowa (1915); Latte (1960) 404-407. See also chapter 4 about the *praesula Tuscananorum.*
76 Cat.no.37.
inscription of this woman was found in Tomis in Moesia Inferior (she was, unsurprisingly, called 
sacerdos Tomitanorum), a province from which only a few priestesses are known.77

While the Spanish provinces have yielded a reasonable but certainly no impressive amount of 
inscriptions that record priestesses, the number of female sacerdotes of cities from this area is 
relatively high. They are all attested in Baetica. Agria Iunufia, whose inscription was erected around 
the turn of the second century, was sacerdotia Iliensis.78 Iunia Rustica had been sacerdos perpetua et 
prima in municipio Cartimitano in the seventies of the first century AD.79 Licinia Rufina was priestess 
of no less than three towns in the late second or early third century; she was sacerdos perpetua in 
colonia Claritate Iulia et in municipio Contribentui Ipscensi et in municipio Florentino Iliberrtano.80

Like city priestesses, sacerdotes perpetuae like Licinia Rufina and Iunia Decima, are virtually all 
found in Baetica.

Both the Spanish priestesses of cities and the sacerdotes perpetuae, are generally supposed to 
have served in the imperial cult.81 With regards to the ‘perpetual’ priestesses, this is not unlikely, 
considering the fact that in the few cases in which the cult of a sacerdos perpetua is recorded, it is the 
imperial cult.82 Additionally, various flaminicae perpetuae have been attested epigraphically. An 
argument to back the view that city priestesses served also in the imperial cult is the similarity 
between the titles of women (and men) who certainly served in the imperial cult and those of the city 
 priestesses mentioned above: both were called ‘priest in a certain municipium or colony’.83

Furthermore, the existence of these city priestesses in Baetica and the wide organisation of the 
imperial cult in this province make links between the two obvious.

However, for several reasons I think more evidence is needed to be able to maintain that all 
city priestesses and ‘perpetual’ priestesses served in the imperial cult, and only in the imperial cult. 
The first reason is that the old priesthoods of the cities around Rome, held by men (mentioned above), 
were certainly not related to the emperor worship. This implies that the title ‘sacerdos of a city’ does 
not necessarily refer to the imperial cult. Secondly, the Spanish women who certainly served in the 
imperial cult usually had the word augustae somewhere in their title and were sometimes called both 
sacerdos and flaminica.84 Finally, many priesthoods in the provinces were local (see also chapter 3 for 
examples), which makes it likely that there were not only small differences in religious titles, but also

77 Cat.no.262. No flaminicae are attested on inscriptions from Moesia Inferior, and the number of male priests is 
also small.
78 Cat.no.243.
79 Cat.no.283.
80 Cat.no.290.
82 E.g. Aelia Senilla (CIL 2, 1341 = ILER 1770; Ossigii Latonium, Baetica) was domus Augustae sacerdos prima 
et perpetua, and Pomponia Rosciana (IRPCadiz 541; Saepo, Baetica) was sacerdos perpetua divorum divarum.
83 Cf. Delgado Delgado (1998) 77. E.g. Domitia Proculina (CIL 2, 895= ILS 6895; Caesareoprisca) was flaminica 
84 Those who were definitely acting in the imperial cult were also called flaminica. CIL 2, 3278= CILA 3.1, 
104= ILER 1662 (Castulo, Tarracoensis); AE 1983, 21=AE 2001, 1185=AE 1982, 521=CILA 2.2, 358 (Italica, 
Baetica).
differences in the tasks and cults of the *sacerdotes*, who accordingly need not all have served in the imperial cult.

I think there are two possible ways to interpret the titles of the city priestesses and ‘perpetual’ priestesses. The first is that they may have had a wider function and acted as ‘general’ priestess for their town in all cults that did not have their own priest(ess) but that were part of the local calendar. Obviously, this could imply that they had to carry out priestly tasks in honour of the empress or other members of the imperial house, but it does not exclude tasks in other cults. The other possibility is that the priestesses, in analogy with *sacerdotes publicae*, served the most important deity of their town – which need not necessarily be the empress or one of her imperial relatives. Unfortunately, with the available evidence this problem cannot be solved.

3: Deities served by female officials

Now the priestesses of whom it is unknown or uncertain in which cult they acted are discussed, and some criteria for determining the cults of the *sacerdotes stricto sensu* have been established, we turn to the deities that were served by female religious officials. In 1912 Henri Graillot wrote in his work on the Magna Mater that in Roman society official participation of women was a religious necessity for cults concerned with female deities. Graillot was not the only one; there have been many other people who thought that the sex of the deity determined the sex of his or her priests and worshippers. In 1986 McMullen still held the same view. Even Schultz, who provided several exceptions to this ‘rule’, wrote in 2006: ‘For the most part, cults were maintained by only one gender or the other (...).’ (Cf. also chapter 1) Indeed, when new cults were created for members of the imperial house, the duties of the priests ‘seem to have been segregated according to gender.’ The question can be asked if the epigraphic material relating to other cults supports this view and if the provinces were much different from Rome in this respect. In this section I will therefore discuss which divinities were served by priestesses and women with other religious offices, and investigate to which extent the ‘gender rule’ was applied. I will also examine where the priestesses are attested and if they had male colleagues in order to gain a better understanding of the spread of female priesthoods of individual cults, of possible

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85 Cf. Fiske (1900) 120: *sacerdotes* who had served as priestesses in cities before the introduction of the imperial cult, had the imperial cult added to their tasks.

86 Therefore, the perpetual priestesses and city priestesses are included in the catalogue, but in the group with uncertain cases.


89 MacMullen (1986) 442: ‘Religion generally required female ministrants for female deities (...).’

90 Schultz (2006) 87 (quotation), 92.

differences between Rome and the provinces and of the diversity of the epigraphic – and in some cases: literary – evidence attesting to priestesses.

3.1: Goddesses

I will deal with the individual divinities served by female cult personnel according to their sex. It should first be noted though, that it is uncertain in how far – or even unlikely that – the cult of a deity with the same name was uniform in the Roman Empire.92 A deity could be honoured in different parts of the Empire under the same name, but there are no reasons to suppose that the social and political background of the worshippers or the way of worshipping were the same.93 Local gods were ‘transformed and integrated into the Roman pantheon’,94 and because they travelled across the Empire, the gods from Rome acquired new identities.95 Everywhere, they were subject to different syncretism and re-interpretation, which implies that the sphere of influence of individual deities was not limited to one aspect.96 This diversity was often expressed by different epithets. Versnel writes about this phenomenon: ‘gods bearing the same name but with different epithets may, but need not have been perceived self-evidently as different functional or local manifestations or aspects of one god.’97 This depended on the context that triggered one of the believer’s various layers of perception.98 Nevertheless, for reasons of convenience and to give an impression of the wide variety of deities women could serve as an official, I will briefly mention the main Roman-Italic characteristics of all the gods and goddesses served by women in the West. This section starts with the goddess whose priestesses are best attested: Ceres.

Ceres and her priestesses

Ceres was the goddess of fertility and agriculture, although she influenced many other aspects of life as well. She was identified99 with Terra or Tellus (the oldItalic earth-mother) and therefore possessed

92 Beard, North and Price (1998) 248. See also Haeussler (2011) 394 and 396: ‘The often postulated similarities across the Roman West are due to our evidence. The adoption of Latin epigraphy along with the adoption of Graeco-Roman anthropomorphic representations of deities cause our evidence to appear, at least superficially, similar across the Roman West.’


95 Bendlin (1997) 54.


97 Versnel (2011) 77.

98 Versnel (2011) 82-83.

a chthonic side. Furthermore, the goddess was linked to marriages and chastity and to the change from barbarism to civilization. At an early stage, the Italic Ceres and the Greek Demeter started to be equated; this process of Hellenization accelerated in the second half of the third century BC, and Ceres’s link to ripening grain became even stronger than before. This link was still important in the imperial period. Many imperial inscriptions from all over the Empire attest to existence of aediles (plebis) cereals and show that Ceres was protectress of the frumentarii (corn-dealers or, in the military: commissaries of the stores). Furthermore, Ceres is depicted on various coins that refer to imperial concern for the provision of grain to the Roman plebs. Several ‘imperial actions [like restoring a temple of the goddess, VG] were probably connected to agrarian crises (...).

By far most inscriptions of the catalogue that can be assigned to a single cult (ca. 34.5%) have been set up for of by priestesses of Ceres. They are only attested in two areas: northern Africa and Italy, including Rome (for which also literary evidence is available, see chapter 3). This distribution reflects the popularity of Ceres in these regions, for dedications to this goddess stem mainly from these same areas. Compared to other deities who are attested on many more inscriptions from a wider geographical area, Ceres did not receive many dedications, except in the regions mentioned. This


104 Cassius Dio, Roman History, 43.51.3.


106 CIL 14, 2; 409; CIL 3,3835; 10511; CIL 9.1545.

107 E.g., coins of Claudius with Antonia, Livia and Agrippina minor as Ceres show a link to grain supply. Seneca, De Brevit. Vitae 18.5 writes that at Claudius’ coronation there was a lack of grain in Rome, and accordingly, these coins possibly show that Claudius took great care of the grain supply in Rome, Foubert (2010) 144, 170. See also: Chirassi Colombo (1981) 424. Maybe for the same reason, Claudius wanted to introduce the Eleusinian mysteries in Rome and to intensify the worship of Ceres, Suet., Claud. 25; Simon (1990) 49–50.


109 There is an exception from Cularo in Gallia Narbonensis that records a male servus of Ceres and Mercurius, CIL 12, 2318 = ILN 5.2, 459. Additionally, some dedications to Ceres were erected in Baetica and other Spanish areas, and very few were erected in the Danube provinces. Alfoldy (1989) 72–74: the number of dedications says something about the popularity of a cult.

110 Eck (1989) 43–44: In the Roman Empire most dedications were erected in honour of Jupiter, followed by Hercules, Apollo, Aesculapius, Diana, Fortuna, Silvanus, Magna Mater, Isis, Serapis and Mithras.

111 Savunen (1997) 122 writes that there is little evidence for the cult of Ceres in Campania, except the inscriptions of the sacerdotes. And indeed, these inscriptions make out the greatest part of the epigraphic
indicates that the worship of the goddess was mainly limited to these provinces, and therefore, a special explanation is needed to account for this spread. I think three main factors played a role in this geographical spread of both the cult of Ceres and, accordingly, her priestesses: in the first place the production of grain, secondly Greek roots and thirdly – in case of Africa – Punic and Romano-Italic influences. Below, I will discuss how these factors may help to explain the distribution.

**Italy**

In virtually all towns in Italy where priestesses of Ceres are attested on inscriptions, the production of grain seems to have been an important economic activity. Besides, many of the same towns had been influenced (or founded) by the Greeks (e.g. towns in the regions 3 and 7). The link to grain and a Greek past is most clearly illustrated by the evidence from Campania. Most Italian Ceres priestesses are attested in Campania (19 of the 46, excl. Sicily), a multicultural region where many Greeks lived who came from the south. Ceres was the main protectress of Campania. The cult of Ceres was concentrated in the most fertile areas of Campania that produced large quantities of grain. Many farmlands in Campania belonged to ‘the richest in all of Italy south of the Po valley,’ and produced three harvests of grain per year. Simon writes that the Italian Ceres priestesses lived in cities from which grain for Rome was imported, and indeed, several examples can be found, e.g. Naples and Capua. Apart from producing cereals, Campania was important for the Roman grain supply in another way: grain from Sicily, Egypt and Africa came to the port of Puteoli to be transported to the Urbs. ‘Without the enormous quantities of grain imported regularly into Italy through this port, it is no exaggeration to say that masses of people at Rome would often have gone hungry.’ Considering this, it is unsurprising that this town has yielded no less than five priestesses of the grain goddess Ceres. The other Italian *sacerdotes Cereri* held office mainly in region 4. Corfinium and Sulmo seem to have been ancient centres of the cult, as several pre-Roman inscriptions show (see chapters 3 and 5). The valleys around Sulmo and Corfinium were very fertile and this may explain the prominence of the

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evidence of the cult, but compared to other regions, the number of Campanian votive inscriptions and others in which Ceres is mentioned, is relatively high.

112 Priestesses of Venus and Juno have also only been attested in Italy and Africa, but in contrast to dedications to Ceres, votives to these goddesses can be found elsewhere as well. Therefore, the distribution of the priestesses of Venus and Juno seems simply the result of the fact that Italy and Africa have yielded most inscriptions in general, see Bodel (2001) 8.

113 Ostrow (1985) 87-88; Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 92. In chapter 3, more will be said about the special relation between Ceres and Campania.


115 Ostrow (1985) 86.


117 However, it is uncertain where exactly the largest part of the Campanian grain was produced; Arthur (1991) 86, thinks that it was probably the area between Capua and the sea. Peterson (1919) 318, writes that Capua was an agricultural town that mainly produced grain.

118 Therefore the Julio-Claudian emperors paid much attention to Puteoli, Peterson (1919) 100; Steurtagel (1999) 182.

119 Ostrow (1985) 86.
cult in the area. The same can be said about Aeclanum (region 2) where one sacerdos Ceres is attested. This town was an important producer of cereals.\textsuperscript{120}

\textit{North Africa}

In northern Africa 54 women were religious officials in the cult of Ceres or the Cereres – see also chapter 3. Half of them lived in Africa Proconsularis; slightly less in Numidia and only three in Mauretania.\textsuperscript{121} Drine has stated that in general most priestesses lived in the part of northern Africa where the Punic roots were the strongest\textsuperscript{122}, but which was also influenced by Greek colonists and in later times used for the production of grain for Rome.\textsuperscript{123} Indeed, in Africa Proconsularis, where most priestesses of Ceres are attested, concentrations of priestesses can be found in the grain-producing eastern part of the province around Bulla Regia, and in a fertile region located directly to the south of this town that included settlements like Ammaedara, Thala, Sufetula and Cilium.\textsuperscript{124} This part was heavily influenced by Punic traditions.\textsuperscript{125}

It is not surprising that Punic – and Greek – influences contributed to the popularity of Ceres/the Cereres in the region, for a connection between Punic religion, i.e. the goddess Tanit, and the worship of the Greek Demeter-Ceres is indeed attested in different areas (including northern Africa) of the western Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{126} Until the end of the first century BC Punic culture (with its strong Greek component) remained dominant in Africa.\textsuperscript{127} From then on, the elite started to use Latin next to Punic, the names of gods changed from Punic to Latin\textsuperscript{128} and Ceres was influenced by the Romans.\textsuperscript{129}

Like the Italian Ceres cult, that of northern Africa was linked to (the spread of) agriculture, mainly the production of grain. The popularity of the Ceres cult in Africa reflects the importance of agriculture for the African economy and society; Africa’s wealth was based on agricultural

\textsuperscript{120} Salmon (1967) 66.
\textsuperscript{121} Although there are several examples of statues of Ceres from Caesarea in Mauretania (see Landwehr (1993) 56-58.), the number of inscriptions in which the goddess is mentioned, is very small (especially when those of the female religious officials are not counted).
\textsuperscript{122} Drine (1994) 174, 179.
\textsuperscript{124} Audollent (1912) 366; MacKendrick (1980) 36, 61; Cherry (1998) 146-147. In addition to these two main areas, a few female sacerdotes Ceres or Cерерum can be found to the east of Thugga and in a couple of more isolated towns located in different parts of the province.
\textsuperscript{125} Drine (1994) 179. Some priestesses are also attested in the Carthaginian pertica, for example in Belalis Maior. In this town many people from Italy lived, mainly stemming from Campania, who were attracted by the fertility of the surrounding area, Mahjoubi (1984) 64: ‘(…) notamment des Campaniens attirés par la richesse agricole de Beld Béjâ et les possibilités d’échanges.’ This might be an interesting point with relation to the Ceres cult.
\textsuperscript{126} White (1967) 346-349. Cf. Audollent (1912) 372 and Cadotte (2007) 359, 360. White mentions (347) a funerary stele from Sidi Ali Madiouni, near Mactar, on which a priestess of the Cereres is depicted in a frontal pose, carrying, among other things, a caduceus. Usually, this was no attribute of Ceres, but - in Africa - of the Punic Tanit.
\textsuperscript{127} It seems that during this time the indigenous kings played a role in the spread of the cult of Demeter-Ceres,Carcopino (1928) 6. Cf. Carcopino (1942) 21. Cf. Gesztelyi (1972) 79; Spaeth (1996) 17, about the role of king Massinissa in the spread of the Ceres cult.
\textsuperscript{129} Audollent (1912) 369.
products.\textsuperscript{130} And indeed, the ‘cult became especially significant under the Empire, when Africa served as one of Rome’s principal granaries.’\textsuperscript{131} As early as the first century AD Africa provided two-thirds of the grain for Rome,\textsuperscript{132} but already after the Second Punic War, Africa had probably acquired a position as \textit{provincia fritmentaria}, together with Sicily (another area where the Ceres-Demeter cult was important!) and Sardinia.\textsuperscript{133} This explains why the worship of the goddess was popular before the Roman conquest in places like Thugga\textsuperscript{134} and why several inscriptions that attest to \textit{sacerdotes Cерeris} date from the first century AD, which is early compared to the other African priestesses.

In contrast to Italy,\textsuperscript{135} in northern Africa also male \textit{sacerdotes} of Ceres have been attested on inscriptions. Their existence might be a result from the Greek-Sicilian roots of the cult; in Gela and Syracuse, the Deinomenids were male priests who served Demeter and Kore (see chapter 3).\textsuperscript{136} Although some male priests lived in towns that were independent from Carthage, most \textit{male} priests are from the area around Carthage, its \textit{pertica}.\textsuperscript{137} The \textit{pertica} included towns like Uchi Maius and Thugga.\textsuperscript{138} Many male priests are attested in and around fertile Thugga, a town of which the inhabitants were citizens of Carthage – at least until AD 205 when it became a colony – and could pursue careers there, obviously including religious offices.\textsuperscript{139} After the adoption of the cult in Carthage and its surrounding area, it spread to Numidia.\textsuperscript{140} The number of Numidian male priests active in the Ceres cult is much smaller than that of both Numidian priestesses and of priests from Africa Proconsularis. This is due to the fact that so many inscriptions have been found in Carthage, where the Ceres cult was of special importance (see chapter 3).

In conclusion, the geographical spread of the \textit{sacerdotes} of the goddess Ceres can be linked to the production of grain, to Greek roots and to Punic influences. In Italy only priestesses are attested, while

\textsuperscript{130} Cherry (1998) 44; Rives (2007) 72.
\textsuperscript{131} Spaeth (1996) 17. However, there is no proof of an active encouragement of agriculture by the Roman authorities, Cherry (1998)151.
\textsuperscript{132} Rives (1995) 26. The coast of modern Tunisia is fertile and close to Italy, which makes it an ideal area for the production of grain for the \textit{Urbs}; Rives (1995) 17, 19.
\textsuperscript{134} Foucher, \textit{toubourt.perso.sfr.fr/maghreb/FoucherPaganisme.doc}, 7.
\textsuperscript{135} One possible exception, see chapter 3, section 3.2.
\textsuperscript{136} As in Italy also male priests of Demeter have been attested on inscriptions, the question why there is no evidence for male Ceres priests in Italy seems to be more important than the question why male Ceres priests were present in Africa. After all, in northern Africa priests of a great variety of divinities are attested epigraphically. I think the absence of male Ceres priests in Italy might be a result from influences from the City, where the officials of the Greek Ceres cult were female, and from ancient Italic habits (e.g. in Sulmo and Corfinium), see chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{137} Gascou (1987) 108, 109. Nothing is known about the Ceres temple in Carthage itself. There was, however, a temple of Tellus, built by a certain M. Caelius Phileros in 40 BC, Gesztelyi (1972) 79; Rives (1995) 48 note 66. Carcopino (1942) 19, writes that here possibly the \textit{Cereres} were worshipped.
\textsuperscript{138} Rives (1995) 24. Thugga, Uchi Maius and the \textit{pagus Sittuensis} were part of the same administrative district, at least during the years 125-130, Fishwick and Shaw (1977) 375.
\textsuperscript{140} Cadotte (2007) 347, 357.
in northern Africa also men served as *sacerdotes*. More about the cult of the goddess, including her religious personnel in Rome, will be said in chapter 3.

**Venus, *sacerdotes Veneris* and *sacerdotes Cereris et Veneris***

Venus was an old Italic goddess, giving prosperity and abundance and promoting the fertility of plants, animals and human beings. As a result from her relation to powers of growing and ever renewing life, Venus developed into a goddess of love, as the Greek Aphrodite.\(^{141}\) Despite her seniority and the fact that Livy writes that Venus belonged to the twelve classical gods, she had no *flamen* in Rome like Ceres or Flora, and she had no place in the ancient Roman calendar.\(^{142}\) From the year 295 onwards a public Venus cult can be identified in Rome.\(^{143}\) In the third century BC two new Venus-types were introduced in the City: Venus Verticordia and Venus Erycina.\(^{144}\) Venus of Eryx was an old Mediterranean fertility goddess. After the Greek colonization she was identified with Aphrodite and later with the Carthaginian Tanit; she became a Hellenized goddess with Asian traits. A temple was built for Venus Erycina on the Capitol in 217 BC after Rome’s loss at Trasimene, but the sanctuary at Eryx was already under the authority and protection of the senate from 249 BC onwards, when the Romans had conquered Mount Eryx.\(^{145}\)

In early times in Rome, Venus had never been a major goddess but she became more popular under Caesar, who built a temple for Venus Genetrix on his new forum.\(^{146}\) Pompeius in his turn built one on his forum in honour of Venus Victrix.\(^{147}\) Elsewhere in Italy the worship of Venus was certainly as important as in Rome. Her cult existed in Campania and southern Italy before the Roman colonisation.\(^{146}\) Although the cults in several Campanian towns were influenced by the Venus of Eryx,\(^{149}\) generally in Campania, Venus was the patron of gardens and of marshes.\(^{150}\) She was worshipped in Herculanum as the *Oscan Herentas*,\(^{151}\) near Casinum,\(^{152}\) in Ardea, Lavinium\(^{153}\), Alba and Gabii.\(^{154}\) Venus was the city goddess of Pompeii, and her cult was promoted by Sulla.\(^{155}\)

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\(^{142}\) Livy, 22.10.9; Turcan (1988) 10; Schilling (1954) 9; *Neue Pauly*, s.v. Venus, 17.


\(^{144}\) Schilling (1954) 225, 228, 229; Beard, North and Price (1998) 80, 83.


\(^{147}\) Beard, North and Price (1998) 122, 144; Stamper (2005) 88. Furthermore, Hadrian erected a temple of Venus and Rome near the *forum Romanum*; this was the largest temple in the whole city. After a fire it was restored by the emperor Maxentius, Beard, North and Price (1998) 257, 260; Stamper (2005) 212.


\(^{149}\) Peterson (1919) 7.

\(^{150}\) In Rome the garden cult did not become important, Koch (1955a) 828; Schilling (1954) 24, 27, 30.

\(^{151}\) Peterson (1919) 19, 285. See also Koch (1955b) 6-7; Latte (1960) 183; Torelli (1996) 172.

\(^{152}\) Schilling (1980) 449-450.

\(^{153}\) Also: Simon (1990) 219.

\(^{154}\) Peterson (1919) 6 note 6.

\(^{155}\) Rives (1994b) 302. Perhaps the Venus cult was also important in the little town of Abellinum in Campania, where a *sacerdos* of an unknown cult has been attested, cat.no.16. Abellinum was named *Colonia Veneria Livia Augusta Alexandriana Abellinatum*. Rives writes: ‘Although this title suggests some involvement by Augustus
Priestesses of Venus

With a possible 42 inscriptions, religious officials of Venus and of Ceres and Venus together in a joint cult are the second best attested group in the catalogue.156 The literary sources do not mention priestesses of Venus in the City,157 and the findspot of the only inscription that may record a sacerdos Veneris from Rome is uncertain.158 There is, however, some epigraphic evidence that attest to several men who were involved in the cult of Venus in the City in one way or another, though not as sacerdotes. A certain Cerdo was aeditumus Veneris,159 while another aeditus of the temple of Venus Felix160 – Publius Aelius Epaphus, imperial freedman – is known from a grave monument.161 Caius Stiminius Heracula had been sortilegus ab Venere Erycina (soothsayer of Venus Erycina) in post-Augustan times.162 Furthermore, several magistri and a minister aliae Veneris,163 who was, according to Rüpke, possibly aeditus in the temple of Venus of the Horti Sallustiani, are attested on inscriptions.164 In this same temple, women could be Veneriae.165 It has often been thought that Veneriae were temple prostitutes, but nothing in the inscription points to this. Kunz writes explicitly that a Veneria was not necessarily a temple prostitute; she ‘kann auch andere Aufgaben erfüllt haben.’166 More about servae Veneris and sacred prostitution will be said in chapter 4, section 2.2.

In the rest of Italy, both men and women who were active in the Venus cult have left their traces in the epigraphic record, though it seems that the most prestigious religious office (that of sacerdos) was reserved for women. There are two inscriptions that seem exceptions to this, but I think they are referring to a different Venus than the one served by the female sacerdotes. In Puteoli, the first taurobolium attested epigraphically, paid for by a woman on command of the goddess, was carried out in honour of Venus Caelestis by a certain Tiberius Claudius Felix, sacerdos.167 Another man from Baiae, a Turrenius Caelerinus, describes his office as pastor sacris deae Veneris Caelestis et cultor decorum (herder of the goddess Venus Caelestis and worshipper of the gods).168 As the name

in the foundation of the town, there is no reason to connect the epithet "Veneria" with the Caesarian cult. Since the cult of Venus had a long history in Campania, it is more likely that the title of Abellinum, as that of Pompeii (Colonia Veneria Cornelia Pompeianorum), referred to a traditional local cult’.

156 Apart from Latin inscriptions there is also evidence of a priestess (pristafalacirix) of Venus on a Pelignian inscription, see: Vetter 213 in the appendix; Guerra Gomez (1987) 283.
157 Plautus, Rudens, passim, mentions a sacerdos Veneris in Cyrene, see also footnote 27.
158 Cat.no.39; Rüpke (2005) 630, 728. It is also possible that the inscription stems from Atina.
159 CIL 6, 4327.
160 Unfortunately, there is very little evidence for a cult of this goddess, only a medallion and some inscriptions, none predating the second century. Rives writes that there is no proof that Sulla established a cult of Venus Felix, nor that he had built her a temple, Rives (1994b) 298.
161 CIL 6, 8710.
162 CIL 6, 2274; Kunz (2006) 308.
163 About this minister and Venus alma, see Koch (1955b) 34.
165 Cat.no. 140.
167 CIL 10, 1596 = ILS 4271.
168 AE 1932, 77.
Venus Caelestis suggests, this goddess was not simply the Roman or Italic Venus. Vermaseren, referring to the first inscription, writes that Venus Caelestis was equated with Cybele. In Apuleius Metamorphoses 11.2 though, Venus Caelestis seems to have been another form of Isis. As several male priests of both Cybele and Isis are attested on inscriptions, and also many priests of Caelestis alone the religious offices of Tiberius Claudius Felix and Turrenus Caelerinus are not surprising.

In sum, men in Rome and Italy could be religious officials in the Venus cult, but no priests. They carried out the more practical tasks held in lower esteem. As women held the highest positions, it appears that the goddess Venus was perceived to have a special connection to women – though calling her a ‘women’s goddess’ is exaggerated.

The (female) sacerdotes Veneris that are attested on inscriptions held their offices mainly in the central Italian regions 1 and 4, which have generated most Italian inscriptions in the catalogue. Six out of forty-two women in service of Venus – mainly libertae – were magistriæ Veneris. Interestingly, they held office in towns in which no sacerdotes Veneris have been attested, or in towns that were located in region 5, an area where no priestesses of the goddess at all have left traces in the epigraphic record. This may be due to coincidence, but it could also show that magistriæ carried out the priestly tasks that in other places were the responsibility of the sacerdotes. In chapter 4, section 1.5 more will be said about the role of magistriæ.

Northern Africa is the only other area where sacerdotes serving Venus have been attested epigraphically, even though many inscriptions from all over the western part of the Roman Empire attest to the worship of Venus. The goddess was worshipped in Mauretania and in Numidia, but also in Africa Proconsularis in originally Punic regions where she was identified with Astarte. Cadotte has shown that the goddess was especially popular in north Numidia but I have found no epigraphic evidence for priestesses or priests from this region, despite the fact that in Cirta a temple was dedicated to Venus. The only Numidic inscription that attests to sacerdotes of Venus I have found, records the names of two male priests who had taken care of erecting a cella in honour of Venus

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169 Vermaseren (1977) 102.
170 E.g.: ILAlg 1, 3000; ILAlg 2.1, 807; ILS 9294; CIL 6, 2242; CIL 8, 1360; CIL 8, 16918.
171 Possibly two others served as magistriæ in Hispania Tarraconensis (cat.no.239) and in Salona in Dalmatia (cat.no.295). Other inscriptions from Salona record a collegium Veneris: CIL 3, 1981 = CIL 11, 642a6 = AE 1983, 735; CIL 3, 2106; CIL 3, 2108. Regarding the epigraphic evidence, Venus seems to have been very popular in Salona and in the Danube area as a whole.
172 Furthermore, a female sacerdos Augustae Veneris has been recorded on an inscription from modern Kato in Greece (CIL 3, 7254; not included in the catalogue).
175 CIL 8, 6965 = ILAlg 2.1, 531 = ILS 3181.

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Erycina Augusta in Madauros.\textsuperscript{176} As was the case with the cult of Ceres, in northern Africa the priesthood of Venus was not reserved for women.\textsuperscript{177}

Apart from an inscription from Mazue that does not offer any information about the gender of the \textit{sacerdos},\textsuperscript{178} in Africa Proconsularis possibly two female \textit{sacerdotes Veneris} have been recorded on inscriptions, both found in Mactar.\textsuperscript{179} Sicca Veneria was a major cult centre of Venus. In this town several people – men and women – acted in various religious offices in service of the goddess: a male \textit{sacerdos}, an \textit{actor Veneris} and a \textit{serva}, a \textit{servus} and a \textit{libertas} of Venus have been recorded. Possible (female) slaves of the goddess have also been attested in Spain.\textsuperscript{180}

In contrast to the cults of Ceres and Venus alone, priestesses – no priests – of the joint cult of Ceres and Venus have only been found in Italy. This priesthood of Ceres and Venus has been attested eight times in the regions 1, 4 and 7. Five of these priestesses were called \textit{sacerdos Cерeris et Veneris}, two were \textit{sacerdos publica Veneris et Cерeris} and one was \textit{sacerdos Veneris et Cерeris} – without the addition \textit{publica}.\textsuperscript{181} Various explanations for the existence of the combined priesthood have been proposed, but none is convincing.\textsuperscript{182}

In sum, both men and women served the goddess Venus in a variety of functions, though the priesthood was mainly held by women, certainly in case of the combined priesthood of Venus and Ceres. The evidence stems mostly from central Italy, though inscriptions attesting to (lower) (fc)male religious officials have also been found in other areas (northern Africa and Spain), reflecting the popularity of the goddess that was certainly not limited to the Italian peninsula.

\textbf{Sacerdotes Iunonis}

Like their colleagues who served Ceres and Venus, female \textit{sacerdotes Iunonis} are attested only in northern in Italy and North Africa. The cult(s) of Juno, who was worshipped in many different forms, originated in Latium.\textsuperscript{183} Likely, she was served by priestesses in this area. Vergil describes how Alecto disguised herself as an old priestess of Juno in the town of Ardea,\textsuperscript{184} and Ovid mentions Faliscan \textit{sacerdotes} (male or female?) who prepared a festival during which a cow was sacrificed in honour of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{176} IL\textit{Alg} 1, 2069.
\item \textsuperscript{177} In Pannonia superior, men seem to have been priests of Venus as well, see \textit{CIL} 3, 4152 = \textit{ILS} 7119 from Savaria (modern Szombathely).
\item \textsuperscript{178} \textit{CIL} 8, 12068 (not included in the catalogue).
\item \textsuperscript{179} Cat.no 183 and 185.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Cat.no. 287 and 288.
\item \textsuperscript{181} Rüpke (2005) 630, 728.
\item \textsuperscript{182} See e.g. Schilling (1954) 20, who thinks that a link between Venus and Liber may explain the existence of the combined priesthood. See also Koch (1955b) 24.
\item \textsuperscript{183} Otto (1905) 176.
\item \textsuperscript{184} Vergil, \textit{Aen.} 7.419: \textit{fit Calybe Iunonis anus templique sacerdos.}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Juno. In Rome, Juno belonged to the Capitoline triad; she was either served by the *flaminica Dialis* or by the *rex* and *regina sacrorum*, but seems to have had her own priests as well: Servius mentions a *sacerdos Iuno* (gender unspecified), and in Severan times the priesthood of the goddess was held by Publius Alfius Maximus Numerius Avitus, a man of senatorial rank who had held several political offices.

Like most other Roman divinities, Juno had many different epithets and spheres of influence, often related to the lives of women. However, it is clear that she was not only the patron of the fortune of women, but also of that of men, especially of young warriors, whose protectress she was. In 396 BC, Juno Regina was imported in Rome from Veii, where the image of the goddess ‘was one that according to Etruscan practice none but a priest (*sacerdos*) of a certain family was wont to touch.’ The title Regina presents the goddess as a political deity and links her to sovereignty. It is noteworthy that in this quality she was worshipped – mainly – by women, who were supervised by the *decemviri sacris faciundis*.

Only one inscription – found near Beneventum (region 2) – records a priestess of Juno Regina. Three other Italian inscriptions, erected in Teanum Sidicum (region 1), record two priestesses and a *ministria* of another form of Juno: Juno Populona. Torelli describes this goddess as ‘an extremely ancient divinity.’ Apart from Teanum, she was worshipped in Luceria, Asernium and Rome. The last Italian woman who served Juno is attested in Grumentum (region 3). The *magistra* Pietas had erected a dedication to Juno and paid for an arch (*arcus*) and a *candelabrum*. In addition to the women mentioned above, some men held religious offices in the cult of Juno in Italy. In Falerii (region 7) Quintus Tullius Cincius Priscus had been *pontifex sacrarius Iunonis Quiritis* and a priest originating from Tarraco in Spain had held the priesthood of Juno in an unknown place close to Rome during the Antonine period.

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188 *CIL* 6, 41176 = *CIL* 6, 1474.
191 (…) *id signum more Etrusco nisi certae gentis sacerdos attractare non esset solius*, Livy, 5.22.5, transl. by B.O. Foster. Cf. Taylor (1923) 35. According to Taylor (1923) 33, Juno Regina was the main goddess of Veii.
194 Cat.no.46. Her priesthoood is mentioned even before her own name, which was not unique, but very uncommon, cf. e.g. *AF* 2006, 1041.
196 Cat.no.79. See also Clark (2011) 365.
197 *CIL* 11, 3125 = *ILS* 3111. Latte(1960) 167, writes about this priesthood: ‘Die Verwendung eines Mannes für dieses Amt an Stelle einer Pieterin im Gegensatz zu dem sonst im Junokult üblichen zeigt, daß die ganze Gemeinde, nicht nur die Frauen, unter der Obhut der Göttin standen.’ As women could represent the whole community as a priestess, this statement can be dismissed as redundant.
Again, North Africa is the only other area apart from Italy in which female *sacerdotes Iunonis* are attested on inscriptions. Cirta in Numidia provides us with the names of two female *sacerdotes Iunonis*, and Vegesela, also in Numidia, with one.\(^{199}\) In Castellum Biracsaccarensium (Africa Proconsularis) a woman is attested who was possibly a religious slave in service of the goddess (see chapter 4).\(^{200}\) I have found only one African man who had been priest of Juno; he served the goddess with Aesculapius in a joint cult.\(^{201}\) The other western provinces have not yielded many other (male) *sacerdotes Iunonis* apart from a man from Graena (Baetica)\(^{202}\) and some men who served Juno as part of the Capitoline Triad. This is unsurprising, given the fact that the cult of Juno alone was rare in general; usually she was worshipped together with Jupiter or in the Capitoline triad.\(^{203}\)

As may be clear, several forms of Juno could be served by both male and female priests, who are attested in various provinces, though the evidence for female *sacerdotes* – which is rather limited – stems only from Italy and Numidia. Inscriptions attesting to other members of the cult personnel is also rather scarce.

### Sacerdotes Caelestis

Together with Saturn, Caelestis was the most important African deity,\(^{204}\) but only a few sanctuaries of the goddess have been found.\(^{205}\) The cult of Caelestis was reintroduced in Carthage in the second century AD; at the end of this century, she had become the most important goddess of the city.\(^{206}\) Her cult was mainly concentrated in the area around Carthage and in Thuburbo Maius, of which town she was protectress.\(^{207}\) According to the *Vita* of Macrinus in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, a woman

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199 An epitaph and accompanying relief from Tebessa (AD 160-180), may have been – according to Wrede (1981) 114 – from a priestess of Juno; *AE* 157, 182. However, regarding the reliefs that include torches, corn ears and a pig, this Aelia Leporina, may also have been priestess of Ceres. As the inscription does not offer any information as to a possible religious office of Aelia Leporina, it is not included in the catalogue.
200 Cat.no.279.
201 *AE* 1952, 41 = Cadotte 216.
202 *HEp* 2, 1990, 403. This Juno may have been the same as Juno Caelestis, consort of Baal-Hammon-Melkart, Delgado Delgado (1998) 23-24. This man was father of a priest of Hercules, mentioned in the same inscription. Delgado Delgado (1998) 23, 27, also writes that Iulia, wife of the *sacerdos Iunonis* and mother of the priest of Hercules, may have been a priestess (of an unknown deity), but this is highly uncertain and therefore this inscription is not included in the catalogue.
acted as prophetess (vates) of the goddess in Carthage.\(^{208}\) Already from the beginning of the imperial period onwards, Caelestis was also worshipped in Rome, as epigraphic and archaeological evidence attest. She was built a temple on the Arx Capitolina in AD 259. In the second and third centuries, the cult spread to Italy, Britannia and Dacia; it flourished mainly under the Severi.\(^{209}\)

Two inscriptions from Rome record sacerdotes of Caelestis, a male and a female.\(^{210}\) The woman is called a honorifica femina, a title without a parallel. Rives writes that the inscription, which contains many mistakes and in which sacratas and canistraristus (sic) are also mentioned, is ‘the record not of an official cult, but of some private association of freedwomen for the worship of Caelestis.’ Therefore, it is possible that the cult in which this woman served was limited to freedmen and -women from African descent, and would therefore be of ‘semi-public’ status (cf. chapter 1).\(^{211}\) From northern Africa however, ‘public’ sacerdotes of Caelestis are known, e.g. Marcus Cornelius Laetus from Mustis, who had been sacerdos Caelestis et Aesculapii publicus\(^{212}\) and Caius Orfius Luciscus, sacerdos publicus of the same two deities, from modern El Ust.\(^{213}\) Other African priests and priestesses of Caelestis were not explicitly called publicus or publica.

It has been remarked above that the cult of Caelestis is mainly attested in and around Carthage, but the geographical spread of the (male and female) sacerdotes provides a slightly different picture. Most priests and the two only priestesses, whose inscriptions were erected in Hadrumetum and Simitthus, held office in Africa Proconsularis and often near Carthage indeed, but several other male sacerdotes are attested in Numidia, in Cirta and towns to the east of this city.\(^{214}\) No inscription recording a sacerdos Caelestis has been found in Thuburbo Maius, the goddess’s other cult main centre. No conclusions can be drawn as to possible explanations of the spread of the sacerdotes Caelestis, as the number of inscriptions is too small. The only thing that can safely be stated is that both women and – mostly – men served the goddess as sacerdotes.

**Sacerdotes Dianae**

Diana was an ancient Italic goddess. She was worshipped in two major sanctuaries in Aricia and at Mount Tifata near Capua.\(^{215}\) According to legend, in Aricia her priesthood was held by a fugitive slave, called the Rex Nemorensis.\(^{216}\) In his recent book about the cult in Aricia, Green mentions also

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\(^{208}\) HA Macr. 3.1-2. Cf. HA Pert. 4.2 and Picard (1959).

\(^{209}\) Wurnig (1999) 34; Rives (1995) 70. In the Republican and early imperial period, the goddess did not have an official cult in Rome, Rives (1995) 68.

\(^{210}\) Resp. *CIL* 6.2242 and cat.no.13, from AD 259.


\(^{213}\) *CIL* 8, 16417 = *AE* 1968, 609 = *AE* 1991, 1678.

\(^{214}\) In Cirta a male sacerdos Caelestis Sittianae loci primi is recorded, whose title implies that in this town the cult of Caelestis had a hierarchical organisation, *ILS* 9409; Rives (1995) 166. An inscription from Carthage may attest to female canistraristus of Caelestis, but this is uncertain, cat.no.162.

\(^{215}\) Evans (1939) 232; Latte (1960) 169, 172.

\(^{216}\) Latte (1960) 171; Green (2007) 147-184 provides an extensive discussion of this rather mysterious priesthood.
priestesses, but unfortunately he does not provide us with evidence for these women.217 In Rome, Diana was also worshipped; in a story about an extraordinary heifer, bred in Sabinum, Livy mentions a (male) antistes fani Dianae.218 In the City, no priestesses of Diana have been attested, neither epigraphically, nor in the literary sources.219 However, there might be some iconographic evidence for sacerdotes of the goddess in Rome. On an altar presumably from the Urbs, a relief depicts a veiled woman who is sprinkling incense on an altar. She is assisted by two people who carry a basket and a knife. An ox and a deer complete the scene, and because of the deer this relief can probably be linked to the cult of Diana. Schörner writes about the depicted woman that she may have ordered the dedication of the altar and could have been a priestess of the goddess.220

In the provinces the evidence for sacerdotes Dianae and other religious personnel of the goddess is more abundant, and in contrast to many other priesthoods, it is not limited to North Africa and Italy.221 Apart from a few men who may have been priests of Diana in the Danube region and in Africa,222 all other sacerdotes seem to have been women. They are attested in Italy, Gallia Narbonensis and Hispania. In Italy, where the goddess was linked to fertility and giving birth and was therefore especially honoured by women, (possible) magistrae of Diana have left their traces in the epigraphic record.223 They are attested in Aquinum (region 1) and in Pollentia (region 9).224 Besides, in Allifae (Samnium, region 4) a collegium capulatorum sacerdotum Dianae (college of those who decanted the wine of the priests/priestesses of Diana) existed.225

One of the Spanish priestesses of Diana held office in Arucci in Baetica, the other two in Emporiae.226 Emporiae was a former Greek city, founded by the Phokaians; the earliest temple of the town was probably dedicated to Artemis of Ephesus.227 According to Strabo (3.4.8), Artemis Ephesia was the patron deity of the town, which could imply that the priestesses of Diana served in an ancient

218 Livy 1.45.
219 Cicero, Verr. 2.3.21 mentions a (male) magister ad despoliandum Dianae templum. Furthermore, aeditui of Diana Planciana are attested on inscriptions from Rome, AE 1971, 31 and 32.
221 There is abundant evidence of Diana in the Eastern part of the empire, no doubt as a result of Greek roots: Artemis was often served by priestesses, for example in Perge, where the well-known Plancia Magna held the priesthood of this goddess, FOS 609; Raepsaat-Charlier (2005) 199. In Patrae in Achaia, a certain Aequina Musa had been sacerdos Dianae Augustae Laphriae et sacerdos Augusti at the beginning of the first century AD, CIL 3, 510 = Patras 5 (not included in the catalogue). In another inscription from Patrae, CIL 3, 499 = Patras 4, a woman is honoured with the sacerdotal ornaments of Diana Laphria. The cult of Diana (or Artemis) Laphria involved animal sacrifice, survived by a priestess, according to Pausanias 7.18.11-13; Henig (1984) 63.
222 CIL 3, 13368; (possibly) CIL 8, 23419 = ILTun 541.
223 Simon (1990) 51.
224 CIL 10, 4263 from Capua (region 1) records a liberta of Diana, cat.no.57. In the same town magistri fani Dianae are attested epigraphically: CIL 10, 3918 = ILS 6304; CIL 10, 3924 = ILS 6305. A vilicus Dianae in CIL 10, 8217 = ILS 3523.
225 CIL 9, 2336 = ILS 7298.
226 Cat.no.240 (this woman may have served in other cults as well, see section 2.3); no.241; no.286 may have been a priest because no name has been preserved.
and important cult, even though the inscriptions of the priestesses were erected, which makes direct links questionable. However, there is other evidence that may point to Phokaian roots of the priesthood of Diana held by women in former Greek colonies. The Gaulish sacerdotes Dianae lived in Antipolis. This city was founded by Massalia which in its turn was a colony of Phokaia, just like Emporiae in Hispania.\(^{228}\) Strabo writes about the foundation of Massalia (my italics):\(^{229}\)

“They say that when the Phocæans were about to quit their country, an oracle commanded them to take from Diana of Ephesus a conductor for their voyage. On arriving at Ephesus they therefore inquired how they might be able to obtain from the goddess what was enjoined them. The goddess appeared in a dream to Aristarche, one of the most honourable women of the city, and commanded her to accompany the Phocæans, and to take with her a plan of the temple and statues. These things being performed, and the colony being settled, the Phocæans built a temple, and evinced their great respect for Aristarche by making her priestess. All the colonies [sent out from Marseilles] hold this goddess in peculiar reverence, preserving both the shape of the image [of the goddess], and also every rite observed in the metropolis.”

This quotation by Strabo could explain why both in Emporiae and in Antipolis female sacerdotes Dianae are attested on inscriptions. Graham writes that the story about Aristarche may have represented the historical reality, ‘because the Greeks seem regularly to have preserved the names of people who introduced new cults (…).’\(^{230}\) One of the priestesses from Antipolis served Diana Thucolis or Diocolis. Thucolis is a name of Greek origin, likely showing the Greek roots of the priesthood.\(^{231}\) Unfortunately, the character of Diana Thucolis is unknown.\(^{232}\) The other Antipolan priestess served both Diana and Minerva, which also may have been a remnant of the Greek past, for in Phokaia Athena was worshipped as well, as the remains of a temple of the goddess show.\(^{233}\) The combination


\(^{229}\) Transl. by Bell (1903). Strabo 4.1.4: ἀπαίροιν γὰρ τοῖς Φοικαῖοις ἐκ τῆς Οἰκείας λόγων ἔκσεσσέν φασιν ἑξελλέιν χρήσασθαι τὸ πλοῦς παρὰ τῆς Ἐφεσίας Ἀρτέμιδος λαβόνσι: τοῖς μὲν δὲ προσαχθέντας τῇ Ἐφέσῳ ξείτεν ὄντινα τρόπων ἐκ τῆς θεός ποίουσιν τὸ προσταθήν. Αρισταρχή δὲ τῶν ἐντύμων φρόντις γυναικῶν παραστήνα τι κατ’ ὄναρ τὴν θεόν καὶ κέλεσαν συνανταίρειν τοῖς Φοικαῖοισ αἱρωμοί τι τῶν ἐρῶν λαβόεις: γεγονέναι ὅτι τοῦτο καὶ τῆς ἀπούσας λαβόμενος τίλος, τὸ τοῖς ἱερῶν ἐρῶσασθαι καὶ τὴν Ἀρισταρχήν τιμήσας διαφερόντος ἔρων ἀποδιδόντας, ἐν ταῖς ἀπούσαις πόλει πανταχοῦ τιμαὶ ἐν τοῖς πρότεις ταύτῃ τὴν θεόν καὶ τοῦ ξούσων τὴν διάθησιν τῆς αὐτῆς καὶ τῶν νόμων φυλάσσεσι τὰ αὐτὰ ἅπας ἐν τῇ μηροπόλει γενόμεναι.

\(^{230}\) Graham (1984) 303. See also Graham (1995) 13: Very few individual Greek colonists from the Archaic period are known to us by name, but two of these were women. Both were priestesses, and this shows the need for Greek women amongst the colonists: they had to ensure a proper relationship with the gods.

\(^{231}\) See also Robert (1966) 745-746.

\(^{232}\) Spickermann (1994b) 195 nr. 5. It is also possible that the woman was flaminica sacerdos in the imperial cult and dedicated something to Diana Thucolis.

\(^{233}\) Van Andringa (2002) 139, writes that in Gaul Minerva did not have indigenous origins, though she resembled local deities, which explains her popularity.
of Diana and Minerva on a single Latin inscription is uncommon, unless they are included in a list of deities.\textsuperscript{234} In short, sacerdotes Dianae, who mostly seem to have been female, are attested in places in which the cult of the goddess had Greek (or Italic) roots. Evidence for ancillary officials is scarce.

Sacerdotes Minervae

The goddess Minerva was of Italic or Etruscan origin. She was protectress of artisans and musicians, but she also possessed a political-military side.\textsuperscript{235} Furthermore, she was a goddess of children\textsuperscript{236} and was, in some area’s linked to women.\textsuperscript{237} Apart from the sacerdos Minervae et Dianae from Antipolis in Gallia Narbonensis, mentioned above, all other priestesses of Minerva held office in Italy.\textsuperscript{238} In northern Africa, a few male sacerdotes Minervae are attested epigraphically.\textsuperscript{239} Two female sacerdotes Minervae lived in Butuntum (region 2) and Ticinium (region 11). In Beneventum (region 2), various women who served Magna Mater may have been priestesses of the local Minerva Berecynthia as well.\textsuperscript{240}

The fact that no sacerdotes Minervae have been attested in central Italy (mainly the regions 1 and 4), where so many other priestesses are recorded on inscriptions, is in accordance with the sparseness of the worship of the goddess in Latium and central Italy.\textsuperscript{241} In Etruria on the other hand, Minerva was considered more important.\textsuperscript{242} Only one woman who presumably had been ministra of the goddess has left a short dedicatory inscription in Sutrium in Etruria, so the popularity of the goddess is not reflected in the preserved number of religious officials.\textsuperscript{243} Possibly, the priesthoods of Minerva were not so much priesthoods of the Italic-Etruscan goddess, but rather of the Greek Athena, who was often served by female religious officials.

Sacerdotes Telluris

We have already seen above that Tellus was the old Italic earth mother, closely linked to Ceres because of the relation of both goddesses to agricultural fertility.\textsuperscript{244} The cult of Tellus (or: Terra Mater)

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\textsuperscript{234} On an inscription from Philippi in Macedonia (\textit{Philippi} 519 = \textit{AE} 1924, 50) Diana Minervia is invoked and a sacerdos is mentioned. It may be indicative that this inscription was erected in a Greek part of the Empire.
\textsuperscript{235} Latte (1960) 164-165; Girard (1981) 206, 207, 222, 224, 228.
\textsuperscript{236} Girard (1981) 227.
\textsuperscript{237} In Glanum for example, she was honoured with a dedication by a group of women, Spickermann (1994a) 43.
\textsuperscript{238} In Diensis in Macedonia, a woman named Mestria Aquilina had also been sacerdos Minervae (\textit{AE} 2000, 1295; not included in the catalogue). Cf. \textit{CIL} 3, 593, recording the same priestess.
\textsuperscript{239} E.g., \textit{AE} 1993, 1721.
\textsuperscript{240} Cat.no.49; 133; 41-44 (Beneventum).
\textsuperscript{241} Evans (1939) 163.
\textsuperscript{242} Evans (1939) 163-164. For example, the sacred area of Portonaccio near Veii seems to have belonged to Minerva, Glinister (2006) 98.
\textsuperscript{243} Cat.no.127.
did not possess a central position in Roman religion, and she did not have her own flamen in Rome. She had her own temple though, in which one of Varro’s friends served as aedilinus. Outside Italy, the cult has been attested in two main areas: the valley of the Danube and northern Africa. In the Danube region, no (female) sacerdotes of Tellus have been recorded epigraphically (though possibly a ministra Terrae Matris from Brigetio in Pannonia superior) and only one temple. All sacerdotes Telluris lived in North Africa. I have collected ten inscriptions that record nine female priests of Tellus, and one male.

Tellus’s presence in Africa may be explained by her strong links to Ceres and the worship of the goddess may have spread as a result of agricultural-economic reasons. Most inscriptions, on which Tellus is mentioned, were erected in the fertile middle of Africa Proconsularis near Thugga. Gesztelyi writes that people who were Romanised at an early stage were the most fervent worshippers of the goddess: many dedicators had the nomen Iulius or Iulia. Three of the nine female African sacerdotes Telluris had indeed the name Iulia, which supports Gesztelyi’s view.

Gesztelyi has stated that the Tellus cult mainly spread along the important east-west route from Carthage, but for unknown reasons, the inscriptions of the sacerdotes do not show the same pattern. With the exception of Iulia Prima, whose epitaph was erected in or near Gillium close to Uchi Maius in Africa Proconsularis, all nine sacerdotes Telluris are attested in Numidia and Mauretania. No fewer than (possibly) four women served Tellus in Madauros. Here, another four women – probably also held religious offices in the Ceres cult. Therefore it is likely that the cults of both agricultural deities belonged to the most important of the town, although priests of various other cults have also left their traces in the epigraphic record. Furthermore, two epigraphs of female sacerdotes Telluris

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246 Varro, RR 1.2.2.
247 Cf. Gesztelyi (1972) 75. A few exceptions are: CIL 2, 2526 (Aqua Flaviae, Hispania Citerior); AE 1975, 705 (Interessa, Pannonia inferior); possibly CIL 3, 607 = AE 1947, 204 = AE 2004, 1315 (Dyrrachium, Macedonia). Terra Mater however, is often attested epigraphically in the Danubian provinces, mainly in Dacia. Also some, but it very little, evidence comes from Germania, Gallia and Lusitania.
248 Cat.no.293. According to Gesztelyi (1972) 82, Terra Mater was a ‘more recent’ deity than Tellus (she was for the first time mentioned in 17 BC), and eventually replaced Tellus.
249 See also Gesztelyi (1972) 83-84.
250 It is not certain whether the sacerdos mentioned in cat.no.189 indeed served Tellus, for she is a sacerdos stricto sensu. Her dedication however, was made in honour of Tellus Augusta.
251 The only male sacerdos Telluris: CIL 8, 5305 = IALg 1, 232 = ILS 3958 = AE 1983, 944 = Cadotte (2007) nr. 361 (Calama, Numidia). This man erected a dedication for Tellus Gilva Augusta. Gilva (modern Mersat Madar) was a town in Mauretania. Whittaker (1996) 614 writes that Gilva was a local deity.
252 Gesztelyi (1972) 75, 84. Fertile region near Thugga: Golfitto (1961) 18; Gesztelyi (1972) 82; Rives (1995) 101: probably grain was being produced here.
253 Before 17 BC. See also Golfitto (1961) 19.
254 Gesztelyi (1972) 84. The Tellus inscriptions were set up both in important provincial towns and in small villages, Gesztelyi (1972) 79.
255 Gesztelyi (1972) 82-83.
256 Gesztelyi (1972) 79.
257 Cat.no.187; 188 and 191 are definitely inscriptions of Tellus priestesses from Madauros. Cat.no.189 is from Madauros, but only possibly records priestesses of Tellus.
258 E.g. of: Caelestis: CIL 8, 4673; CIL 8, 4674; of Liber Pater: CIL 8, 4681; CIL 8, 4682; IALg 1, 2131; IALg 1, 2228; of Pluto: CIL 8, 4680; CIL 8, 4683; CIL 8, 4687; IALg 1, 2224; of Jupiter: CIL 8, 16875; IALg 1,
have been found in Thubursicu Numidarum, a town located between Madauros and Calama – in this last town the only inscription of a male priest of Tellus has been discovered.259

In contrast to Ceres and most other goddesses, sacerdotes of Tellus have not been attested in Italy, but only in northern Africa, especially Numidia, which is mainly the result from the large number found in Madauros. Men could also hold the priesthood of this goddess, but the evidence is rather limited.

Bona Dea and her religious personnel

The next goddess served by women was Bona Dea. Her cult focused on the promotion and protection of both agricultural and female fertility.260 Bona Dea possessed healing powers and was a prophetic deity as well.261 Men were excluded from her temple in Rome, to which possibly a healing shrine was attached.262 Propertius calls her Feminea Dea and Plutarchus a γυναικεία θεος.263 In the city of Rome, the December rites in honour of the goddess were reserved for women and conducted in the house of the highest magistrate.264 It was a festival pro populo, for the wellbeing of the people.265 From the epigraphic sources however, can be concluded that not only aristocratic matrons worshipped the goddess, but slaves and freedwomen as well – and even men.266 Nevertheless, in general women played the most important role in the cult.267

The tasks of the wife of the magistrate in whose house the December rites for the goddess were performed are unknown.268 Schulz thinks that she was not a priestess.269 The Vestals were probably the ones who performed the ritual; we know at least that they were present.270 Yet specific priestesses for Bona Dea existed; according to Festus, they were sometimes called damiatrix.271 Macrobius tells us about antistites who were attached to the temple in Rome and organized the festival

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2216; ILAlg 1, 2223; of Mercury: ILAlg 1, 2212; of Saturn: ILAlg 1, 2215; ILAlg 1, 2222. Besides, several inscriptions attest to male sacerdotes stricto sensu.

259 Cat.no 229; 230.

260 Versnel (1992) 32-33. (In-) direct identification with the earth can be found in different literary sources and in inscriptions, Macrobius, Sat. 1.12.20-29; Varro, De Ling. Lat. 5.57, 5.64; Augustine, De Civ. Del. 4.11; AE (1964) 270; AE(1961) 45.


262 Macrobius, Sat. 1.12.26. Besides, men were not allowed to know her name, as Cicero writes, Cicero, De Har. Resp. 17.37; Brouwer (1982) 186.


270 Cicero, De Har. Resp. 17.37, Ad Att. 1.12.3, 1.13.3; Pro Mil. 27.72; De Leg. 2.9.21; Plutarch, Cicero, 19.3, Caesar, 9; Cassius Dio 37.45.1; Brouwer (1982) 288; Staples (1998) 6, 30, 42.

in honour of the goddess on the first of May.\textsuperscript{272} Propertius mentions an old priestess of Bona Dea (\textit{alma sacerdos}, later in the text also called \textit{anus}). This priestess was in charge of rites in which only women or girls (\textit{puellae}) took part.\textsuperscript{273}

Brouwer has discussed the geographical spread of the cult of Bona Dea, and has concluded that the goddess was worshipped most intensively in Rome and Latium.\textsuperscript{274} Aquileia was the other important centre of the cult; in this city, there may have existed even two \textit{collegia Bonaes Deae} and more than one sanctuary.\textsuperscript{275} Brouwer links the spread of the cult in Italy to Roman expansionism and a subsequent implementation of the official Bona Dea cult in the lands of the Paeligni (around Laverna) in the second half of the first century BC.\textsuperscript{276}

Two (female) \textit{sacredotes Bonaes Deae} from the city of Rome are known to us by name.\textsuperscript{277} Besides, in either Cuma or Rome another \textit{sacredos Bonaes Deae} is attested and in Tusculum a fourth.\textsuperscript{278} Brouwer thinks that these last two women were attached to the temple in Rome, because the title \textit{sacredos} was rarely used outside the City, in contrast to that of \textit{magistra} or \textit{ministra}, which has been found frequently in areas far away from Rome. Additionally, he thinks that it is unlikely that the small shrines in the countryside had their own \textit{sacredotes}.\textsuperscript{279} As most of these priestesses were freedwomen (just like many of the other religious officials involved in the cult), Brouwer thinks that they probably did not celebrate the second festival for Bona Dea – the one on the first of May – \textit{pro populo}.\textsuperscript{280}

Although, according to the ancient literary sources, men were excluded from the rites,\textsuperscript{281} a possible two male priest of the goddess are recorded epigraphically.\textsuperscript{282} One was a \textit{libertas} of Claudius or Nero, and the other was a boy of seven. The inscriptions were found in Puteoli and Rome respectively, and were erected in AD 62 and in possibly the third century AD.\textsuperscript{283} The existence of male priests of Bona Dea might be supported by Ovid, who writes in his \textit{Ars Amatoria} that men were forbidden to enter the temple of the Goddess, except the ones she asks to come there – though this could refer to worshippers rather than priests.\textsuperscript{284}

Twenty-four \textit{magistrae} and \textit{ministrae} (no men!) of the cult have been recorded, who were mostly of freed rank. Apart from three \textit{ministrae} from Narbonese Gaul, all others held office in Italy,

\textsuperscript{272} Sat.1.12.26; their role is not clear, according to Brouwer (1989) 371.


\textsuperscript{274} Brouwer (1989) 297, 414.

\textsuperscript{275} Brouwer (1989) 381, 383, 414, 415.

\textsuperscript{276} Brouwer (1989) 404-405.

\textsuperscript{277} Cat.no. 8 and 9. And one male: \textit{CIL} 6.2240 = Brouwer 36. Besides, three (possible) \textit{magistrae} of Bona Dea from Rome are known, cat.no. 2; 10 and 267.

\textsuperscript{278} Cat.no.68; Brouwer (1982) 238, and cat.no. 135; Brouwer (1982) 297. Brouwer (1989) 378 writes about the \textit{sacredos} from Frascati that she may have been retired from her office in Rome and gone to her family in the country and died there.


\textsuperscript{281} Tibullus, 1.6.22; Propertius, \textit{Elegies}, 5.9.26; 53-60; Ovid, \textit{Ars Am}. 3.637; \textit{Fasti}. 5.153.

\textsuperscript{282} Furthermore, men could possibly be members of \textit{collegia Bonaes Deae}, Brouwer (1989) 381.

\textsuperscript{283} Brouwer 79 and 31 respectively. Number 31 is a Greek inscription. Brouwer (1989) 280, 281.

\textsuperscript{284} Ovid, \textit{Ars Amatoria}. 3.637-638: \textit{Cum fuget a templis oculos Bona Diva virorum, praeliteraque siuos illa venire iubet.}
mostly in region 1 (Latiun) and in region 10, in Aquileia. Besides, several others are attested in Umbria and Etruria; one magistra left an inscription in Lucera in Apulia (region 2). When the distribution of the religious personnel of Bona Dea is compared to that of the other goddesses in the catalogue, it is striking that so many officials have been attested in Rome, in Gaul and in region 10 of Italy. It seems that the cult of Bona Dea spread according to its own rules, as has been pointed out by Brouwer. A second important difference with the other female officials in the catalogue is the presence of so many magistri and ministri, and only a few sacerdotes. This may be a consequence from the fact that Bona Dea seems to have been worshipped mainly by collegia, whereas the other deities had town-wide cults. The last notable difference is the virtually total absence of male religious officials, which has been discussed above.

Sacerdotes Fortunae

Fortuna was no indigenous Roman deity. Different aspects of her character were worshipped, sometimes even as separate goddesses, e.g. Fortuna Muliebris and Fortuna Primigenia. In many ways, Fortuna was a goddess related to women. Fortuna Primigenia, for example, was a goddess of female fecundity, a protectress of the newly born, of young mothers and of child-bearing women. Furthermore, Fortuna played a role in marriage and accordingly, took care of the multiplication of the Roman people as a whole. In the literary sources priestesses of Fortuna Muliebris are mentioned. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus the priestesses of Fortuna Muliebris had to be univirae, women legitimately wed to their first husband. Besides, in Rome at the place of a sanctuary of Fortuna, a statue of presumably a priestess of the goddess has been found, dating from 100-110 AD. However, the epigraphic evidence from Rome and its surrounding area (all region 1) only provides us with men who held religious offices in the goddess’ cult: two served Fortuna Primigenia as sacerdotes, and another had been manceps aedis (keeper of the sanctuary) of the same goddess in Praeneste (region 1), together with three cellarii (stewards). Also in Praeneste, a male sortilegus Fortunae Primigeniae (soothsayer of Fortuna Primigenia) has left an inscription, apart from a group of magistri of Fortuna Primigenia. Two aeditui from Rome – both imperial freedmen – served Fortuna

291 CIL 14, 3003; Fasolo and Gullini (1953) no. 31, p.286-287; Champeaux (1982) 71.
292 CIL 14, 2864= ILS 3688a; Champeaux (1982) 72.
293 CIL 14.2989; sortilegus dating from the imperial period, Champeaux (1982) 71. CIL 14, 2882 = CIL 1, 1454: magistri.
Redux and Fortuna Tulliana. Suessa Aurunca has provided us with the name of a male *sacerdos* of the goddess. In Pompeii several *ministri Fortunae Augustae* are attested and in Ficulea two *magistri*.

In Italy the cult of Fortuna was widely spread. There were sanctuaries in Campania along the Via Latina and along the Via Campania and the cult seems to have been important in Capua. Elsewhere in the Empire, the goddess was also popular; many temples in her honour were built. Despite Fortuna’s popularity, a mere three priestesses and one *magistra* have been attested epigraphically, and interestingly, they did not serve Fortuna Muliebris like the women from Rome, or Fortuna Primigenia, but Fortuna Melior, Fortuna Augusta and Fortuna Redux.

The last two epithets of Fortuna were her most common during the imperial period; they are recorded on dedications in Italy, the Danube provinces and Africa. The cult of Fortuna Redux was founded in Rome to honour the emperor Augustus when he returned to the City from the East in October of the year 19 BC. The altar of Fortuna Redux was the first of several imperial altars meant to promote the emperor and his well-being. The epitaph of the imperial freedman Tiberius Iulius Limen Stabilianus, *aedituus Fortunae Reducis*, shows that there was a temple of Fortuna Redux in Rome at least in Tiberian times. Later emperors also took interest in the cult of this goddess who remained an ‘important symbol of victorious Rome and the emperor’. The only known priestess of Fortuna Redux is attested in Veii, close to Rome, in the middle of the third century AD. In Veii, hardly any other epigraphic evidence for the worship of Fortuna has been found.

Fortuna Augusta was obviously also closely linked to the emperor. She became very popular after her first appearance in a privately dedicated temple. In Rome from AD 3 onwards, a board of four *ministri* served in the temple of this goddess. No *ministrae* of Fortuna Augusta have been attested epigraphically, but an inscription from Baetica (now lost) records a priestess of this goddess. Fortuna Melior was mainly worshipped in Umbria (region 6; e.g., in Spoletium and

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294 *CIL* 6, 8705 en 8706.
295 *AE* 1919, 71 and *AE* 1940, 48.
296 *CIL* 10, 824; *CIL* 10, 826-28.
298 Strabo, 5.4.11; Simon (1990) 66.
299 Peterson (1919) 7.
300 Simon (1990) 59. She was protectress of for example Arelate, Spickermann (1994a) 51. In some areas most of her worshippers were male. In Germania superior for example, she was mainly worshipped by soldiers and in Germania inferior, only one dedication was made by a woman, Spickermann (1994a) 255 (sup.), 312 (inf.).
303 *CIL* 6, 8705 = *LIMN* 1, 109; Arya (2002) 325; De Capraris (2005) 133.
305 Cat.no. 136. Caesia Sabina was of decurial rank and left two inscriptions behind in which her various benefactions are recorded (see also chapters 4 and 5).
307 Egelaar-Gaiser (2007) 220. They were required to dedicate statues in the *cella* upon the accession of a new emperor. They held meetings and communal meals.
308 Cat.no.246.
Interamna Nahars). From Ameria in the same area stems the inscription of a *magistra Fortunae Melioris*, who seems to have been an important woman in her town.\(^{309}\)

In sum, the various forms of Fortuna could be served by *sacerdotes* of both sexes. Close to or in Rome, men seem to have held the priesthood of Fortuna Primigenia, or other religious offices in her cult. Elsewhere in Italy and Spain, there is only sparse epigraphic evidence for women who were priestesses of a form of Fortuna who had close links to the imperial house. The reputation of Fortuna as a ‘women’s goddess’ is therefore not backed by the surviving epigraphic evidence.

**Salus, Spes and Tutela Augustae**

The number of epigraphic references to religious officials – both men and women – of Salus (Health) is small\(^{310}\) even though Salus was an ancient goddess who received a temple in Rome at the end of the fourth century BC, dedicated by C. Junius Babulcus.\(^{311}\) The first inscription is the epitaph of the *ministra* Plaetoria Secunda, who held her office in Amiernum at the beginning of the first century AD. Remarkably, this is the only evidence of the worship of Salus in this area, while she was popular elsewhere in Italy.\(^{312}\) In Gabii (region 1), a *sacerdos Spei et Salutis Augustis* was an important woman in her local community, as the inscription (erected in AD 138-140) shows that accompanied her statue, which was placed on publicly given land, (see also chapter 5). *Spes et Salus Augusta* were personifications obviously closely linked to the imperial house.\(^{313}\)

Like Salus, Spes (Hope) was already worshipped in the early Republic.\(^{314}\) Mainly during the principate Spes was associated with Salus; both goddesses were protectresses of the imperial family.\(^{315}\) In Carthage a group of *sacerdotes stricto sensu* who dedicated something to *Spes*, and therefore may have been involved in the goddess’ cult, is attested; their gender is unknown.\(^{316}\) In Ferentinum (region 1) an inscription may record a *minister* of the goddess.\(^{317}\) A third personification that was linked to the emperor was Tutela Augusta (Augustan Protection). An inscription from Ossigi Latonium (Hispania Baetica) mentions the freedwoman Vibia Felicula, who had been *ministra* of the goddess. Tutela Augusta was worshipped in several places in Hispania,\(^{318}\) but inscriptions recording this goddess have also been erected in for instance Achaia. I have found no inscriptions of male religious officials of the

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\(^{309}\) Cat.no.21.

\(^{310}\) In other areas than those included in the catalogue, more examples of priestesses involved in the cult of Salus can be found, e.g. in Corinth (Achaia), see: *AE* 1923, 8 = *AE* 1971, 442.

\(^{311}\) Livy 9.43.25. See also Moralee (2004) 23.

\(^{312}\) Evans (1939) 170. In Rome, a temple dedicated to Salus was built on the Quirinal, Cicero, *Ad Att. 4.1.4;* 12.45.3; Evans (1939) 171.


\(^{314}\) For a discussion of the history of the worship of *Spes* in Rome, see: Clark (1983). *CIL* 10, 3775 is one of the famous Republican inscriptions from Capua that record local *magistri*, in this case those of Spes, while *AE* 1934, 249 is a similar one from Minturnae.

\(^{315}\) Clark (1983) 82.

\(^{316}\) *AE* 1999, 1835 = *AE* 2007, 1721.

\(^{317}\) *AE* 1998, 336.

\(^{318}\) For a discussion of the Spanish inscriptions with *Tutela*, see: Pena (1981). In Gaul, Tutela was often worshipped without any connections to the imperial house, see: Van Andringa (2002) 198.
goddess in the western part of the Empire. The small number of female religious officials of the three personifications mentioned in this section suffices to show that women could act as priestesses or ministræae in their cults, but not much more.

Other goddesses: Mater Matuta, the Matres Magnae and Angitia

There are a few other female deities that were served by priestesses, though the evidence – both epigraphic and other – is even scarcer than that of the personifications discussed above. Of Mater Matuta, the goddess of dawn, spring, birth and fertility who was worshipped in central Italy (Satricum, Cales, Cora, Praeneste, Pisaurum and probably Pyrgi as well), a few magistræae have left their traces in the epigraphic record. They all lived in region 1 in Italy; two in Praeneste, the other in Cora, perceived by Halberstadt as ancient places of worship. As far as I know, no men are attested as religious officials of Mater Matuta.

Other ‘mother’ goddesses are recorded on an inscription from Dalmatia. A certain Safinius Filucinus erected a dedication to the Matres Magnae in Salona.

Matri(us) Mag(nis) / sacrum P(ublius) S afini us F ilu cin us T erent ia s s acred to tis (il i us) / aram su puti uit(!) idem ampl( i avit) / sibi et cognatio[ni suae] / permissu C(ai) Clodi Grac[ il is]

“Dedicated to the Great Mothers. Publius Safinius Filucinus, son of the priestess Terentia, replaced the altar and enlarged it, for himself and his relative, by permission of Caius Clodius Gracilis.”

Publius Safinius Filucinus did not mention the name of his father, but recorded that of his mother, probably because she was a priestess of the Matres Magnae. It is not clear who these goddesses were. Their name obviously refers to Magna Mater who was very popular in Salona, but also to the Matres. The cult of the Matres is mainly attested in Gaul and Britain. Šašel Kos writes that possibly the Matres Magnae had a partly Celtic character, originating from contacts between Dalmatia and Aquileia and other North Italian cities. They might be compared to the Matres Pannoniorum and

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319 Elsewhere male priests are attested, e.g. in Corinth 8, 3, 194 from Corinth.
320 Taylor (1923) 126; Halberstadt (1934) 67. For a discussion of the cult of Mater Matuta in Rome and Satricum, a major cult center; some characteristics of the goddess and her links with Fortuna, see: Smith (2000).
321 Cat.no.105; 106 (Praeneste); 60 (Cora). Halberstadt (1934) 48-49. See also Schultz (2006) 72 and endnote 87 about magistræae in Cora.
322 Cat.no.261.
323 As these goddesses cannot simply be identified with Magna Mater, the inscription is included in the catalogue. Cult of Magna Mater important in Salona: Šašel Kos (2010) 251.
324 The Matronae, often confused with the Matres, were worshipped mostly in the Rhineland and northern Italy, Garman (2008) 19. Garman, p. 29-34, 85-86, argues that the Matres were not the same goddesses as the Matronae. For a discussion of the character of the goddesses, see Garman (2008) chapter 3.
Delmaratarum recorded on ILS 4794 from Lugdunum.\textsuperscript{325} No wonder that of such a local cult that seems to have been unique for Salona, only one priestess has been attested (although it is remarkable that there is no epigraphic evidence for priest(esse)s of other Matres, whose cult is so widely attested).

Although again only a single inscription (possibly) refers to one of her religious officials, the goddess Angitia is better known than the Matres Magnae. Angitia is mentioned is some literary sources and various inscriptions, all from Samnium.\textsuperscript{326} She was an Italic deity who was worshipped in central Italy, especially in the area around lake Fucinus in the territory of the Marsians and Marruvians. She was a snake and healing goddess, and was related to the Greek Medea and to Circe.\textsuperscript{327} In Virgil’s Aeneid, a Marruvian named Umbro was sacerdos of the goddess; he tried to heal snake-bites with herbs.\textsuperscript{328} According to the Historia Augusta the emperor Elegabalus ordered Marsian sacerdotes (their sex is unspecified) to collect snakes and let them loose onto the crowd that was gathered to watch games.\textsuperscript{329} Based on literary sources reporting Marsian endogamy, Dench suggests that the priesthood of Angitia may have been hereditary; the evidence however, is not very convincing.\textsuperscript{330} On an inscription from Sulmo a magistra stricto sensu who dedicated something to the Angitiae is recorded.\textsuperscript{331}

It may be clear that the evidence for female cult officials who served goddesses is on the one hand rather limited, but on the other hand quite wide. Of only a few goddesses more than five inscriptions record priestesses or women holding ancillary functions, but at the same time the epigraphic evidence shows that women served a wide variety of female deities. Most of these goddesses, who were often linked to fertility, could also be served by male cult officials, but in some cases evidence for priests is much smaller, and limited to northern Africa, most notably in the cults of Venus and Ceres.

3.2: Gods

Although the list of male deities who were served by women is much shorter than that of the goddesses, it shows a considerable variety and extends to divinities often perceived to be ‘men’s gods’. As usual, Italy and northern Africa provide most epigraphic evidence.

\textsuperscript{325} Cf. Šašel Kos (2010) 252. Šašel Kos (1999) 89 on the other hand writes: ‘There is no doubt that the Matres Magnae are native Dalmatian deities (…).’
\textsuperscript{326} AE 1964, 15; AE 1996, 514; AE 1999, 568; CIL 1, 1763; CIL 9, 3885 = ILS 4024; AE 1975, 347.
\textsuperscript{327} Salyer (1947) 411; Dench (1995) 195, 164. Dench writes that the Paelignian inscriptions that mention anaceta cerria link the goddess Anagitia to agricultural production, Dench (1995) 164. In chapter 3 we will see that other interpretations of these inscriptions are also possible.
\textsuperscript{328} Virgil, Aen. 7.750-760.
\textsuperscript{329} HA Heliogab. 23.2.
\textsuperscript{330} Dench (1995) 165.
\textsuperscript{331} Cat.no.118. Dench (1995) 164 supposes that the fact that a plural version of the goddess’s name was used shows that ‘some sort of family of deities was associated with her.’ However, plural forms of divine names were quite common (Polluces, Cereses; Castores).
Sacerdotes of Liber and Bacchus

Liber and Bacchus were often identified with each other, and therefore I will discuss their priestesses in one section. Liber was an ancient Italic and Roman god, part of a couple with Libera. Both were deities related to agriculture and fertility, and became linked to wine and wine production. As a result Liber-Bacchus developed into the wine god who became the centre of the famous Bacchanal mysteries. Priestesses of Liber in Rome are mentioned by Varro: during the festival of the Liberalia, old priestesses of Liber, crowned with ivy, sacrificed honey cakes, paid for by passengers-by.

Female sacerdotes Liberi are only attested on inscriptions from Italy and northern Africa, though the evidence is meagre. Only one – or possibly two – served in Italy, i.e. in Aquinum (region 1). Three priestesses of Liber held their religious office in Numidia (two in Thubursiculum, the other in Madauros). In North Africa, where Liber was probably a native god identified with the Roman Liber, he was often called Liber Pater and was very popular. Both men and women are attested epigraphically as sacerdotes of the god in Africa – sometimes in the same city, for instance in Thubursicum. Generally though, more men seem to have held the priesthood. By far most male sacerdotes Liberi served in North Africa. Others are attested in Italy and the Danube area.

An Etruscan god called Fufluns resembled those two deities and was worshipped in Etruria, Lundeen (2006) 47. Fufluns may have been served by priestesses, according to Thomson de Grummond (2006) 38.

Dionysus was the Greek version. Generally, women played a significant role in Dionysiac groups, Wilson (1996) 11. Priestesses of Dionysus on Greek inscriptions from Rome: IG 14.977; Rüpke (2005) 631, 746, 1015, 1070, 1180 (2nd or 3rd cent. AD). Priestesses of Dionysiac groups (Greek inscriptions, not included in the catalogue): IGR 160.1; 160. IA14; 160. IA15; Rüpke (2005) 631, 1127, 1216. The mater nata et facta who has been recorded on an inscription from modern Cologne (cat.no.296) may have held an office in a mystery cult of Dionysus Spickermann (1994b) 143-144. But as we have seen above, other interpretations are also possible.

RE s.v. Liber Pater, 68, 73, 75; Neue Pauly, s.v. Liber, Liberalia, 136; Neue Pauly, s.v. Libera, 140; Simon (1990) 126.

Augustine, De Civ. Dei 6.9; 7.3; 7.21; RE s.v. Liber Pater, 68, 69, 75; Bruhl (1953) 14, 17, 18, 19, 24; Le Bonniec (1958) 300; Neue Pauly, s.v. Libera, 140; Staples (1998) 87.


Besides, in Aesernia (region 4) a sacerdos Cerialis Dea Libera held a religious office, cat.no.19. See chapter 3.

The first had been sacerdos Liberi publica Aquinatis (cat.no.34) while the other was sacerdos publica (cat.no.33). In analogy with the sacerdotestes in Pompeii, (see section 2.2) this could also be an indication that these women served in different cults.

Cat.no.227; 228 (Thubursiculum Numidarium); 280 (Madauros).


Augustinus, Epis. 17.4 about the cult of Liber in Madauros.

See also RE s.v. Liber Pater, 74. In Africa, these men were often from the local elite and held a flaminate, Foucher, tabboust.perso.str.fr/maghreb/FoucherPaganisme.doc, 11. Example of a male sacerdos of Liber from Cumae (region 1): CIL 10.3705. From Luna (region 7) stems an inscription that records a group of sacerdotes Liberis Patris, their sex is unknown (CIL 11, 1335). See also Taylor (1923) 229.

E.g., CIL 8, 4681; CIL 8, 4682; CIL 8, 20145; ILAlg 1, 2131; ILAlg 1, 2228; ILAlg 2.3, 7663; ILAlg 2.3, 7750; ILAlg 2.3, 8002; CIL 8, 4887; ILAlg 1, 1301; ILAlg 1, 1371.

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The cult of Bacchus was originally a cult for women, according to Livy at least. *Matronae* used to be priestesses of the god. Varro also stressed the fact that the Bacchus cult was reserved for women. However, the scandal of 186 BC and the following *senatusconsultum*, show that this had changed in the years before 186, and that men could become priests as well. After the issuing of the *senatusconsultum de Bacchanalibus*, men – but not women! – were prohibited to become *sacerdotes* in the cult. However, despite the *senatusconsultum*, in later times in Rome and in Moesia Inferior men seem to have been priests of Bacchus.

The epigraphic evidence that attests to priestesses of Bacchus is even scarcer than the evidence for female religious officials of Liber, and uncertain at that. In Arausio a certain Geminia Titulla had been *mater sacrorum*, she died in Vesontio in Germania Superior. She may have served Bacchus, but the *Matres* or an initiation cult is also possible, according to Spickermann. A woman from Rome had been *sacerdos* of Bacchus and *pastophorus* of the goddess of the Nile. Therefore, it seems that this priestess served in a Near-Eastern cult and that the Bacchus of the inscription was Osiris, as has been suggested by Heyob. Accordingly, this inscription is not included in the catalogue.

In sum, even though women were allowed to hold the priesthood of Bacchus, epigraphic evidence for priestesses of the god hardly existing. While men were officially prohibited to be priests of Bacchus, a few are attested as *sacerdotes*. The cult of the god Liber has yielded much more epigraphic evidence for priests and priestesses, though the number of female cult officials is small and limited to the usual areas (Italy and Africa). It is possible that the female priesthood of Liber and Bacchus, mentioned in the literary sources, was a Republican phenomenon that gradually disappeared in the imperial period.

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348 *AE* 1995, 1362 (Moes. inf); *CIL* 3, 2931 (Dalmatia).
351 Furthermore, in the imperial period there many different Bacchic mysteries throughout the Mediterranean world, developed from the Greek mysteries, in which both men and women were initiated, Kahlós (2002) 78-9.
353 *CIL* 6, 32459 records a man who had been *sacerdos Bacchi* in Rome, and *CIL* 3, 6150 records a *collegium* devoted to Bacchus; a man is listed as priest.
354 Cat.no.265. Spickermann (1994) 230-31 nr.2.
355 *CIL* 6, 32458; Heyob (1975) 89. The Latin text is followed by the same text in Greek.
Saturn

Only one female sacerdos of Saturnus has been attested on an inscription, found in Thibilis (Numidia) in northern Africa, where the cult of Saturn was very popular. The African Saturn was only loosely linked to the Roman Saturn; generally, he was identified with Baal-Hammon. Therefore, in Africa Saturn was a sky god and also the protector of fertility. He was especially venerated by the ‘middle classes’ (see for the use of this term chapter 3, section 3.4). Saturn possessed two major cult centres, one near Thignica and the other at modern Djebel bou Kournein. Other shrines can be found in Theveste, Uchi Maius and near Thugga. It seems Licinia Monula did not live in the main area of Saturn worship – and indeed, no traces of other (male) priests of the god have been found in Thibilis, though it has to be noted that only a few sacerdotes in general have been attested epigraphically in this town. In other North African places though, many male sacerdotes Saturni are recorded on inscriptions.

Jupiter and Silvanus

Women who held religious offices in service of Jupiter were rare, but they existed. Cassius Dio writes that the emperor Caligula called himself Jupiter Latiaris and made his wife Caesonia his priest, together with himself, his horse and some wealthy people who had to pay a large amount of money for the ‘honour’. As Dio told this story presumably to illustrate Caligula’s wickedness and weirdness, and Caesonia was likely appointed as priestess only because she was Caligula’s wife, this passage shows that the woman only acquired her religious office – which she did not hold for long – because of exceptional circumstances.

Sempronia Salsula and Valeria Paulina are two individual women known to us by name who held a religious office in the cult of Jupiter, a god usually served by men. These women lived in Carthage and were sacerdotes of a collegium devoted to Jupiter Hammon (and?) Barbarus Silvanus –

354 Delgado Delgado (1998) 113-114, mentions another inscription (CIL 8, 20592 = ILS 4475, Tamallula, Mauretania Caesariensis; not included in the catalogue) that may record a woman who served Saturn in a religious function, but this is rather uncertain. Mulleia Saturnina was nutrix Frugiæri, which could mean sacerdos Nutricis Frugiæri, with Frugiær being identified with Saturn. Nutrix (without sacerdos) could also be a religious title, similar to that of mater, according to Delgado Delgado. However, Delgado Delgado favours the view that Mulleia Saturnina was a devotee and no priestess, as the word nutrix seems a likely term for the devotee of a fertility god like Frugiær.


358 Cassius Dio 59.28.5.

359 For a discussion of this cult of Caligula alias Jupiter Latiaris, see Barrett (2001) 146-148.

360 On an inscription from Rome, a woman is recorded as sacerdos of Jupiter Dolichenus. Jupiter Dolichenus was a soldier-god, who was especially associated with the Severi, Henig (1984) 120. The god, who originated from Kammagene (therefore, the inscription in not included in the catalogue) and who received a more of less official cult in the course of the imperial period, had many female worshipers, Merlat (1960) 1, 26-27, 192. Memnia Florida was the only female sacerdos or candidata. She was part of a group of sacerdotes et candidati from Rome, CIL 6, 409 = CIL 6, 10292 = CCIID 382. Croom (2000) 113 mentions a tomb from modern Mainz that depicts a woman of whom Croom thinks that she may have been priestess of Jupiter. As Croom does not provide a photo or inventory number, this suggestion cannot be checked.
which makes them also two of the small number of women attested as religious officials in the cult of Silvanus.\textsuperscript{361} Jupiter Hammon was an African deity\textsuperscript{362}, related to Ammon from Libya. The character of Silvanus Barbarus is less clear. Silvanus was god of woods, trees, orchards and hunting and the word Barbarus may refer to the Berbers, to the Punic race or to Silvanus’ unruly character. Silvanus Barbarus was likely the result of Silvanus’ identification with a Punic or Berber deity.\textsuperscript{363} The Carthaginian collegium of the two divinities consisted of fourteen or fifteen men with the tria nomina and the two women. According to Dorcey, it is likely that outside Africa, women had no official religious role in the cult of Silvanus although they were by no means excluded from it. However, the inclusion of the women in the collegium was unique. Dorcey also thinks this African inscription is no hard evidence for a female priesthood of Silvanus.\textsuperscript{364} The names of Sempronia Salsula and Valeria Paulina are included in the list of sacerdotes, but they are further specified as matres sacrorum.\textsuperscript{365} This seems to imply that a mater sacrorum had a special position, or had to carry out special tasks, but which is unknown.

Most collegia devoted to Silvanus can be found in Italy, some in the provinces. There is little evidence for an organised priesthood of the god, apart from the sacerdotes mentioned on the Carthaginian inscription and a few male priests from Rome who have left their traces in the epigraphic record.\textsuperscript{366} The evidence for the worship of Silvanus is concentrated in Italy, but the cult is also widely attested in Pannonia, Dacia and Dalmatia. In Belgica Silvanus was not popular,\textsuperscript{367} and therefore it is noteworthy that an inscription from this region might mention a female cult official. In Divodurum (modern Metz) an antistita stricto sensu erected a dedication to Silvanus and the Nymphs of the place on account of a dream.\textsuperscript{368} As may be clear, it is uncertain whether this last inscription is proof of a woman with an official function in the cult of Silvanus. This makes the total number of inscriptions of priestesses of this god very small, though it has to be admitted that the number of male priests of Silvanus was neither extensive – in contrast to that of men serving Jupiter. The religious personnel of this last god seem to have been virtually exclusively male, although it is of course questionable if

\textsuperscript{361} Cat.no.163.
\textsuperscript{362} Silvanus was only rarely linked to Jupiter Hammon (see e.g. CIL 6, 278 = ILS 4426; Várhelyi (2010) 33), though often with Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Dorcey (1992) 82, 83.
\textsuperscript{364} Dorcey (1989) 150; Dorcey (1992) 65-66. Apart from Sempronia and Sallustia, no other female college-members have been attested, Dorcey (1992) 87.
\textsuperscript{365} Dorcey (1992) 89-90.
\textsuperscript{366} Some were organised like other collegia, including a patron and offices like magister and quaestor. Most adherents originated from the lower strata of society, Dorcey (1992) 85, 86, 89, 90. The number of sanctuaries on the other hand, suggests that more people must have held a religious office in the cult of the god.
\textsuperscript{367} Dorcey (1992) 79.
\textsuperscript{368} Cat.no.264. In Divodurum various deities have been attested on inscriptions, most record the goddess Icovellauna. See also Van Andringa (2002) 235. As was the case in Belgica, Silvanus was no important divinity in the Spanish provinces. However, from Ilica in Baetica stems an inscription, erected at the end of the second or the early third century AD, that records a sacerdotia Iliipensis making a dedication to Silvanus Augustus. I think that this woman did not serve in the cult of one specific deity (i.e. Silvanus), but was rather a priestess in all cults of Ilica that did not have their own sacerdotes – see also section 2.3, cat.no.243.
absence of evidence is evidence of absence and women were indeed everywhere excluded from his priesthood.

*Dis Pater*

Dis Pater was the god of the Underworld, bestower of agricultural fertility and consort of Proserpina, daughter of Ceres. There are only a few references to *sacerdotes* of the god. One of these is the epitaph of a woman from Rome. Her name has partly been lost.\(^{369}\) In the City two sanctuaries of Dis Pater have been traced; one was possibly located on the Aventine near the Circus Maximus and the other, the famous *ara Disit Patris et Proserpinae*, in the extreme north-western part of the *Campus Martius*.\(^{370}\) It is unknown whether the woman served at one of these shrines. There is no male priest of the god attested in Rome\(^{371}\), and I have found only one elsewhere.\(^{372}\) This man was *sacerdos dei Ditis* and lived in modern Sidi el Titouhi in Africa Proconsularis.\(^{373}\)

*MERCURY*

Below the church of Santa Maria di Civita Falconara in ancient Arpinum (region 1) the dedication of a small group of *magistri* of Mercury Lanarius (Mercury of the clothiers) was found.\(^{374}\) It contains the names of two men and possibly one woman, ? Teipa, slave of Precia.\(^{375}\) She is one of the three women who might have held a religious office in the cult of the god of (grain) trade, who was related to the Etruscan Turms and the Greek Hermes.\(^{376}\) Numerous inscriptions attest to exclusively male *magistri* and *ministri* in colleges of religious officials devoted to Mercury, the *Mercuriales*.\(^{377}\) Male *sacerdotes* of the god can be found in Noricum and – for the greatest part, in northern Africa, though their number is not extensive.

The second female religious official of Mercurius – that is, if she did indeed serve in his cult, which is uncertain – is attested in Burdigala (modern Bordeaux) in Gallia Aquitania.\(^{378}\) Mercury’s popularity in Gaul is mentioned by Caesar, who writes that the Gauls ‘worship as their divinity, Mercury in particular, and have many images of him, and regard him as the inventor of all arts, they

\(^{369}\) Cat.no.11.

\(^{370}\) Richardson (1992) 110-111, 373.


\(^{372}\) Besides, a *collegium of cultores* of Dis Pater and Proserpina has left an inscription in modern Potzneusiedl in Noricum, see: *AE* 1982, 791b = *AE* 1988, 914.

\(^{373}\) *CIL* 8, 16406 = *ILS* 4471 = *ILTun* 1564. This limited number of priests in Africa, the area that has yielded so many other *sacerdotes* might be explained by the identification of Dis Pater with Pluto, a deity who seems to have been popular in Africa. Several (male) priests of Pluto have left their traces in the epigraphic record. Rives (2007) 72 writes that the African Pluto seems to have been a pre-Roman deity of agriculture.

\(^{374}\) Leoni (2008) 137.

\(^{375}\) Cat.no.272. Teipa may also have been a man.


\(^{377}\) Combet Farnoux (1981) *passim*.

\(^{378}\) Cat.no.255. From Burdigala stem several dedications to the Mercury (Augustus). Furthermore, on the relief, probably from Cologne, that accompanied a dedication to Mercury, three women, clothed as matrons, are depicted in a sacrificial scene near an altar, Spickermann (1994a) 312-313; *CIL* 13.8234.
consider him the guide of their journeys and marches, and believe him to have great influence over the acquisition of gain and mercantile transactions.

Pompeia Thelegusa had been *mater sacrorum* and solved a vow to Mercury.

The last women serving Mercury, or rather: a divinity that might have been identified with Mercury, lived in Masculula, close to modern Kef in Africa Proconsularis. She wore the puzzling title of *sacerdos Mathamodis*. The god of this inscription may have been related to Motmanius, perhaps an indigenous African deity who is attested on an inscription from Lambaesis from the second or beginning of the third century AD. This Motmanius was possibly associated with Mercury.

In sum, women are attested as religious officials of various different gods – be it much less frequent than they are attested in service of goddesses, and often in very small numbers. However, in many cases, of these same gods also only a few men are recorded are priests. Accordingly, it cannot simply be concluded that the deities of which hardly any female cult officials have left their traces in the epigraphic record, will have mainly been served by men. As a consequence of the limited number of inscriptions, there is no pattern visible in the spread of priestesses serving gods. In some cases, their existence might be explained by local customs.

*Conclusions of this chapter*

The picture that emerges is one of diversity on the one side, and broad patterns on the other, both in titles, in the spread of priesthoods and in the cults in which women served. Priestesses could carry various titles, of which the exact meaning is not always clear. The most common was that of *sacerdos*, found everywhere in the western part of the Empire. According to local preferences, this title could be slightly changed (to *sacerda* in Africa) or specific qualifications could be added, like *publica* or *magna*. Sometimes, a woman was called ‘priestess of a city’. In these cases, it is not clear whether she served in a specific cult (the imperial cult, or the main cult of the city), or whether she served as ‘general’ priestess, which I think is the most likely option. Very often, priestesses were simply referred to as *sacerdotes*. In some of these cases, the cult in which they served can be traced by looking at the text of the inscription, accompanying reliefs, local religious life and the archaeological context.

The distribution of the priestesses roughly fits the general pattern of inscriptions and reflects the spread of Romanization. By far, most are attested in Italy – mainly in Campania – and northern Africa. In Rome though, the number of priestesses attested epigraphically is relatively small; this is

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380 Cat.no.195.

made up for by the literary sources that provide evidence of some priesthoods – but not many – held by women in the City. Deviations from the epigraphic habit, both chronological and geographical, can usually be explained by exceptional (archaeological or other) circumstances. In case of the Ceres cult, the distribution of priestesses seems to reflect the popularity of the cult, which in its turn was linked to the production of grain, Greek and Punic roots and Romano-Italic influences.

Many examples show the falsity of the presupposition that women only served goddesses and men served gods.\(^{382}\) Women could worship male deities and hold religious offices in their cults and men could serve female divinities in an official function.\(^{383}\) This confirms Flemming’s statement that in Roman religion: ‘Exclusion and incapacity had to be actively imposed (…)’.\(^{384}\) The impression the evidence provides, is that women living in the provinces – certainly those in North Africa – could serve a great variety of deities in a religious office, just like men. However, the range of priesthoods held by men was much wider than those held by women, and the number of priests attested epigraphically is about 6.5 times as high as that of priestesses.\(^{385}\) Men served as priests in virtually all cults of which female sacerdotes or other religious officials are attested, but the opposite was not the case; female priesthoods were mostly, though certainly not exclusively, limited to goddesses concerned with fertility. Only when individual cults – e.g. that of Bona Dea – or areas – e.g. Italy, where only women held the priesthood of Ceres – are examined, does it become apparent that in some cases women were clearly preferred over men as the best choice for the religious offices available. To call these cults ‘women’s cults’ and the divinities ‘women’s goddesses’ is exaggerated though, for the exclusion of men as priests did certainly not apply to all places and times, and men were always part of the worshipping community.

\(^{382}\) And much more evidence can be found: in Rome the Flaminica Dialis had to serve Jupiter and the Fratres Arvales served Dea Dia. Likely, the Salian virgins served the same (male) deities as their colleagues, the Salii, Glinister (2011) 128. Furthermore, even the Augustales, generally perceived to be all-male groups had female sacerdotes, see footnote 25. Not only in the division of priesthods the distinction is not strict, but neither in the gender of the worshippers: dedications from women to Mars, Hercules, Silvanus and even Mithras, and from men to Dea Dia, Mater Matuta and Ceres, have been found, to mention but a few, cf. Schultz (2006) 69. See also Flemming (2007) 90-91, about women in the cults of Hercules and Silvanus. Their exclusion from Hercules at the Ara Maxima and the worship of Mars-Silvanus was an exception, just as the exclusion of men from the December festival of Bona Dea.


\(^{385}\) Cf. Culham (2004) 144: ‘Women tended to be associated with the worship of deities conceived of as female, yet most of those same deities had male priests. Few of the temples or observances that featured one gender actually excluded the other.’