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 3: Religious officials in the cult of Ceres

Introduction

Apart from the imperial cult, the cult of Ceres is the one that provides us with the most epigraphic evidence for priestesses. I have found 102 inscriptions from Rome, Italy and North Africa which record the names of women serving in the Ceres cult. Approximately half of them lived in North Africa where the cult was popular and widespread (see also chapter 2).¹ With the exception of North Africa, this prominence of priestesses of Ceres is not reflected in the number of Italian dedications to Ceres and in other inscriptions that mention the goddess.² Ceres is not even included in Eck’s list of popular gods, which is based on dedications.³ The relatively few inscriptions of the early Empire that mention the goddess Ceres were mostly erected by people involved in the grain trade.⁴ Other inscriptions were set up by persons from both sexes and from various social ranks.

As there were several differences between the Roman, Italian and the African Ceres cults, I will deal with the priestesses of these three areas in separate sections (sections 1, 2 and 3). In order to gain a better understanding of the women who held the priesthood and of the variations between the cults, attention will be paid to local preferences and peculiarities, which can at least partly be explained by indigenous elements, Greek influences, and Romanization. Furthermore, I will discuss the rank and social standing of the priestesses, as this is a field in which the Italian and African sacerdotes can fruitfully be compared. Since the goddess Tellus had close ties to Ceres, and her priestesses show some similarities to those of Ceres in northern Africa, this chapter finishes with a section devoted to the sacerdotes Telluris.

1: The Ceres cult in Rome

In the previous chapter I have mentioned the connection between Ceres, agriculture and the production of grain. I have also referred to links between Ceres and Demeter. In this section about Ceres in Rome, these two connections will figure prominently, regarding both the worship of the goddess and her religious officials.

² Despite the fact we would expect Ceres to have been a central deity in a world in which agriculture was so important to most people. Cf. Henig (1984) 173.
³ Eck (1989) 43-44; see also chapter 4.
1.1: Ceres in early Rome: the Aventine triad and the Greek cult

In 496 BC the Sibyline books advised Rome to honour Demeter, Dionysus and Korè together in one cult in order to avert a famine. The origins of this triad – either Greek or Italic, for Demeter, Dionysus and Korè were equated with Ceres, Liber and Libera – are still debated. All three divinities were connected to agriculture. After its introduction into the City, the triad was built a new temple, dedicated in 493 BC. Its building was ordered by the dictator Postumius, who expected an abundant grain harvest from the goddess. As we have seen in the first chapter, its exact location is unknown. The so-called Aventine Triad had special links to the plebeians. Ceres herself was a plebeian goddess and even in the imperial period, her aerarium was still managed by an aedilis plebis, as is clear from many inscriptions.

We have seen in the previous chapter that after the regal period a process of Hellenization influenced the character of the Roman Ceres, who was still being worshipped separately from the Aventine triad. The Roman Ceres-Demeter cult acquired new ceremonies, conducted Graeco riti and introduced between 249 and 216 BC, the year the first sacrum anniversarium Cereris was celebrated. This ‘Greek cult’ was less confined to plebeian worshippers than that of the Aventine triad. In the ‘Greek’ cult that probably resembled the Thesmophoria, Ceres was worshipped together with her daughter Proserpina in a cult for women and organized by priestesses (see below). Despite their secluded nocturnal character – by some called a mystery cult because one had to be initiated – the rites

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5 Livy, 2.34.3; Tacitus, Annals, 2.49; Dion. Halic. 6.17.2-4; 6.17.94; 1974; Peterson (1919) 26; RE s.v. Liber Pater, 69; Bruhl (1953) 30; Spaeth (1996) 7; Neue Pauly, s.v. Ceres, 1071; Simon (1990) 45.
10 Bruhl (1953) 16, 19, 41; Le Bonniec (1958) 311; Beard, North and Price (1998) 64; Spaeth (1996) 6, 81; Chirassi Colombo (1981) 408. Sabbatucci (1972) provides a rather vague discussion about the changing relation between Ceres and agriculture and the plebs, and the role of the flamen Cerialis and the sacrum Ceriale.
11 For example: CIL 6, 91 = ILS 153; CIL 6, 1822 = ILS 1893; CIL 6, 30905; CIL 6, 1095 = CIL 6, 31239 = CIL 9, 407,01 = CIL 13, 58 = ILS 503; CIL 6, 1345; CIL 6, 1570; CIL 6, 41229 = AE 1929, 158 = AE 1930, 76 = AE 1933, 1 = AE 1995, 124 = AE 1995, 762 = AE 2000, 656. Le Bonniec (1958) 112, 278; Bruhl (1953) 41.
12 The ritus Graecus was in fact a typically Roman construct, Scheid (1995) 19, 28. It was not used in the cults of all Greek gods, but only in those of Hercules, Saturn, Apollo and Ceres, Scheid (1995) 20.
14 Le Bonniec (1958) 379-380, 388, 391-392, 400; Chirassi Colombo (1981) 421; Spaeth (1996) 11, 103; Beard, North and Price (1998) 70; Bendlin (2002) 67; Orlin (2010) 105-106. Livy 22.56.4 mentions matrons who should have been celebrating the sacrum anniversarium, but did not because they were mourning after the Battle of Canusium.
of the Graeca sacra were pro populo.\textsuperscript{15} Bendlin writes that these rites took place near the mundus of Ceres (see also below).\textsuperscript{16}

The Graeca sacra or sacrum anniversarium Cерesis involved groups of matrons and girls in procession, singing and offering gifts to the goddesses. As the participation of separate groups of women was uncommon, this was a ‘real change in the religious life of Rome’, according to Beard, North and Price.\textsuperscript{17} However, the acceptance of the Graeca sacra Cерesis fits into a pattern of adoption of foreign religious practices and the Hellenization of various cults.\textsuperscript{18}

1.2: Priestly officials in the Roman Ceres cult

The priestly responsibilities in the Ceres cult in Rome were shared by different religious officials, and changed over time.\textsuperscript{19} A flamen Cerialis existed long before a female sacerdos of Ceres was introduced.\textsuperscript{20} The flaminate of Ceres was one of the oldest public priesthoods in Rome that were created, according to legend, by king Numa.\textsuperscript{21} There is no evidence for the flamen Cerialis that dates from the period after the end of the first century AD. The flamen Cerialis belonged to the flamines minores.\textsuperscript{22} These flamines minores, who were plebeians and seem to have been less prestigious than the flamines maiores, had their own internal ranking of importance. The flamen Cerialis belonged to the first group of six of the twelve minores, which leads to the conclusion that Ceres was a relatively prominent divinity.\textsuperscript{23} The flamen Cerialis sacrificed to Ceres and to Tellus because Tellus did not have her own priest. Likely, he celebrated the sacrum Cereale, an agrarian festival.\textsuperscript{24} The only flamen Cerialis attested epigraphically was a certain Sextus Caesius Propertianus, who had held several equestrian offices in the early imperial period, both military and administrative. His inscription was erected in Mevania (region 6).\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{15} Cicero, \textit{De Leg.} 2.35-37. Spaeth (1996) 13. Cf. Graf (2003) 142: parallel with the Thesmophoria. Bendlin (2002) and Wagenvoort (1980) have discussed the \textit{sacrum anniversarium Cерesis} and other rites in honour of Ceres (the \textit{initia Cерesis}, mentioned by Varro, \textit{RR} 2.4.9; 3.1.5; see also Spaeth (1996) 60). The precise contents of these rites are not relevant for this thesis, so I will not expand on them.


\textsuperscript{17} Beard, North and Price (1998) 70-71; quotation: 71.


\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Edlund-Berry (1994) 29.

\textsuperscript{20} Although the flamines are often considered to be linked to one deity only, they could also play a role in the rites of other divinities, Vangaagda (1988) 105, 113-114.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{CIL} 11.5028, from the first century AD; \textit{CIL} 10.5422=\textit{ILS} 3353; Le Bonneie (1958) 113, 343, 456; Bruhl (1953) 122; Vangaagda (1988) 21, 46, 48; Spaeth (1996) 4, 34; \textit{Neue Pauly}, \textit{s. v.} Ceres, 1071.

\textsuperscript{22} Of the fifteen flamines, three were flamines maiores (the Dialis, Martialis and Quirinalis) and the others, amongst which the Cerialis, the flamines minores. The minores were originally plebeians, the maiores were patricians. In the imperial period the minores were equestrians, Vangaagda (1988) 24, 46, 48, 73.


\textsuperscript{25} \textit{CIL} 11, 5028 = \textit{ILS} 1447 = \textit{AE} 1892, 3. See also: Chirassi Colombo (1981) 427-428. Kunz (2006) 179-180, mentions a Sicilian inscription recording a flamen Cerialis, but as the inscription (\textit{CIL} 10, 7146 = \textit{EE} 8.1, 679) is very fragmentary, this cannot be stated with certainty.
A plebeian aedillus probably acted as priest for Demeter, Liber and Korè of the Aventine triad and celebrated the Cerialia,26 while priestesses celebrated the Hellenised cult of Ceres and Proserpina. These priestesses were supervised by the (quin)decemviri. These (quin)decemviri played an important role in the cult of Ceres, which illustrates the foreign character of the Hellenised cult.27 Cicero’s oration against Verres provides evidence for the role of the quindecimviri in the Ceres cult, dating from about a century after the introduction of the Graeca sacra. He writes that some time after the death of Tiberius Gracchus (around 130-120 BC28) the Sibylline books explained the way to ward off a disaster that was predicted by various prodigies. It was said that the most ancient Ceres ought to be appeased (ex quibus inventum est Cerearem antiquissimam placari oportere). Accordingly, priests – sacerdotes populi Romani selected from the college of the decimviri – went as far as Enna on Sicily to find a way to do as the books had told, even though there was already a magnificent temple of Ceres in Rome (by which he presumably meant the one on the Aventine hill). Enna was a place with a reputation for holiness and in the local temple of Demeter an impressive statue of the goddess – and one of Libera – was displayed.29 This statue was the occasion for Cicero’s speech, for Verres, who had been governor of Sicily, had ordered to steal it.

Cicero’s oration stressed the (supposed) universality of the worship of Ceres in the Roman Empire and the relationship between the Sicilian and the Roman cults. The journey to Enna showed that this town was perceived to be the place of origin of the goddess – note in this context the inscription from Rome in which a priestess of Ceres is called Sicula (see below).30 However, Hinz writes that there is evidence which shows that the cult in Enna became important at a relatively late moment. Therefore, Cicero’s statement that the cult was very ancient is likely an exaggeration to enlarge its respectability in order to aggravate Verres’s crime.31 According to Šterbenc Erker, Cicero mentioned the link to Sicily because the island was politically important for Rome: Sicily was the first Roman province and provided a great deal of grain for the Urbs.32 Orlin also links the mission to political factors: after the unsuccessful slave revolt of Eunous (135-132 BC) the Romans may have wanted to demonstrate their renewed power over the island and their control of the sanctuary.33

Be that as it may, the priestesses of the Hellenised Ceres in Rome who were supervised by the (quin)decemviri had to be of Greek descent and came mostly from Velia and Naples, as Cicero

27 Le Bonniec (1958) 398, 454, 457.
31 Hinz (1998) 122; Kunz (2006) 61, writes that the cult of Demeter and Kore on Sicily was not any older than the Demeter cults in other areas, colonized by the Greeks.
33 Orlin (2010) 193; he offers other explanations as well.
writes.\textsuperscript{34} They acquired civic status,\textsuperscript{35} according to Cicero to be able to serve the goddess on behalf of the Roman people.\textsuperscript{36}

*Sacra Cereris, iudices, summa maiores nostri religione confici caerimoniamque voluerunt; quae cum essent adsumpta de Graecia, et per Graecas curata sunt semper sacerdotes et Graeca omnino nominata. sed cum illam quae Graecum illud sacram monstraret et faceret ex Graecia deligerent, tamen sacra pro cibibus civem facere voluerunt, ut deos immortalis scientia peregrina et externa, mente domestica et civili precaretur. has sacerdotes video fere aut Neapolitanas aut Veliensis fuisse, foederatarum sine dubio civitatum. Mitto vetera; proxime dico ante civitatem Veliensibus datum de senatus sententia C. Valerium Flaccum, praetorem urbanum, nominatim ad populum de Calliphana Veliense, ut ea civis Romana esset, tulisse.

“Our ancestors, O judges, ordained that the sacred rites of Ceres should be performed with the very strictest religious reverence and the greatest solemnity; which, as they had been originally derived from the Greeks, had always been conducted by Greek priestesses, and were called Greek rites. But when they were selecting a priestess from Greece to teach us that Greek sacred ceremony, and to perform it, still they thought it right that it should be a citizen who was sacrificing for citizens, in order that she might pray to the immortal gods with knowledge, indeed, derived from a distant and foreign source but with feelings belonging to one of our own people and citizens. I see that these priestesses were for the most part Neapolitanos or Velians, and those are well known to be federate cities. I am not speaking of any ancient cases, I am only mentioning things that have happened lately, as, for instance, that before the freedom of the city was conferred on the Velians, Caius Valerius Flaccus being the city praetor, did, in accordance with a resolution passed by the senate, submit a motion to the people concerning a woman of Velia, called Calliphana, mentioning her expressly by name, for the purpose of making her a Roman citizen.”

\textsuperscript{34} Šterbenc Erker (2006-2007) 127; Orlin (2010) 27. Therefore, modern scholars think that in early times there was no clear link between Rome and Enna, but between Rome and Naples and Velia instead.

\textsuperscript{35} To Flemming (2007) 108, this citizenship was crucial about the Roman *sacerdos Cereris* she was not foreign, but a Roman citizen. Isayev (2011) 375, 385-386 on the other hand stresses the necessary ‘foreigness’ of the priestesses, which was created through their gender and their Greek roots. Orlin (2010) 107-110 thinks that the grant of citizenship should not be underestimated and that it was a way to show the ‘centrality of women, in their proper place, to the success of the Roman state.’ Furthermore, incorporating *Graeca sacra* can be seen as a propagation of Romanness, that shared the main ideas about the proper place of priestesses in society with the Greeks.

\textsuperscript{36} Cicero, *Pro Balbo*, 55 (transl. by A. Clark); Bruhl (1953) 39; Le Bonniec (1958) 397; Spaeth (1996) 12-13, 104; *Neue Pauly*, s.v. Ceres, 1072; Hänninen (1998) 121; Beard, North and Price (1998) 70; Scheid (2003a) 143; Schultz (2006) 72. These Roman female *sacerdotes Cereris* were, according to Scheid, a new conception of religious offices for women, because they did not depend on their husband for their office. However, this was neither the case with the Vestals as he admits, Scheid (2003a) 145.
As a consequence of the Greek character of Naples and Velia, the priestesses were able to carry out the requested rites in the proper way. However, it may be clear that the choice of priestesses from both towns was not only based on religious arguments, but also on political considerations: Velia and Naples were federate cities, relatively close to Rome. That religious considerations were not the only reason for the choice is supported by the fact that Velia was a trading town where the cult of Demeter was not really important: the importance of the Demeter cult, although explicitly mentioned by Cicero, cannot be traced in the archaeological remains from Velia. However, in Naples a thesmophoric cult presumably existed in the first century AD, as the elaborate honorary inscription of the priestess Tettia Casta suggests. Generally, she is perceived to have been priestess of Demeter Thesmophoros, as the cult of Demeter was the only one in Naples with such a high standing that prestigious women like Tettia could hold its priesthood. It is even possible that Tettia became priestess in the Roman Ceres cult, but there is no evidence to support this. It is noteworthy to mention that Tettia was priestess of a ‘house of women’ (ἱσρεία τοῦ ...? ...] τῶν γυναικῶν οἴκων). It is uncertain what was meant by this, but it might point to a secluded group of women serving the goddess.

The Greek women from Naples and Velia who came to Rome were ‘public’ priestesses in the sense that they had to carry out rites on behalf of the citizens of Rome. This public character is also shown by the titles of the only two priestesses attested on inscriptions from the Urbs. Casponia Maxima, daughter of Publius, had been sacerdos publica populi Romani and Favonia, daughter of Marcus, had been sacerdos publica populi Romani Quiritum. Both lived in the early imperial period.

Unfortunately, these two inscriptions do not provide any information about the priestesses, except that Casponia originated from Sicily as is indicated by the word Sicula, inscribed after her title. This is of some interest, for we know that on Sicily the cult of Ceres was important (see below), and because it confirms Cicero’s statement that the Roman priestesses of Ceres had to be ‘Greek’ and from a ‘federate’ state. After all, Sicily, which had been colonized by the Greeks, had become a Roman province in 227 BC. The names of both priestesses though, are thoroughly Romanised and show the Roman citizenship that they had to possess – which is not surprising, considering the time in which they lived.

38 See also Glinister (2006) 101.
42 Flemming (2007) 104, writes: ‘(...) the [Roman] sacerdos Ceres’ addressed the gods on exactly the same basis as any other public religious official, her authority came from her own, properly arrived at, position in the Roman constitution; but she communicated in, as it were, a different language, in the Greek mode rather than the Roman one.’
43 Casponia: cat.no.4; Favonia: cat.no.5. Le Bonniec (1958) 388. It is remarkable that in Velia, one of the towns where the priestesses came from, men also played a role in the Demeter cult, see Hinz, (1998) 181.
The priestesses of Ceres were the only public priestesses (in the sense that they represented the whole community) in Rome apart from the Vestals and the Sian virgins. This must have implied that they possessed a lot of prestige, although Scheid, perhaps because he stresses the fact that the priestesses were ‘foreign’, writes that they were of lower social status than other priests. Schultz, on the other hand, thinks that the priestesses stemmed mainly from prominent families, and Spaeth, who refers to Cicero, Verr. 2.4.99 (see below), writes that just like the priestesses of the goddess on Sicily, the Roman sacerdotes Cereris were of respectable descent and reputation. As we do not know anything about the social origins of the two priestesses Casponia and Favonia, except that both women were free-born, we cannot agree or disagree with either of these views. Nevertheless, the fact that most (but certainly not all!) priestesses of Ceres in the rest of Italy were of a fairly high rank and standing, seems to indicate that the view of Schultz and Spaeth is more convincing than the one held by Scheid.

As I have mentioned above, several scholars think that the Graeca sacra were meant only for women in contrast to the earlier Ceres cults that were open to both sexes. An exclusion of men was also part of the cult of the goddess on Sicily; Cicero writes about the shrine of Ceres in Catena:

Aditus enim in id sacarium non est viris; sacra per mulieres ac virgines confici solent.

“For the entrance into that shrine does not belong to men; the sacred ceremonies are accustomed to be performed by women and virgins.”

It is interesting that Cicero in the same oration writes that the goddess is worshipped nearly everywhere in the same way and that the nature of the shrine was comparable to that in Rome (eadem religione qua Romae). However, I think we should not attach too much value to these words,

44 Isayev (2011) 380-381 stresses the unique position of the priestesses and their (supposed) status and authority. She also writes, based on Cicero, Leg. 2.21, that the priestesses had the right to initiate members, though in this passage of Cicero nothing is said about the role of priestesses in initiation rites of Ceres in Rome. Isayev (p. 384) further thinks that the priestesses were ‘inspirational’ rather than ‘specialist’ (arbiters in problematic cases), as the other Roman priests were. They mediated between human and divine by praying. The priestess’ role was anticipatory. The evidence for this statement is rather limited, though. But if it is true, the priestesses’ role seems to be comparable to that of the priest(esse)s of individual gods in the provinces.
45 Le Bonniec (1958) 399; Spaeth (1996) 105; Scheid (2003b) 143.
49 Cicero, Verr. 2.4.99. The sentences following this quote show that Cicero is not talking about women in general, but about priestesses – see chapter 4, section 2.1. Cf. Lactantius, Div. Inst., 3.20.3-4: men were prohibited from entering the temples of Vesta, Bona Dea and Ceres. As may be clear, this is not true for the temple of the Aventine, were the aediles was priest, Brouwer (1989) 418.
50 Cicero, Verr. 4.99: Sacarium Cereris est apud Catienensis eadem religione qua Romae, qua in ceteris locis, qua prope in toto orbe terrarum. “There is a shrine of Ceres among the Catenans of the same holy nature as the one in Rome, of the ones in other places, and of the same nature as in almost every country in the world.” Transl. Loeb Classical Library.
because Cicero wanted to convince the judges that Verres had committed a grave crime by stealing the statue of Ceres, and the less ‘foreign’ the cult would seem, the better his listeners could identify themselves with the victims and the more likely they would be willing to punish Verres. Nevertheless, certain similarities between the Graecia sacra and the Sicilian cult will certainly have been present, and fit into the existing pattern of continuous influences from Magna Graecia on Roman culture.

2: The Ceres cults in Italy

We have seen in chapter 2 that priestesses of Ceres have only been attested in Italy and northern Africa. In Italy, they were concentrated in Campania and other parts of mid and southern Italy, while in North Africa they are mainly attested in Numidia and Africa Proconsularis. In the following section, various aspects of the Italian Ceres cult(s) and its priestesses will be discussed. As virtually nothing can be said about the daily organisation of the cults for a lack of evidence, we have to turn to other topics. The first deals with origins: as both theItalic Ceres cults and the Demeter cults from Greater Greece lay at the foundations of the cults in which the sacerdotes Cерерis of the imperial period served, I start with a section about the Italic Ceres cults. This is followed by a discussion of the worship of Demeter in southern Italy. Like so many other aspects of religion, the spread of the cult of Demeter shows the impact of the process of Hellenization on the societies of central Italy. Secondly, the various titles of the priestesses will be discussed, as these illustrate some interesting aspects of the Italian Ceres cults. Thirdly, the priestesses who served other deities besides Ceres will pass under review, and finally, I will pay attention to the social rank and standing of the sacerdotes, because in this respect the Italian priestesses can fruitfully be compared to their African colleagues.51

2.1: The Italian Ceres cults

The goddess Ceres has been attested on an early Faliscan inscription in which she is linked to grain. This very old text from the south-eastern edge of Etruria is called the Ceres inscription. It dates from around 600 BC.52 Further evidence of the Italic worship of Ceres is of much later date, but is important in a discussion of priestesses of the goddess. From Lavinium (Latium) stem the fragments of a third century BC stips votive, containing the following words: Cerere auliquoquisbus/ Vespernam por(t).53 Weinstock thinks these words are part of a lex sacra ‘probably formulated by the priestess of the temple and attached to the table of offerings.’54 No Lavinian Ceres priestess has been attested, however, so her supposed existence remains just speculation. There are many other uncertainties

51 More about the social rank of all priestesses in the catalogue will be said in chapter 5, section 3.1.
54 Weinstock (1952) 34.
concerning this inscription, but based on etymology, Weinstock concludes that ‘an Italic goddess of food seems to have been worshipped in the temple of Ceres at Lavinium (…).’ Simon on the other hand thinks that the ‘Vespera’ mentioned on the inscription was the same as Venus. This is interesting with regard to the joint cult of the two goddesses, mentioned in the previous chapter.

In Agona (in the modern region Molise) a third century Oscan sanctuary of Ceres has been excavated. On an inscription from this sanctuary, found in 1848 in Capracotta and dated to the second century BC, Ceres is mentioned. She is connected to rites in a sacred grove (hûrz), but what these rites encompassed, remains a mystery. From the same century stem several inscriptions recording Oscan priestesses of the goddess ‘Cer(r)ia’ or ‘Cerfum,’ likely the same as Ceres – or the Cereres (see section 3.2). These inscriptions, recorded in the Pelignan dialect, refer to the priestess as ‘anaceta/ancta/anacta/anecta’ or ‘sacrarix/sacracrix.’ In the first century BC, the Pelignan disappeared and the Latin words sacerdos Cereris were used. The priestesses called ‘anaceta’ or one of its variants all lived in Sulmo, while those called ‘sacrarix’ are attested in Interpromium, Corfinium and Teate Marrucinorum or Teatina (all in the later Augustan region 4). Schultz writes that these inscriptions were dedications, but in my opinion this is very unconvincing as they are found in tombs. All inscriptions are short and do not give any other information than the names of the priestesses and short funerary formula’s (see the appendix).

The only inscription that records a priestess of Ceres-Cerfum (instead of Cer(r)ia) is the well-known one from Corfinium, called the ‘Herentas inscription.’ It is the epitaph of the priestess Prima Pettiedia, inscribed on a square travertine pedestal. According to Vetter the inscription dates from the mid first century BC. Prima Pettiedia is described as Cerfum sacrarix semunu. Lindsay offers ‘priestess of the Ceri Semones’ as a translation, but according to Pocckett and Spaeth these words mean Cererum sacerdos semonum, by which possibly a priestess of the Cereres and deities of sowing

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55 Weinstock (1952) 36.
57 Vetter 147. The inscription starts with the words: statius pûs ser hûrîn/ kerrîin vezkeî statîf; meaning: stati (dies) qui sunt in loco Ceriali. This is followed by a list of agricultural deities that had their own place and festival day in the grove.
61 Dates according to Buonocore and Pocckett (1985) 51. There is no consensus about the exact translation of the word ‘anaceta’; it has been stated that it does not mean ‘priestess’, but is part of the name of the goddess, see Radke (1988) 365; Schultz (2006) 51. See also Pocckett (1982) 172 who contradicts the view that the name of the goddess Angitia was meant. Adams (2007) 48 seems to reject this view too. Cf. chapter 2, footnote 327.
62 Corfinium and Sulmo also provide evidence for priestesses living in the first century AD, which shows the long-lasting importance of the Italic Ceres cult in this area.
64 Vetter (1953) no. 213, p. 145-149; Peruzzi (1995) 5. See the appendix for the text.
65 Lindsay (1893) 333.
is meant. A parallel can be seen in CIL 1, 3215 = Vetter 204, in which the name of an anaceta ceria et aisis santo is recorded, which Poccetti translates as ‘sacerdotessa di Cerere e delle divinità dei seminati’.

In contrast to Pocetti, Spaeth thinks that the Cereres of the Herentas inscription were not Ceres and Proserpina (or Demeter and Kore, like the African Cereres, see section 3.2), but Ceres and Venus instead, because of the existence of other Pelignan inscriptions that mention priestesses of Ceres and of Venus. In my opinion, this suggestion is not very convincing for these Pelignan inscriptions all attest to either priestesses of Venus, or to priestesses of Ceres, and not to a combined priesthood of both goddesses. It is much more likely to view the Cereres as Ceres and Proserpina, regarding the link between these two goddesses, the Greek influences in Italy and the African parallel. Besides, it has been noted several times that the ‘Herentas inscription’ displays ‘the influence of Greek forms of expression’, so Greek influences on its religious contents are likely.

Another argument for regarding the Cereres as the equivalent of the Greek Thesmophores is the possibility that in the inscription a reference is made to a temporary separation of the priestess from her husband. Peruzzi thinks that the priestess had two names (see chapter 4) that were used because of the woman lived (temporarily) apart from her husband. As we shall see in the chapter 4, temporary chastity may have been part of the African cult of the Cereres that was based on Greek roots, and of the cult in Rome, although the evidence is rather inconclusive.

2.2: The cults of Demeter in Italy

Apart from the indigenous Italic Ceres, the Greek Demeter was also worshipped in Italy. As we have seen above, the cult of this goddess was imported in Rome from Sicily, where the cult of Demeter and Persephone was very popular, like in the rest of southern Italy. In Latium and Campania, close to Rome, some early evidence of the cult of Demeter can be found. In Veii and Capena – the second

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66 Spaeth (1996) 3. In the refrain of the frateres Arvales the Semones are mentioned, representing ‘divine forces which in some way preside over the sowing and prosperity of the crops,’ Evans (1939) 172. The association of Cerus and Semo was ‘fairly common to central Italy’, Evans (1939) 174.
67 Poccetti (1985) 55, 56.
68 Poccetti (1985) 60.
72 This goddess was often served by priestesses, for example in Thebe, near Theopais, on Kos, in Mantinea. Cf. Herodotus. 5.72; RE, s.v. Demeter, passim.
73 On the other hand, Peterson writes that the influences from Campania on the Roman Ceres cult were possibly more important than the Sicilian influences: Campania was much closer to Rome, there was a connection between the Sybillian books and Cumae, and other cults from Cumae were also imported in Rome. The fact that the Roman priestesses had to come from Naples and Velia supports this view, Peterson (1919) 26-27. However, it is virtually impossible to quantify and compare religious influences, so Peterson’s view cannot be checked.
town providing evidence of Ceres priestesses in later times – depictions dating to the fifth century BC show women and men together with pigs, torches, baskets and fruit, all common objects in the Demeter cult.75 In Teano in Campania, a complex with votive offerings has been excavated, and although it is difficult to determine which deities were honoured here, it is possible that the place was influenced by the Demeter cult from Tarentum.76 Besides, in Pompeii a priestess of the *Thesmophores* is attested, though her inscription is from much later date.77

Possibly as a result of a resemblance to the cult of Demeter, the Ceres cult became very popular in Campania,78 where it was mainly concentrated in the most fertile parts of the area – a region where grain was one of the main agricultural products (see chapter 2).79 According to Pliny the Elder, Ceres 80 was protectress of Campania, together with Liber Pater.81 No wonder that Frederiksen suggests that the federal cult of Campania, mentioned by Livy, was probably that of Ceres in Hamae (later in Lilenium).82 While the cult of Demeter finally disappeared in many places in *Magn Graecia*, sometimes to be replaced by the worship of Ceres, it remained important on Sicily,83 the island with which Demeter was perceived to be closely connected.84 Syracuse provides the best epigraphic sources, though the only concrete evidence for a sanctuary is found in Cicero (*Verr. 4.119*).85 Some Greek inscriptions from Enna dating from the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third century BC mention male priests of Demeter.86 The existence of male priests of Demeter in the Greek world was not uncommon.87

In addition to Sicily and the towns of Velia and Paestum on the Italian mainland where some priestesses of the goddess have been attested,88 Cumae was another important centre of the Demeter cult. In this town, being a priestess of the goddess was considered a high honour, if we may believe

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75 Hinz (1998) 223, 226. In addition, the Campetti sanctuary, containing votive heads from late 6th or the 5th century BC, was perhaps dedicated to Demeter, Glinister (2006) 91.
77 *IG* 14.702. Τερεντία Παναμόντι ἱερα / Δήμιτρος Θησμόφωρος.
78 Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 93. However, there is little evidence for the cult of Ceres, the inscriptions of the *sacerdotes* form the main part of the evidence, Savunen (1997) 122.
81 Pliny *NH* 3.60; De Cazanove (1990) 384 note 33.
82 Livy 23.35.3; Frederiksen (1984) 33. He also suggests that the federal Ceres was served by a priestess, but there is no evidence to support this.
83 Hinz (1998) 231. However, in contrast to the many available inscriptions, there is no archaeological evidence for a continuity of the Greek Demeter cult on Sicily, Kunz (2006) 24, 61, 67.
84 Wood 2000, 79; Kunz (2006) 371. Nowhere else in the classical period, so many sanctuaries of Demeter were built in such a small area as on Sicily, Kunz (2006) 100.
88 Hinz, 1998, 180 with epigraphic references.
Plutarch.89 As Demeter was one of the dii patri of Cumae (as she was in Naples, a sub-colony of Cumae)90 and the protectress of the town, it is unsurprising that this was a high honour indeed.91 However, the status of the cult in Roman times is unknown; perhaps the cult had even ceased to exist until it was restored by the Luceei in AD 7, as the following inscription seems to suggest.92


“Cnaeus Cnaeus Luceius, father and son, praetor?, restored the sacred rites of Demeter. Luceea Polla, daughter of Cnaeus and Luceea Tertulla Pia, daughter of Cnaeus, wife of Gallus restored the sanctuary of Demeter and the things that are around this sanctuary and the colonnade with their own money.

It is also possible that there was no discontinuity in worship, but that the women paid for the restoration of the temple, while the men provided funding for the sacra. The temple of Demeter was probably located outside the city walls at the Tempio dei Giganti, to the east of the Akropolis.93 Although Cumae was relatively small, its Demeter cult was considered important by the Romans.94 In the words of Peterson: ‘The importance of Cumae in the field of ancient religion is greater than the size or intrinsic worth of the place at any time would suggest.’95

Naples, located in a grain and wine producing area that was Hellenised from the mid-fifth century onwards and that retained the Greek language and institutions for a very long time after the Roman conquest, was another important centre of the Demeter cult.96 However, the location of the temple is unknown.97 Both Demeter Thesmophoros (attested on an inscription mentioning a priestess98)

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89 Plut. *Mol. Virt.* 262D: τιμῶν δὲ καὶ δωρεῶν μεγάλοιν τῆι Ξενοκρίτηι προστυνομένων ἑώσας πάσας ἐν ἴσθματο, θάψα τοῖ σώμα τοῦ Ἀριστοδήμου καὶ τούτη οὖν ἐδοσαν αὐτῇ καὶ Δήμητρας ἔρεαν αὐτήν ἐλπιστό, οὐ χτίσον οἰόμενον τῆι θεῶ κεχαρισμένην ἢ πρέαυσαν ἐκείνη τιμῆι ἔσσοθα - Honours and great gifts were tendered to Xenocrite, but she would have none of them; one request only she made, to bury the body of Aristodemus, and this they granted her, and chose her to be priestess of Demeter, feeling that the honour would be no less pleasing to the goddess than appropriate for Xenocrite. Transl. by F. Cole Babbit. Peterson (1919) 64; Frederiksen (1984) 76, 173 note 54; Savunen (1997) 135; Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 111.
93 Peterson (1919) 65; Frederiksen (1984) 76.
94 De Cazanove (1990) 384. Frederiksen (1984) 76, thinks the cult was a mystery cult.
95 Peterson (1919) 47.
97 Peterson (1919) 187. Neapolitan women served also in other cults as priestesses, e.g. a priestess of Leucothea: *NS* 1898, 226; Savunen (1997) 142.
98 *IG* 14,702.
and Demeter Actaea\textsuperscript{99} were worshipped in Naples.\textsuperscript{100} There are few archaeological traces, but what has been found shows that the Thesmophoric Neapolitan cult was influenced by that of Sicily,\textsuperscript{101} while Demeter Actea was adopted from Cumae. After the decline of Cumae, Naples became important in the spread of the Demeter cult.\textsuperscript{102} As we have seen above, the Neapolitan influences reached as far as Rome.\textsuperscript{103}

The Campanian Ceres-Demeter cult spread also to other parts of the Empire. For instance, it influenced the cult of Demeter in some cities in Greece. The ‘religious orientation’ of the Demeter cult in Corinth changed at the beginning of the Roman period; the goddess’ chthonic side (see chapter 2) became more important. The same happened in Isthmia and in Knossos, where Roman colonists arrived from Campania in 36 BC and a new stage in Demeter worship started.\textsuperscript{104} As we shall see below, there may have been Campanian influences on the Ceres cults in certain places in North Africa as well. Nevertheless, many differences between the cults of Demeter-Ceres in the various parts of the Roman Empire remained, even within the same area. Even though the causes for the differences may have been forgotten as Greek elements had blended with Italic ones and Roman with native, local peculiarities continued to exist, or were more recently be created. Some are reflected in the variety of titles carried by the Italian priestesses, which will be discussed in the next section.

\textit{2.3: Priestly titles and local peculiarities}

In Italy (including Rome), the title most often used was \textit{sacerdos Cerericus}; it is attested twenty-seven times.\textsuperscript{105} In Pinna Vestina (region 4)\textsuperscript{106} and in Aeclanum (region 2) the priestesses were called \textit{sacerdos Cerceria}.\textsuperscript{107} It is noteworthy that the word \textit{Cereria} has been attested on only two other inscriptions, as far as I know. These inscriptions were found in Aquileia. One is a dedication to Bona Dea who was called \textit{Augusta Bona Dea Cereria}, and the other is a dedication to Magna Mater who was addressed with the same epithet.\textsuperscript{108} Probably, in Aquileia, which was a centre of grain production and import, Bona Dea and Magna Mater were endowed with Ceres’s links to grain and agriculture, as Brouwer suggests.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{99} Statius, \textit{Silv.} 4.8.45-51.

\textsuperscript{100} Lomas (1993) 128.


\textsuperscript{102} Peterson (1919) 185, 186; Frederiksen (1984) 91.

\textsuperscript{103} Cf. De Cazanove (1990) 398.

\textsuperscript{104} DeMaris (1995) 107-8, 109, 113. Apart from their place of origin, the social background of the colonists played a role, DeMaris (1995) 113.

\textsuperscript{105} A very deviating title is \textit{saceticus}, attested in Cumae, cat.no.274 (see chapter 2).

\textsuperscript{106} Cat.no.89.

\textsuperscript{107} Cat.no.17.


\textsuperscript{109} Brouwer (1989) 413, 417, 420. Brouwer, p. 421-422 offers some other speculations about the character of Bona Dea Cereria, but I do not think they are convincing.
In three other cases the word Cereris was substituted by Cerialis (cf. the ancient Roman flamen Cerialis). These three priestesses lived in Alvito, Aesernia, and in Capua, all located in region 1. We have seen above that the cult of Ceres-Demeter had a long history in Capua; the evidence dates back to the third century BC. It is possible that the priesthood of Ceres was the highest honour obtainable for a Capuan woman as was the case in Cumae, and be reserved for women from the highest ranks. And indeed, all Capuan priestesses of Ceres originated from families of high social rank.

The sacerdos Cerialis from Capua, Titia (?), was a member of the gens Curia, who has left traces in other Campanian towns as well: in Cumae, Puteoli, Herculeum and Pompeii. These were all cities where the goddess was worshipped, but no other members of the family have been attested as sacerdotes in the Ceres cult. Titia (?), Curia had the unique addition mundalis attached to her title. It is likely that this word refers to the chthonic character of the goddess Ceres and her role in guarding the opening of the mundus Cereris. There is much uncertainty concerning this mundus, the only known rite related to it, is its opening. The sources do not provide a straightforward link between the mundus, Ceres, the underworld and agrarian life. Bendlin thinks the mundus was a cult place that was used during various rites, which together formed the sacra Graeca Cereris (see above, section 1.1). He further writes that the Capuan priestess Titia (?) Curia must have played a role in a thesophoric ritual.

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106 Cat.no.271. Possibly – though highly unlikely considering the absence of male priests in the Italian Ceres cult – this sacerdos was a man, for no name has been preserved.

110 Cat.no.19.

111 Cat.no.56.

112 Peterson (1919) 335. However, the most important cult was that of Diana Tifatina, served by priests, Peterson (1919) 322, 328; Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 113.

113 Peterson (1919) 335.


115 Ceres was protectress of Puteoli, Dubois (1907) 134; Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 111. Ceres was worshipped in mystery cults, according to Dubois (1907) 136 and Peterson (1919) 106. They probably mean a Thesophoric cult, cf. Status, Silv. 4.8.45-51; Cicero, Nat. Deor. 2.24.64. Cf. De Cazanove (1990) 396. Steuernagel (2004) 157, writes that the Ceres worship of Puteoli was probably no direct remnant of the Greek past.


117 Spaeth (1996) 2, 5; Neue Pauly, s.v. Ceres, 1070, 1071, 1073; Staples (1998) 84; Le Bonniec (1958) 89-91, 107, 207, 456. Mundi were underground altars to the gods below and the spirits of death. The only known rites in which a mundus was involved, were those in honour of Ceres, Kvium (2011) 81.

118 Devijver and Van Wonterghem (1983) 499-500; Bendlin (2002) 39, 56-57; Chirossi Colombo (1981) 418-420. See Festus 142M; Macrobius, Sat. 1.16.16-18; Apuleius, Apologia 13. On an inscription from Cosilinum, another mundus is mentioned: a mundus Attinis, AE 1979, 195; Devijver and Van Wonterghem (1983) 495. This inscription seems to point to a sacred building (Bendlin (2002) 41), which would be totally different from what always has been suggested. Bendlin (2002) 42-43, writes that the mundus Ceres is no ancient remnant of the old Roman religion, and its meaning is unclear.


120 Bendlin (2002) 50, 60.

121 Bendlin (2002) 69-70. Possibly, there was also a mundus in Corfinium, but this is subject to much debate, Devijver and Van Wonterghem (1983); Crawford (1990); Bendlin (2002).

As the other two priestesses of Ceres from Capua carried also rather unusual titles Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba ask the question whether the different titles ‘signe que le sacerdoce de Cérès n’était pas vraiment institutionalisé mais qu’on désignait des prêtresses en fonction des besoins, par exemple à l’occasion d’une crise religieuse ou lors de circonstances exceptionnelles?’ 124 Unfortunately, we do not have any parallels for such a practice, so this question cannot be answered. Another possibility is that the Capuan priestesses simply served different manifestations of Ceres. In the previous chapter some examples of sacerdotes who were active in the cult(s) of various manifestations of for example Juno have been mentioned. Divinities with multiple names were a common feature of polytheism in classical antiquity. Different epithets could refer to specific qualities, functions, rituals, important cult places and to places of origin (these last being important in the competition between towns and regions).125 In case of the sacerdos Cericis Mundalis a link to specific rites and a specific locality is likely, as I have already mentioned.

![Figure 5: Sacerdos Ceralis mundalis from Capua](image)

The second Capuan inscription, erected on a place decreed by the local town council, records the name of Herennia127, daughter of a Marcus. Possibly, she had been a sacerdos Cereri sacrata, a ‘priestess dedicated to Ceres’, but this is uncertain because the inscription has only partly been preserved.128 Therefore, it is also possible – and in my opinion more likely – to regard Herennia as a sacerdos stricto sensu, who made a dedication to the goddess; sacr should then be restored as sacrum. If this is the case indeed, it is still possible to suppose that Herennia was priestess of Ceres (see chapter 2).

The third inscription from Capua is the most cryptic, mainly because of its very fragmented state:

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125 Versnel (2011) 61, 67.
126 All photos of inscriptions in this thesis are taken from the Epigraphische Datenbank Claus-Slaby.
128 Cat.no.54.
Savunen suggests that this priestess was a *sacerdos Cereris maxima*, the oldest and most prestigious *sacerdos* of a college of priestesses of Ceres in Capua. However, the text reads *maximi* instead of *maximae*, so Savunen’s proposal is grammatically incorrect. To support her view, Savunen refers to two inscriptions from Teanum Sidicinum, one of the richest Campanian cities and located close to Capua. The first of these inscriptions, recording a woman who was member of an important local *gens*, seems to indicate that a hierarchic college of priestesses of Ceres existed in Teanum: Staia Pietas was *sacerdos Ceres publica prima*. However, it is also possible that a chronological order was meant, and not a hierarchic one. The second inscription from Teanum Sidicinum that Savunen uses to support her view about a hierarchy in the priesthood of Ceres in Capua and Teanum contains the name of the woman – possibly Macquia – followed by the words *sacerdos Ceresis / publica summa*. Savunen thinks that the word *summa* was part of the title of the priestess. This is not impossible, but still highly uncertain. Therefore, in my opinion both the evidence for a (hierarchic) college of priestesses of Ceres in Teanum Sidicinum and in Capua remains questionable.

However, the supposition of a college of priestesses in itself is not strange, for the existence of priestly colleges was common in the Roman world. The cult of Ceres was no exception, as a Carthaginian inscription shows:

*nepoti L(uci) Memmi / [Tusci]lli pronepoti Memmi / Senecionis consularis / sacerdotes Cereal(es) universi / sua pecun(ia) fecer(unt)*

“To the grandson of Lucius Memmius Tuscius, the great-grandson of Memmius Senecio, consular, all priests of Ceres made this of their own money.”

The words *sacerdotes Cereal(es) universi* suggest either that more than one man at the same time held a priesthood of the goddess, or that the former priests stayed member of the *collegium* – which, in my

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129 Cat.no.273.
130 Savunen, 136-137.
131 Arthur (1991) 47.
132 Savunen (1997) 137 note 102 with epigraphic references to the *gens* of the priestess.
133 Cat.no.132.
134 Savunen (1997) 137.
135 Cat.no.131.
136 Ladage (1971) 18 holds the same view as Savunen.
137 Cf. Schulz (2006) 71. One could think of the various priestly colleges in Rome, but also of the *consacerdotes* mentioned on an inscription from Beneventum (*CIL* 9, 1540; not included in the catalogue): a certain L. Sontius Pineius had been priest of Magna Mater, and refers to a Cosinia Celsina as *consacerdote sua*.
opinion, is the most plausible suggestion of the two, for the Carthaginian priesthood was annual.\textsuperscript{139} Of course, this inscription is from a different part of the Empire than Teanum and Capua, and no proof of a \textit{collegium} of female priests. However, colleges could also be made up of women. In the literary sources priestesses are often referred to in plural.\textsuperscript{140} Additionally, inscriptions record priestesses acting together, sometimes in a hierarchic order.\textsuperscript{141} For example, an inscription from Beneventum attests to a \textit{sacerdos prima} (head priestess) and a \textit{sacerdos secundo loco} (priestess second in command).\textsuperscript{142} Nevertheless, the evidence for priestly \textit{collegia} of Italian \textit{sacerdotes Cereris} is lacunary.

Regarding the uncertainties concerning the titles of the priestesses discussed so far, there is one thing that can be stated with certainty and that is that the priesthood of Ceres – and accordingly also the cult of the goddess – was certainly not uniform in all Italian towns. Therefore, I strongly agree with Šterbenc Erker, who writes about the Italian Ceres cults: ‘(...)' die rituellen Praktiken der Ceres/Demeterkultur unterscheiden sich von Stadt zu Stadt.’\textsuperscript{143} In the next section another aspect showing the local peculiarities of the Ceres cults will pass under review: joint priesthoods.

\subsection*{2.4: Priesthoods of Ceres and their links to Libera, Magna Mater and Venus}

In some towns the priesthood of Ceres was combined with that of other goddesses. In the previous chapter, the \textit{sacerdotes Cereris et Veneris}, who can be found in several Italian towns, have been mentioned. The other two priestesses of Ceres who held (possibly) a combined priesthood lived in Aesernia and Superaequum, both region 4. The inscription from Aesernia, dating from the first century AD, records a \textit{sacerdos Cerialis Deia Libera}, named Suellia Consanica.\textsuperscript{144} We have seen above that in the Aventine triad Ceres was linked to Liber and Libera. Apparently, in the first century AD the connection between Ceres and Libera still existed. In the \textit{RE} however, it is said that Suellia Consanica served in the cult of Ceres and Diespiter Liber.\textsuperscript{145} Apart from a priestess of Dis Pater, priestesses of Liber have been attested epigraphically in Africa and in Aquinum in Italy (see chapter 2).\textsuperscript{146} In

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{139} Cf. Gascou (1987) 117: after their priesthood, the former priests possibly entered in the \textit{ordo Cerealium}.
\textsuperscript{140} E.g., Varro \textit{De Lingua Latina}, 6.14, about the priestesses of Liber.
\textsuperscript{141} Cat.no.64 records two priestesses of Venus. The women acting in the cult of Bona Dea are also generally supposed to have been members of \textit{collegia}.
\textsuperscript{142} Cat.no.43. Cf. Cat.no.41, recording a \textit{cfy|mhal|istra|]joco secundo}.
\textsuperscript{143} Šterbenc Erker (2006-2007) 130. Cf. Van Andringa (2011) 135, about deities in Gaul: these should not be perceived as common Roman, Gallic or Gallo-Roman deities. Instead, they should be viewed as belonging to separate cities. The gods of polytheistic religious systems changed together with their local communities, because these systems were human constructs. See also Haeussler (2011) 390, 418, 423 about the enormous religious diversity in Gallia Narbonensis, where no cult place was the same.
\textsuperscript{144} Cat.no.19.
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{RE s.v.} Liber Pater, 74.
\textsuperscript{146} Dis Pater: cat.no.11. Aquinum: cat.no.34; \textit{RE s.v.} Liber Pater, 73. In imperial Rome, an Alexandria served as \textit{sacerdos} of Dis, in addition to her office as \textit{pastophorus} of Isis: \textit{CIL} 6.32458=\textit{IGUR} 1150=\textit{IGRRP} 1.187=\textit{SIRIS} 433; Rüpke (2005) 630, 748.
\end{flushleft}
addition, they are probably depicted on Pompeian frescos in the House of the Dioscuri.\textsuperscript{147} Furthermore, as we have seen in the previous chapter, literary sources mention Roman priestesses of Liber who played a role during the \textit{Liberalia}.\textsuperscript{148} However, as the inscription provides us with two feminine words, the suggestion of the \textit{RE} is unconvincing. Another possibility is to see the word \textit{dea} as an epithet. The practice of using \textit{dea (or deus)} in this way was common in the Gallic provinces but not in Italy, though it can be found on an inscription from Formiae, where a certain Sallustia Saturnina had been a \textit{sacerdos deae Cereris}.\textsuperscript{149} A third option is to read the title of Suellia Consanica as \textit{sacerdos Cerialis Deia(e) Libera(e)}, implying that she served the ‘Cerarian goddess Libera.’ In this case she would have been not a priestess of Ceres, or of Ceres and Libera, but of Libera alone, who then possessed certain qualities that linked her to Ceres.

On an inscription from Superaequum (first century AD, region 4) a priestess whose name has not been preserved, was called \textit{sacerdos Cereris et Veneris et Matris Deum}.\textsuperscript{150} The combination of Venus and Ceres was common (see chapter 2), but this combination with Mater Deum has only been attested once. Of course, all three goddesses shared several characteristics, but as virtually all female deities did so, this is no convincing explanation for the existence of a joint cult. In Superaequum no other priestesses of Magna Mater have been attested, and no dedications to this goddess.\textsuperscript{151}

Perhaps that in Superaequum special circumstances, like a lack of people willing or able to hold a priesthood, played a role in forming the strange combined priesthood of this town (cf. Savunen’s suggestions about the Pompeian \textit{sacerdos Cereris et Veneris}, Epilogue, footnote 33).\textsuperscript{152} Superaequum was not a large town, so the number of possible candidates for priesthoods was likely relatively small. As we shall see in chapter 5, holding a priesthood was expensive and therefore limited to the wealthy. Often, but certainly not always, the wealthy were members of the local elites. It can therefore be expected that the priestesses of Ceres originated from the highest ranks in local society. In the next section, this assumption will be checked.

\textbf{2.5: The rank and social standing of the Italian priestesses of Ceres}

According to Cicero, the priestesses of Ceres in Catena on Sicily were of high birth.\textsuperscript{153} This is not in accordance with \textit{all} epigraphic evidence, which mostly stems from a later period. Although the social rank of many Italian priestesses is unknown, the rank of those women of whom it \textit{is} known shows a

\textsuperscript{147} Simon (1990) 126-127.
\textsuperscript{149} Cat.no.75.
\textsuperscript{150} Superaequum: cat.no.123.
\textsuperscript{151} In Superaequum, one other priestess is attested epigraphically; she acted in an unknown cult (cat.no.124).
\textsuperscript{152} The priestess’ son is called Sextus Agrius \textit{Asiaicus}. Unfortunately, the name Agrius is otherwise unknown in local name giving, so we do not know anything else about the family of the priestess.
\textsuperscript{153} Cicero, \textit{Verr.} 2.4.99.
considerable spread. A few libertae have been attested, just as are some women of equestrian rank and several belonging to the decurions. In her epitaph, one woman explicitly states that she did not belong to the elite, but was brought up well, thereby showing that social standing was made up of more than rank alone – see also chapter 1.154

Sometimes, when indicators of rank are missing, proud references are made to honours granted to the priestess by the local ordo, such as the location of a grave monument on public ground, or the place for the erection of a statue, or to the benefactions offered by the priestess herself. Honorary inscriptions and their accompanying statues were usually not erected for people of low social rank and standing. Rather, they reflected and enhanced the standing of the recipient. Therefore it can be argued that the priestesses who were granted an honorary inscription and statue must have been quite prestigious – apart from the fact that they needed to possess a certain amount of money to pay for their priesthood and benefactions. More about public honours, rank and social standing will be said in chapter 5.

Moreover, in some Italian inscriptions, the magistracies held by the fathers, sons or husbands of the sacerdotes are listed, for instance in the epitaph of Tamudia Severa, sacerdos publica Ceresis whose husband Marcus Caesius Magnus was duovir iure dicundo and four times (!) duovir quinquennalis.155 Another example is the inscription set up by the Pompeian Alleia Decimilla for her father and son.156 Marcus Alleius Luccius Libella had been aedile, duumvir, quinquennial prefect and her son Marcus Alleius Libella was already decurion when he was seventeen.157 It may be clear that the standing of their male family members was shared by the priestess.

In sum, it can be concluded that most Italian sacerdotes Ceresis possessed a reasonably high social standing, often, though not always, reflected in a high rank. As I have mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, social rank and standing are useful for making a comparison between the Italian and the African priestesses of Ceres. In section 3.4 of this chapter the rank and standing of the African sacerdotes will be discussed.

3: The Ceres cults in Africa

We now turn to the Ceres cult in northern Africa. For the sake of convenience, I have made a distinction in the catalogue between inscriptions from Africa Proconsularis, Mauretania and Numidia, but it should be kept in mind that the borders of these provinces shifted in the course of time as a result of Roman political decisions. Generally speaking, from the time of Julius Caesar onwards Roman influences can be detected in the most important towns along the east-west route from Carthage to

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154 Cat.no.89: (...) libertinis ego nata parentibus ambis / pauperibus censu moribus ingenuis / (...).
155 Cat.no.22 (Amiternum).
156 Cat.no.100 (on the reverse the same text is inscribed).
157 Franklin (1997) 436. Augustus had set the age limit for decurions at 25, but there are several examples of men who were younger magistrates or decurions, Castrén (1975) 58.
Cirta. But long before the Romans left their mark on indigenous and Punic religion in Africa, Greeks had exerted cultural influences in northern Africa from the end of the fourth century BC onwards. This means that African society was characterised by several ethnic and cultural layers – Libyan, Punic, and Greek – all remaining visible in some way. This was certainly the case with regard to African religion which was an amalgam of various ethnic elements: Libyan-Numidian, Punic, Egyptian, Greek and Roman. Therefore the categories of ‘Roman’, ‘provincial’, ‘Greek’ and ‘native’ are not easily distinguishable. As Whittaker aptly writes: ‘The fact is that the pre-Roman culture of Africa, including the strong Punic and Hellenistic elements, inevitably remained embedded in the make-up of the new provincial [that is, Roman] society (...).’

3.1: The epigraphic evidence

I have collected ninety-seven Latin inscriptions that record women serving as religious officials in North Africa. Fifty-four of these inscriptions – that is about 55.7% – mention women who (presumably) served in the cults of Ceres or the Cereres. This number includes not only priestesses (sacerdotes) but also three canistrariae (basket carriers, see chapter 4), and one lampadifera (see also

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158 Gesztelyi (1972) 83.
160 Unfortunately, there is little information available about Punic and Libyan-Numidian cults, Szynce (1968) 29, 31. There are, however, some inscriptions and reliefs attesting to a hierarchy of Punic priesthoods (Picard (1982) 75) and to lower religious officials like victimarii, lamp-litters and musicians, Tlatli (1978) 202. Women are represented as well; there are several examples of Punic priestesses, mainly from Carthage. These women were called khn, the feminine of khn, the word used to indicate male priests, Yon (2009) 211. Tlatli mentions a woman named Mattanbaal who was rb khmm (this is the Punic expression of ‘chief of the priests’, implying a certain hierarchy) – ‘sans doute par rapport à des prêtresses,’ Tlatli (1978) 202. Furthermore, there is a sarcophagus, found in the necropolis of Saint Monica, on which a woman is depicted as the goddess Tanit and dressed in priestly garments. She carries a censer in her right hand and a patera in her left, Parrot, Chélab and Moscati (1975) 169, 170; Tlatli (1978) 178, Picard (1982) 74. I do not discuss Punic inscriptions that attest to the pre-Roman Ceres cult (e.g. CIS 1.5987.1; Cadotte 2007, 343, 346).
161 Cadotte (2007) 391; Wurnig (1999) 14 n. 27. Cf. Rives (2007) 71-72. Desanges (1994) 71: ‘(...) the old naturalist basis [of African religious culture] had evolved under the influence of the Punic and Graeco-Roman cults, admitting to a progressive personification of the diffuse religious forces which had originally been perceived in a variety of things: thus it approached, at least in appearance, the official religion of the Empire (...).’
164 The Numidian woman referred to in cat.no.194 (Madauros) is believed to be a sacerdos Cererum, but the title mentioned in the inscription is fragmentary (sacerdos / Cererum) and does not necessarily point to the priesthood of Ceres or to that of the Cereres. No accompanying relief to this funerary inscription is known. The inscriptions of five other women, who are believed to have been priestesses of Ceres based on the carvings of their stones, are not included in this number. The reliefs show torches, which were often connected with Ceres-Demeter, and images of women standing near small altars. It has been stated that they represent sacerdotes, but it is also possible that they were special devotees of the goddess. Cf. Picard (1970). Due to this uncertainty, they are not included in the catalogue.
below, chapter 4). Furthermore, the fifty-four inscriptions include twenty-three women called *sacerdos magna* or *sacerda*. Since two inscriptions refer to *sacerdotes magnae Cererum*, and one to a *Caereris sacerda*, it has been supposed that all other *sacerdotes magnae* and *sacerdae (magnae)* served in the Ceres cult as well.\(^{166}\)

There is some iconographic evidence that supports this view. The bilingual – Punic and Latin – epitaph of a *sacerdos magna* named Quarta found in Gales (Africa Proconsularis) is decorated with reliefs on all four sides. The relief on the right side depicts a priestess standing on a base, wearing a long tunic with a band around her waist, and on her head a filled basket. Two snakes are carved on either side of her. In her hands she is carrying two corn-ears.\(^{167}\) Snakes\(^{168}\) and corn-ears are symbols that were frequently used in connection with Demeter-Ceres. On other inscriptions that record *sacerdotes magnae* torches are depicted.\(^{169}\) (For the torch as symbol in the Ceres cult, see chapter 4)

As has been remarked, I have included all *sacerdae* in the number of 54 Ceres priestesses, although I think that – despite the evidence discussed above – more convincing arguments are needed before it can be stated beyond doubt that all *sacerdae* served Ceres or the *Cereres*. An inscription from Simithus (Africa Proconsularis), for instance, mentions a *sacerda* of Caelestis, which makes it likely that *sacerda* was simply a local African way to write *sacerdos*, and not exclusively connected with the Ceres cult.\(^{170}\)

\[Veturia Sex(ti) f(ilia)/ Martha/ sacerda Caelestae/ hic sua u(ixit) a(nnis) XCV(sic).\]

‘Veturia Martha, daughter of Sextus, priestess of Caelestia, is buried here; she lived 95 years.’

In addition to the 54 priestesses of Ceres or the *Cereres*, there are 39 North African\(^{171}\) inscriptions in which male cult officials of Ceres/the *Cereres* are attested.\(^{172}\) In a few cases, the name of the same man is recorded on more than one inscription, usually when he had had a long and distinguished career and the accompanying high rank and standing. The fact that several inscriptions that record male

\(^{165}\) Picard (1954) 151-152. A *lampadifera* is probably the Latin version of the *dadouchos* in the Eleusinian cult, see chapter 4.


\(^{167}\) Cat.no. 175. Cadotte (2007) 356. On the same stone, a *krater* – connected with Liber – and a Delphic table are depicted. Links between Ceres and Liber, common in Italy, were rare in North Africa, Cadotte (2007) 276-7.

\(^{168}\) Snakes are found in other cults as well, for instance that of Hecate and Hygeia. The combination with corn ears however, makes it likely that the priestess served Demeter-Ceres,

\(^{169}\) Cat.no. 147 and 148; 192. One of these women (no. 147) was without any doubt a priestess of the *Cereres*, as her title *sacerdos magna Cerenum* shows. Picard (1954) 140-1: two examples of depictions of snakes in the Ceres cult.

\(^{170}\) Cat.no.213. Audollent (1912) 367-368, is also sceptical about this view.

\(^{171}\) Apart from the African examples, one inscription which records a male *sacerdos Cererum* was found in Marseille. For a list of these male priests, see: Gaspar (2011).

\(^{172}\) It is not self-evident in all cases that the male *sacerdotes stricto sensu* included in this number did actually serve in the cult of Ceres/ the *Cereres*, but for several reasons I think they did, see Gaspar (2011) 474-475 footnote 22.
sacerdotes are honorific is an important difference from the epigraphic evidence for the priestesses, since that evidence is mainly funerary and offers little more than the names of the women, their priesthood and sometimes the (advanced) age at which they died.\footnote{Their age will be discussed in chapter 4.}

3.2: Peculiarities of the African Ceres cults

As has been mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, there are several differences between the Italian cults of Ceres and the African cults.\footnote{Cf. Beard, North and Price (1998) 1.248. Rives (1995) 49 writes that the Roman priestesses of Ceres were certainly not the model for the African priesthood, and that ‘the priesthood of Ceres in Carthage was an innovation without any real precedent in Rome’.} The most striking one is the fact that in North Africa also \textit{male} priests served in the cult whereas no male \textit{sacerdotes Cereris} have been attested in Italy or Rome (except the \textit{flamen Cerialis}).\footnote{The ancient Roman \textit{flamen} of Ceres can hardly be compared to the Italian and African \textit{sacerdotes}. For differences between \textit{flamines} and \textit{sacerdotes}, see: Beard, North and Price (1998) 1.357. One possible exception from Fabratèria Vetus, see below.} Diodorus Siculus’ account of the introduction of the cult of the \textit{Thesmophores} to Carthage in 396 BC may offer an explanation for the existence of male \textit{sacerdotes} of Ceres in Africa.\footnote{The fact that there were also \textit{priestesses of the Ceres} cannot be explained by Diodorus’ writings. However, in Greece and Magna Graecia several inscriptions recording the names of priestesses of Ceres-Demeter have been preserved, see e.g. \textit{IG} 1.1876; 1.2148; 1.2676. Cf. also Herodotus 5.72; Pausanias 2.35.8, 6.21.9; other inscriptions are mentioned in \textit{RE} s.v. Demeter, \textit{passim}.}

(...) they [the Carthaginians] appointed their most renowned citizens to be priests of these goddesses [the Sicilian Demeter and Kore], and consecrating statues of them with all solemnity, they conducted their rites, following the ritual used by the Greeks. They also chose out the most prominent Greeks who lived among them and assigned them to the service of the goddesses.\footnote{\textit{(...)} τούτους ἱεροὺς τοὺς ἐπισημοτάτους τῶν πολιτῶν κατέστησαν, καὶ μετὰ πάσης συμνόμησις τάς θεᾶς ἱερεύμενοι τάς θυσίας τοῖς τῶν Ἐλλήνων ἤθεσαν ἐπώδην, καὶ τῶν παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς ὄντων Ἐλλήνων τοῖς χαριστάτους ἐπιλέξαντες ἐπὶ τῶν τῶν θεῶν θεραπεύαν ἔταξαν. Diod. 14.70.4 (cf. 14.74.3); 14.77.4-5. Translation by C. H. Oldfather.}

This Carthaginian cult originated from Sicily, where, at least in Gela and Syracuse, the Deinomenids were male priests serving Demeter and Kore.\footnote{Hinz (1998) 233. We have seen above that the cult of the goddess was very popular on Sicily.} Diodorus’ account also shows why the male \textit{sacerdotes} from Africa mainly served in the city of Carthage.\footnote{It is likely that the only priestess of Ceres or the \textit{Cereres} attested in Carthage was \textit{sacerdos} in a cult different from that of the ‘annual’ priests. Another possibility is that she was no priestess of the goddess in Carthage at all, but served somewhere else and only erected her dedication in Carthage. Unfortunately, we know nothing more about this woman than her name – Sallustria Luperca – so this remains speculative; cat.no.161.} It must be noted, however, that most of these priests for whom we have evidence served in a Ceres cult that had been re-established when
Carthage was founded as a Roman colony in the second half of the first century BC. Possibly, the revival of the cult was linked to the rebirth of Carthage, but Fishwick and Shaw write convincingly that ‘it might also be viewed as reflecting the inclusion within the Carthaginian territory of the grain fields of the Upper Bagradas, particularly when holders of the cult priesthood were, at least in later years, drawn not only from Carthage itself but from regions west as well as east of the Fossa Regia (…).’ Therefore, they think that the first year of the cult was the first year of Lepidus’ administration, either 40 or 39 BC when Africa Proconsularis was created. Here, I will refer to the Carthaginian Ceres cult as the ‘annual’ cult and to its priests as ‘annual’ priests.

Although the cult of Ceres is attested in a much wider area, the worship of the Cereres is found virtually only in Africa. This peculiarity has been given much attention, and various identifications of the goddesses have been proposed. According to the most commonly held view the Cereres were Demeter and Persephone (or Korè); I think this is the most convincing interpretation, even though it cannot definitely be proved. Apart from Diodorus’ account of the introduction of the Thesmophores in Carthage, there is other evidence that supports this view: on a pre-Roman Punic epitaph of the necropolis of Ard el-Kheraib at Carthage, a priest(ess) of Korè is mentioned. Besides, there are several African coins with Demeter cult statues of the goddess and votive terracottas for Demeter and Korè from the fourth century BC until the second century BC, resembling Sicilian terracotta. Furthermore, Demeter and Korè were also worshipped in other Punic areas, like Ibiza, Sardinia and the Iberian peninsula.

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180 Rives (1995) 158 convincingly argues that this cult was Roman and not Libyan-Punic.
182 Fishwick and Shaw (1977) 377, 379, 380. See also footnote 254 about the possible date of the re-establishment of the Carthaginian cult.
183 Sometimes both Ceres and the Cereres were worshipped in the same place, Audollent (1912) 379. Only a few inscriptions mentioning the Cereres have been found outside Africa. One is from Puteoli (cat.no.109); the maritime connections with Africa may explain its erection there, but influences from Thesmophoric initiation cults are also possible, Audollent (1912) 379-380, note 3; Zimmermann and Frei-Stoiba (1998) 112. Another was found in Marseille, but mentions a priest from Africa (see footnote 171) while the third comes from Lilybaenum on Sicily, a Punic settlement (AE 1964, 181 = AE 1965, 219; Carratelli (1981) 367; Rives (1995) 157. See also Kunz (2006) 371. The last inscription (from Rome) is very fragmentary: CIL 6, 87 = CIL 1, 973 = ILRP 67 = ILS 3333; [C]ereres ca[st]u[.] Finally, there is the ‘Herentas’ inscription, see section 2.1 and chapter 4.
185 Cf. Gesztelyi (1972) 80.
As already at the end of the fifth century BC the influence of Carthage had gradually started to spread over its hinterland and the practicing of agriculture – linked to Demeter and Korè – was encouraged, the cult of the goddesses became attractive and spread quickly and widely in North Africa – including Numidia – after the first decades of the fourth century BC. As we have seen in chapter 2, the popularity of Ceres in Africa shows the importance of the production of grain for the African society and economy.

**Different types of Ceres in Africa**

Diodorus’ description of the Carthaginian cult and the fact that in Roman times this cult was re-established, makes one suspect that we should speak of different cults of Ceres/the Cereres. This is most recently argued by Cadotte, who detects a difference between a Roman and a Greek-Punic cult in northern Africa. However, based on several inscriptions erected by or for sacerdotes, and certain aspects of Punic religion that will be discussed below, I think a difference was made between the Greek and a native-Punic cult as well.

The Greek Ceres (or: Greek Cereres) has been attested on two inscriptions in which priests are mentioned. Cadotte thinks that possibly in the towns where these priests lived, the Greek roots of the cults were remembered especially well. The first inscription is a dedication to Ceres Graeca, found in Sicca Veneria in Africa Proconsularis:


“Dedicated on the command of the Greek Ceres, Marcus Lartidius A(...)mbugaeus, first priest, dedicated an altar with stairs on his own land.”

Of course, it cannot be stated with certainty that this man was priest of the Greek Ceres to whom he made his dedication, but it is at least likely, because otherwise the man would presumably have mentioned the name of the deity he served (cf. chapter 2, section 2.2). Besides, a priestly hierarchy, of

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191 Cadotte (2007) 357. This distinction can also be seen in the cult of Saturn, one of the most popular deities in Africa, according to a dedication to Saturnus Achaia from modern Bou Djelida: *CIL* 8, 12331 = *ILS* 4440.

which this inscription from Sicca Veneria is proof, is attested for the cult of the Cereres in Cirta as well, where a sacerdos Cererum loci primi held office.\textsuperscript{193}

The second inscription that points to the existence of a Greek Ceres cult stems from Cuicul in Numidia, a town that had close connections with Cirta, which was strongly Hellenised.\textsuperscript{194} On this inscription, a certain Titus Livius Crescens is referred to (in the genitive) as antistoris Cererum(m) Gr(a)ekaru(m).\textsuperscript{195} The title antistes is not unique in North Africa, but rare,\textsuperscript{196} and I have found no other antistes of Ceres/the Cereres, with one possible exception from Fabrateria Vetus in Latium.\textsuperscript{197}

As opposed to this Greek cult, some women and men carried special titles that stressed the Roman character of the goddess they served. The first is a certain Vindicia Theodora, who lived in Capsa in Africa Proconsularis – according to Whittaker a strikingly Punic town, although it had been Romanised by soldiers.\textsuperscript{198} She was called sacerdos Cereris Augustae. Two other priestesses whose titles (might) show Roman or Italian influences are Valeria Concessa\textsuperscript{199} from Bulla Regia and Cornelia Licinia\textsuperscript{200} from Ammaedara (modern Haidra). The first woman was sacerdos publica Cererum and the second is supposed to have been sacerdos Cererum publica. The addition ‘publica’ could be the result of Italian influences, for various Italian (mainly Campanian\textsuperscript{201}) priestesses were called sacerdos publica, sometimes without mentioning the name of the deity they served. Several of these Italian ‘public’ priestesses served Ceres.\textsuperscript{202} And, as we have seen above in section 1.2, in the only two inscriptions from Rome recording priestesses of Ceres it is also explicitly stated that these women were sacerdos Cereris publica (but with the addition of populi Romani Quiritium).\textsuperscript{203}

However, the interpretation of Cornelia Licinia’s inscription is problematic: of the word publica only the letter ‘p’ can still be read, so it is uncertain whether publica was inscribed. Furthermore, none of the other three priestesses thought to be serving in the Cereres cult of Ammaedara, was called a ‘public’ priestess.\textsuperscript{204} An alternative, and much more obvious, reading is the

\textsuperscript{193} ILS4468 (Cirta, Numidia). A priestly hierarchy in the cult of Caelestis in Cirta is also attested on inscriptions, Rives (1995) 160.
\textsuperscript{194} Champlin (1980) 6-7.
\textsuperscript{195} ILAlg 2,3, 8000 (Cuicul, Numidia). In the ILAlg it is said that Ceres and Proserpina are meant.
\textsuperscript{197} On CIL 10, 5654 the words culturae antistes deae Cereris are recorded. They refer to a collegium of devotees of Ceres and possibly to a priest.
\textsuperscript{198} Cat.no. 160. Whittaker (1996) 609-610.
\textsuperscript{199} Cat.no. 155.
\textsuperscript{200} Cat.no. 150.
\textsuperscript{201} The Campanian influences in Africa were concentrated around Cirta, Thompson (1969) 135; Castrén (1975) 54; Champlin (1980) 6; MacKendrick (1980) 197; Desanges (1994) 70; Whittaker (1996) 586-587, 590.
\textsuperscript{202} E.g. cat.no. 22; 94; 100; 101; 102; 111; 112.
\textsuperscript{203} Cat.no. 4 and 5.
\textsuperscript{204} Ammaedara became a colony in AD 75 (Toutain (1912) 326; Witschel (1995) 308 note 193), so in my opinion the title of Cornelia Licinia, whose inscription has been set up at the end of the second or the beginning
word *pia*, which is attested on several other African inscriptions recording priestesses.\(^{205}\) Another, though in my opinion less plausible – because less common – way to complete the letter ‘p’ is to read the word *Punicarum* instead of *publica*. If this is true, it would imply that the priesthood of this woman was neither that of the Greek Ceres, nor that of the Roman one, but instead of the *Cereres Punicae*.\(^{206}\)

The *Cereres Punicae* have been attested on an inscription recording a priestess in Thuburbo Maius:\(^{207}\)

\[
\]

“Nonnia Primitiva, priestess of the Punic Cererex, pious, happy, lived 97 years, 3 months (and) 7 days.”

Cadotte thinks that these *Cereres Punicae* may have been the goddesses worshipped by the Punic part of the African population, because the (originally Greek) *Cereres* were being worshipped for such a long time in the area that the people had started to see them as ancestral deities.\(^{208}\) To support his view, Cadotte refers to Tertullian who has written about priestesses serving *Ceres Africana*, one of his examples of chastity amongst the pagan inhabitants of the Empire (see chapter 4, section 2.2).\(^{209}\)

Secondly, Cadotte mentions a dedication from Madauros, erected for the goddess *Ceres Maurusia Augusta* by a *canistraria* named Iulia Victoria, who had paid for a statue of the goddess:\(^{210}\)

\[
Deae Caercre/ri Maurusiae Aug(ustae) / Iulia Victoria / canistraria / simulacrum / deae de suo fo/cit et dedicavit
\]

“To the Dea Ceres Maurusia Augusta, Iulia Victoria, *canistraria* made of her own (money) a statue of the goddess and dedicated it.”

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\(^{205}\) Cf. e.g. cat.no. 176; 184.
\(^{206}\) To read the ‘p’ as the first letter of *perpetua* is not likely in my opinion, for in northern Africa no priestesses, except those acting in the imperial cult, had this addition to their titles.
\(^{207}\) Cat.no.225. It is not fully clear whether this inscription is indeed from Thuburbo Maius; another possibility is Mactar. This town, in which Punic culture remained strong for a long time, was not far from Ammaedara, and therefore could have influenced the local *Cereres* cult there – or *vice versa*. MacKendrick (1980) 75; Cadotte (2007) 356.
\(^{208}\) Cadotte (2007) 356-357, 360. It is perhaps indicative that on this relief the attributes of the Eleusinian Demeter are depicted: grain, torch, basket and winnowing fan, MacKendrick (1980) 75-76. Carratelli (1981) 368, writes that the stress on the African, Punic or Maurusian side of Ceres was the result of ‘nationalistic’ tendencies.
\(^{209}\) Tertullian, *Ad Ux.1.6.4; De Exh. Cast.* 13.2; *De Monog.* 17.4; Cadotte (2007) 357. Cf. Audollent (1912) 370.
\(^{210}\) Cat.no.190. Cf. *AE* 1935, 39; Cadotte nr. 338 a dedication to *Ceres Maurusia Augusta* by a Marcus Pusillius Securus and his wife Autelia Audata, a *ilaminica perpetua*, from Thagora, not far from Madauros.
Furthermore, Cadotte suggests that probably in northern Numidia and around Vaga in Africa Proconsularis Ceres/the Cereres was (were) identified with (a) native Libyan-Punic deity (deities),\textsuperscript{211} and that she/they probably had links to the dii Maurii, mentioned on an inscription from Vaga.\textsuperscript{212}

However, other interpretations of the Cereres Punicæ and Ceres Maurasia are also possible. They could be local divinities, who were worshipped by people originating from elsewhere, or goddesses with Punic roots, whose original character was preserved on purpose (like that of the gods worshipped Graeco ritu in Rome).\textsuperscript{213} In my opinion, these two options are more likely, as the inscription – like the others used by Cadotte to support his argument – are very Roman in character. The names of the women, their religious titles, the language and the text – all show Roman influences. In any case, the epigraphic evidence and Tertullian’s writings show that in northern Africa the goddess Ceres was worshipped in various forms. The main and most striking characteristic of the African Ceres worship though, is still the difference between Ceres and the Cereres; this will be the topic of the next section.

\textit{Ceres and the Cereres}

Some scholars have proposed that the ‘annual’ Carthaginian cult in which most male priests served was established originally for the single (Roman) Ceres, and only later changed into a cult for the Cereres.\textsuperscript{214} The epigraphic evidence does not support this suggestion,\textsuperscript{215} and because in many inscriptions the abbreviations CER or CERER are used, it cannot always be determined whether the priest in question served Ceres or both Cereres.\textsuperscript{216} The few Numidian male priests for whom we have evidence all served both Cereres, as did the stator templi (temple servant) from Theveste.\textsuperscript{217} In

\textsuperscript{211} Unfortunately, very little is known about native Numidian religion, as Cadotte himself admits, Cadotte (2007) 357, 358, 360-1.

\textsuperscript{212} CIL 8, 14438 = AE 1956, 158; Cadotte nr. 220; Cadotte (2007) 357, 360-361. Vaga was possibly an old, Libyan town, Toutain (1912) 321; Mackendrick (1980) 36; Whittaker (1996) 613. Carcopino (1928) has shown that a Ceres cult existed in Vaga at the time of Jugurtha. See also Cadotte (2007) 347.

\textsuperscript{213} I would like to thank professor Greg Woolf for suggesting this.


\textsuperscript{215} Admittedly, the only sacerdos Ceres who definitely served in the ‘annual’ Carthaginian cult held office in the first century AD; AE 1997, 1655. He was sacerdos Ceres annis CXXVII, the priestly year 127 was a year between AD 83 and 90. However, the other three male sacerdotes Ceres were presumably priests of other, local Ceres cults, and their inscriptions do not all belong to the earliest evidence. E.g. no. CIL 8, 14447 (Henchir Bir El Afu), a dedication by a sacerdos Cereris et Aesculapi, erected between AD 222 and 235. Moreover, of the two Proconsularian men who definitely served both Cereres, only one was an ‘annual’ priest (CIL 8, 12318 = ILS 6814, Bou Arada: sacerdos Cererum Karthaginiani annis CXXX), and he had held office only a few years after the sacerdos Cereris from the first century just mentioned, sometime between AD 87 and 94.

\textsuperscript{216} Rives (1995) 158; Delgado Delgado (1998) 33. It has been suggested that all abbreviations refer to the Ceres, because many other (dedicatory) inscriptions show that the cult of these two goddesses was widespread in Africa Proconsularis. However, the fact that several priestesses and four priests were sacerdotes Cereris while various others used different titles like magister Cerealium shows that the abbreviations do not necessarily stand for Cerealum, cf. Rives (1995) 158. See also Fevrier (1975) 40.

\textsuperscript{217} ILAlg 2.3. 7244= AE 1989, 835a and CIL 8, 6709= ILAlg 2.1, 3618.
Numidia four women served both Cereres while another four served Ceres alone,\(^{218}\) and in Mauretania three of the five attested priestesses served Ceres.\(^{219}\) Only one Proconsularian inscription records a woman who, without doubt, served the single Ceres instead of the Cereres.\(^{220}\) All the other priestesses from Africa Proconsularis served in the cult of the Cereres.

Audollent has argued that the single Ceres was worshipped mostly by the ‘Romanised’ elite, while poorly educated people – the lower strata of the population which were more attached to local and older cults influenced by Punic religion – felt especially attracted to the cult of the Cereres.\(^{221}\) This ought to mean that we should expect to find a difference in social rank and ethnic background between the various priests and priestesses: sacerdotes with Roman names and, in case of the men, with a municipal career would have been serving in the Ceres cult, while people with (partly) native names who did not belong to the local elite, would have been sacerdotes of the cult of the Cereres. Audollent’s hypothesis can be tested by an examination of the names of the sacerdotes, of the status of the cult and the standing of the priest(esse)s themselves. Since it has been suggested that women were less Romanised than men,\(^{222}\) gender could make a difference as well, and so priestesses ought to have served mainly in the cult of the Cereres, if Audollent’s suggestion were correct.\(^{223}\)

Before I turn to these topics, I have to mention the inscription of Vindicia Theodora from Capsa who was sacerdos Cereris Augustae (cf. above).\(^{224}\) The epithet Augusta can be regarded as a general expression of ‘Romanness’ or of loyalty to the imperial family.\(^{225}\) Therefore, this inscription shows that not all women were necessarily connected with, or limited to, cults that were less Roman in character. Instead, they could not only serve in the cult of the single Ceres, but also in a cult that had an explicitly Roman connotation.

\(^{218}\) The woman mentioned in cat.no.194 could have been sacerdos Cererum as well. It cannot be established whether the other women, mainly sacerdae and sacerdotes magnae, served Ceres or the Cereres – if they served Ceres at all.


\(^{220}\) Cat.no. 160. Accordingly, Savonen (1997) 139, is mistaken when she writes that in Africa only male priests served the Cereres. In only one inscription of a priestess from Africa Proconsularis an abbreviation has been used, cat.no.161. The only known Mauretanian sacerdos, Herennia Tertulla from Saldae, was a priestess of Ceres, cat.no.203.

\(^{221}\) Audollent (1912) 379. Cf. Dubois (1907) 135.

\(^{222}\) See chapter 1.

\(^{223}\) Although I will look at the aspects mentioned above, I do not think Audollent’s view is convincing, because the fact that a Numidian antistes served both Cereres, while the sacerdos primus from Africa Proconsularis – probably – was priest of a single Greek Ceres shows that the use of singular or plural form for the name of the goddess(es) does not necessarily offer any clues about the character of the cult, or at least that the Greek cult was not automatically connected to the plural Cereres. Cf. Tlati (1975) 188: there is no proof for viewing the Cereres as the expression of strong Hellenization. Besides, if Audollent’s view were correct, it would imply that the ‘Romanness’ of the ‘annual’ priesthood of Carthage changed from time to time, which would be very remarkable.

\(^{224}\) Cat.no.160.

\(^{225}\) Gesztelyi (1972) 82 and Spaeth (1994) 100, who – basing herself on Audollent (1912) 377 – argues that ‘[t]his cult [of Ceres/the Cereres] was tied to the person of the Roman princeps through the application of the epithet Augusta to its divinities’. Audollent writes that the single Ceres was relatively often endowed with epithet Augusta. This may have been fashion but also shows links to the imperial house, which could suggest that the single Ceres was more Roman in character than the Cereres, Audollent (1912) 377-8.
3.3: The names of the African priestesses

There are many problems regarding nomenclature and its possible links to Romanization and ethnic origin.226 Cherry explicitly states that Roman names are not useful for measuring Romanization, because often it is impossible to distinguish between immigrants and Romanised natives.227 Names with Libyan and Punic parts can only partly be linked to the indigenous population, and Romanised names that are traditionally regarded as typically African were not only given by the native population, but also by immigrants. A *gentilicium* that was the same as that of a senator who had connections to Africa, could either point to the acquirement of civil rights with help of this senator or to a real Italian descent.228 In addition, from the end of the first century AD onwards, new citizens are no longer distinguishable by their names from non-citizens.229

Despite these limitations, I think names can help us to get some insight into the background of the priestesses. Names can tell something about stages of Romanization, sometimes across generations.230 Purely Libyan or Punic names, dating from the first and second centuries AD – rather than the Romanised ones like Data or Fortunata – could point to a less Roman character of the *sacerdotes* than that of other priestesses who had Latinised names.231 Although Rives states that the names of the African priestesses of Ceres/the *Cereres* were often Punic, most were clearly Latin(ised), like Firmidia Impetrata or Baburia Ianuaria.232 That is not surprising, for there are many translated or Latinised native names on inscriptions in the three African provinces, mainly in Numidia and Mauretania, whereas purely native names were rare.233 The priestesses conform to this trend: there are only two with purely Libyan-Punic names, though several had partly Libyan-Punic names. The appearance of partly native names among the priestesses is noteworthy, because only one of the priests had a partly Libyan-Punic name.234 This could point to a higher level of Romanization among the male priests. The frequency of Latinised names fits with Cadotte’s view that ‘le clergé de Cérès se recrutait volontiers parmi les gens de souche africaine’.235

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227 Cherry (1998) 86.
231 Cherry (1997) 74, writes that non-romanised people had one or more non-Latinised, African name(s). Cf. Curchin (2004) 183: ‘The prevalence of Roman over native nomenclature seems to indicate a considerable degree of Romanization among the worshippers [of deities in Celtiberia].’
232 Rives (1995) 157, 158. The names of the women from Africa Proconsularis usually consist of a *nomen* and *cognomen*, whereas the priestesses in Numidia more often had a single name; sometimes a filiation was included.
234 Publius Iulius Gibba, who had been *sacerdos Cerei(um) colonorum? coloniae Iuliae K(arthagenis) anni CXCVIII, CIL 8, 23820.
There is a small difference in the origins of the names of the priestesses who had titles other than *sacerdos: sacerdae* fairly often had Libyan or Punic names, like Birichal Iurat, or names with a Libyan or Punic element, like Caecilia Zaba. 236 Perhaps this shows that the *sacerdae* themselves were not as Romanised as the *sacerdotae*, as their strange titles also suggest. On the other hand, Adams writes that ‘(…) (partially) Romanised Punic-speaking inhabitants of Tripolitania often had two names, one traditional, the other Roman. These could be used together in the same inscription, or alternatively distributed between the different versions of a bilingual text (…)’. This form of mixed naming reveals with particular clarity the referent’s sense of a double, or changing, identity.237 The fact that in general the use of a double Latinised name was the most widespread practice suggests that the women holding the priesthood were at least superficially Romanised and had accepted their changed identity – or at least saw the need to use their Latinised name in contexts in which they may have seemed more appropriate.

The bilingual epitaph of Quarta, daughter of Nyptan and *sacerdos magna* illustrates nicely the gradual change to Roman names *and* the supposition – to be elaborated in section 3.4 – that the African priestesses of Ceres belonged to a ‘middle class’, and not to the decurial elite.238 The names in the inscription are the same in the Latin and Punic version; however, as Adams writes: ‘there is evidence for a change in naming practices between two generations, this time in two families. The dedicator [Quarta] has a Latin name, but her father a Punic’; similarly her husband has a Latin name, but his father too a Punic name.’ The list of (Latinised Punic) names – Saturum, Rogatū(m), etc. – is inscribed in the accusative, while *curatoribus* is an ablative. According to Adams, the ‘presence of this usage locates the Latin version somewhat down the educational scale,’ which shows that bilingualism can be found across broad social-educational spectrum.239

In sum, the names of the priestesses show that most priestesses did not live outside the sphere of Romanization and saw the need to adapt to the new politico-cultural circumstances, something which is also suggested by the fact that they erected inscriptions that followed the conventions of Latin epigraphy.240 However, compared to their male colleagues some appear to be less Romanised.

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236 Eleven *sacerdae* have been attested in Numidia and Africa Proconsularis. As the word *sacerda* seems to be pigeon Latin, one could expect to find the *sacerdae* in settlements that were not very Romanised. The inscriptions of two Proconsularian *sacerdae* have been found in an area where several of the earliest inscriptions recording (female) *sacerdotae* had been erected, so the proper Latin word for priest(ess) was probably not unknown. On the other hand, two *sacerdae* – Úlia Zaba (cat.no.210) and Caecilia Zaba (cat.no.204) – are attested in relatively small and unimportant settlements. This could imply that their titles were indeed the result of limited Roman influences. The native *cognomina* of both women seem to fit with this, although the *gentilicium* Úlia points to a family that was granted Roman citizenship relatively early. Birichal Iurat: cat.no.151.


238 Cat.no.175.


3.4: The social rank of the priestesses

Unfortunately, none of the inscriptions that record priestesses of Ceres or the Ceres gives any information whatsoever about the social rank of the women, although many do seem to have been freeborn. Furthermore, no male relatives are mentioned that could offer insight into their rank. In the few cases in which the name of a father or son is included, nothing is said about his rank or a municipal career, if he had one. In some other inscriptions from the towns where the priestesses lived, possible male relatives are recorded, but usually also without a career. This may suggest that these male relatives had never held any important local offices, and did not belong to the local elite.

In only one case we may be able to identify the offices of male relatives, which were of some importance. In the inscription of Valeria Concessa, two Domitii are mentioned:

Valeriae I(uci) K(iliae) Concessae / C(aius) Domitius C(ai) K(ilius) Quirina / Pudens Lucretius Ho/noratianus et C(aius) Do/mitius C(ai) K(ilius) Quirina / Concessus matri opti/mae et bene de filiis suis / meritaque item sacerdote (sic) / publicae Cерerum de/creto ab ordine loco / s(ua) p(ecuniae) p(osuerunt)

“To Valeria Concessa, daughter of Lucius. Gaius Domitius Pudens Lucretius Honoratianus, son of Gaius, of the tribe Quirina and Gaius Domitius Concessus, son of Gaius, of the tribe Quirina erected (this) with their own money for the best of mothers who deserves well from her sons, also public priestess of the Ceres; the place decreed by the ordo.”

Several Domitii are attested in Bulla Regia; one had been procurator Augusti, and a Quintus Domitius Pudens had been duovir and benefactor. Therefore, it seems likely that Valeria Concessa was of a

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241 The Mauretanian inscription of the lampadifera Fabatia Polla Fabia Domitia Gelliola (cat.no. 200) is an exception, for she was called a ‘consular woman’. This woman’s religious office was different from that of the sacerdotes (see chapter 4).

242 The filiation is not consistently applied (which was not uncommon in the second century AD), but is nevertheless recorded is several cases. Since it is mostly unknown, the archaeological context of the inscriptions does not offer any help in determining the rank or standing of the priestesses.

243 A (possible) exception is Sittius Celer, son of Trebia Matrona. This man had possibly held a perpetual flaminate, but the inscription is very fragmentary. In CIL 8.431 = ILT 425 two male relatives of Trebia Matrona (her father and grandfather?) are mentioned, but without status indicators.

244 See e.g. the husband (?) of Munatia Lull’ – ILAlg 2.1.1710; the relative (?) of Sittia Urbana – ILAlg 2.1.326 or Iulia Credula’s son (?) - CIL 8.6360 = CIL 8.19338 = ILAlg 2.3.10129. Cf. Hemelrijk (2006a) 86. On an inscription from Nemausus, recording a public burial granted to a woman, her social rank is omitted. MacMullen (1986) 436, suggests that it could have been deliberately omitted because her rank was known to her fellow citizens. This may be a satisfactory explanation for this Nemausian case, but I think it applies only to priestesses who were ‘special’ and were granted public honours, and not for the African priestesses discussed here.

245 Vindicia Theodora’s son Antonius Pudens may have been a relative of Antonius Africanus, mentioned in CIL 8.146, who had (possibly) been a duovir (?) quinquennalis. However, this cannot be proved.

246 Cat.no. 155.
higher social rank and standing than most other priestesses of Ceres/the Cereres. I think this is also suggested by the fact that she received a statue (or a grave monument?) on a location decreed by the ordo, whereas no other African priestess of the Ceres cult appears to have been granted this honour. May be her higher status was also expressed by her title sacerdos publica Cererum.248

I think it can be concluded that generally speaking the African priestesses did not belong to the highest echelons of the local society, which took part in the local government. This is in accordance with Witschel’s view that the priesthoods of cults like that of Ceres or the Cereres were less prestigious than the ‘main’ priesthoods (amongst which was presumably the imperial cult), and that they could also be held by common people. These cults were very popular with the Romanised native ‘middle classes’, as can be concluded from the quality of the dedications in general, according to Witschel.251 Perhaps that is one of the reasons that none of the African priestesses (not only those of Ceres, but others who also seem to have belonged to the ‘middle class’ as well) is recorded as benefactress – in contrast with the flaminicæ of the imperial cult.252

In short, the social rank, and accordingly the social standing of the African priestesses was different from that of their Italian colleagues, who were, generally speaking, of higher rank and possessed more prestige. In order to gain a fuller picture of the place in society of the African priestesses of Ceres, the next two sections will deal with the male sacerdotes Cereris/Cererum, their social rank and standing and the Ceres cult in Carthage.

3.5: Cult and priestly status in Carthage

Although the inscriptions recording priests of Ceres or the Cereres are the only evidence for this cult in the city of Carthage,253 the ‘annual’ Carthaginian Ceres cult must have been important because a

249 Even though it is usually accepted that a priesthood brought distinction both to the priestess herself and to her family, and that it reflected a certain prominence of her family in local society, Spickermann (1994b) 189; Kleiner-Matheson (2000) 3. See also chapter 5.
250 Cf. Gaspar (2011) 480. This is also suggested by the quality of the inscriptions that do not mention any priestly title, but only feature relief sculptures that could indicate that the women mentioned were sacerdotes Cereris: the short texts, the sometimes poor lettering and the low quality of the carvings indicate that the persons who erected them were not of high standing. This fits with Saller and Shaw (1984) 127, who write that most tombstones belonged to humble urban people, those below the curiales. Still, they must have had a certain amount of money to spend.
251 Witschel (1995) 293 n. 126, 321. The ‘annual’ Carthaginian Ceres cult was an exception, see below.
253 Rives (1995) 48; No Ceres temple has been excavated in Carthage so far. It is possible that we have some literary evidence of the cult, but this is highly uncertain: Apuleius may have been priest of Ceres in Carthage, as may be concluded from his Florida (16.38-40), but this is debated, see e.g. Rives (1994a). In the Carthaginian theatre, a statue of the Roman Pudicitia type was found (ca AD 140-150). Ros (1996) 485, writes that this statue
special era commenced with the establishment of the cult. This can be concluded from the inscriptions in which the formula sacerdos anni is followed by a number (and sometimes a reference to the colony of Carthage). The importance of the cult is also shown by the fact that the ‘annual’ priesthood was fully integrated into the cursus honorum. For instance, on the honorary inscription of Sextus Pallaenus Florus Caelicianus, his priesthood is mentioned among his public offices. This suggests that the priesthood itself was in some sense the equivalent of a public, municipal office. The title of Publius Iulius Gibba – sacerdos Cere(um) c(olonorum?) c(olonae) K(arthaginis) anni CXCVIII – suggests the same. However, it is difficult to establish just how important the priesthood was, because it is not listed in a fixed place in the cursus honorum. Furthermore, in several other inscriptions no municipal career is mentioned.

Various priests of the ‘annual’ cult belonged to the circle of the most important men in Carthage. Most were of decurial rank and had at least been praefectus iure dicundo; three were equestrians. There was a clear link between the cult and the ordo and its members, that both appointed and provided (most of) the priests. It is no surprise that the ‘annual’ priests were Roman citizens. Besides, many of these men had clearly adopted Roman values and standards, which is incidentally another argument against Audollent’s view that the Cereres were especially worshipped by the native (lower) part of the population.

was probably erected to honour a prominent Carthaginian woman. Since she held pomegranates and ears of wheat, she might have been a priestess of Ceres. Link between Ceres and African theatres: Poinssot (1963).

254 Picard (1954) 150; Spaeth (1994) 100. Much has been written about this African annual priesthood, but usually only to recover the exact year in which the cult was installed and its (new) temple built. See e.g.: Gründel (1965) 351-352, 354; Fevrier (1975) 41; Gascou (1987) 128; Fishwick and Shaw (1978) 353, 354; Rives (1995) 21, 46; Whittaker (1996) 589. The precise date is not important for the purposes of the present discussion. In any case, the priests either served in a newly established Roman cult, and not the one described by Diodorus, or they served in the same – but Romanised – cult, which I think is more likely. Cf. Whittaker’s (1996) 614.


256 E.g., in ILAfr 390=ILS 9406=AE 1910, 78 the priesthood is listed after the offices of military tribune, aedilis and praefectus iure dicundo, while in ILAfr 384=AE 1920, 29 the priesthood is recorded after the offices of aedilis, quaestor and praefectus iure dicundo. Sometimes a laminate was mentioned before the priesthood of Ceres (AE 1909, 163), sometimes after (CIL 8, 25808b=ILS 9403=AE 1909, 162). Gascou (1987) 119 and Fishwick and Shaw (1978) 349-351, however, claim that the priesthood was usually held at an early stage of the municipal career of the priest.

257 AE 1909, 164; CIL 8, 26245. Fishwick and Shaw (1978) 348. Cf. Fishwick (2002) 194. Despite these uncertainties, Rives (1995) 161 thinks that possibly the annual priests of Carthage were important enough to have had authority over the African priestesses of Ceres. However, this would have been hardly possible in practice, for only a few inscriptions attest to women serving as priestesses near Carthage. Therefore, in my opinion, Rives’ suggestion is only an interesting speculation.


259 AE 1909, 163; AE 1951, 52; AE 1997, 1665. The equestrians mentioned in AE 1909, 163 and AE 1951, 52 were not of Carthaginian origin, but they were probably appointed as priests because of their social prominence, Gascou (1987) 112. See Gascou (1987) 116-120 for a discussion of the social status and the cursus honorum of the priests. Two liberti, who were among the first men to hold the priesthood and who did not have a distinguished career, are the only exceptions: ILT 1063=AE 1924, 23; AE 1976, 386; Cadotte (2007) 355. Fevrier (1975) 40, 41, though, claims that the inscriptions recording these liberti show that in coloniae liberti were allowed to hold magistracies. See also Whittaker (1996) 605. Gascou (1987) 117, 119, alternatively, argues that after a while the status of the priests and accordingly of the Carthaginian annual cult itself, started to rise.
Given that many priests had successful careers and were of high social rank, it is not surprising that many of the inscriptions record honorific decrees that accompanied statues – in contrast to those of the female sacerdotes, which are virtually all epitaphs or votive inscriptions. In the honorary inscriptions the priests are often praised for their benefactions or their patronage of a town. Sometimes a priest is only praised ob merita, but it is likely that benefactions are meant. The inscriptions make clear that these men belonged to the local elite that had adopted the Roman system of municipal offices, benefactions, patronage and honour.

3.6: The standing of non-Carthaginian priests of Ceres or the Cereres

As can be judged from their names, the male sacerdotes of Ceres or the Cereres from Africa Proconsularis who did not serve in the ‘annual’ cult were likely virtually all Roman citizens. Like the ‘annual’ priests some – but very few – of them had also had a municipal or military career. Sometimes only a list of religious offices was inscribed. Rives argues that Quintus Pullaenius Clinia, sacerdos Cерерis, was probably a freedman from the gens Pullaenia that possessed estates near Thugga and Uchi Maius and held several important offices in Carthage. If Rives is correct, it is worth noting that another man named Pullaenius – perhaps Clinia’s patron – had been sacerdos in the ‘annual’ Carthaginian cult.

As far as can be concluded from the little information their inscriptions provide, none of the Numidian priests had held municipal or other religious offices apart from their priesthood of the Ceres. Nor did any of the ‘non-annual’ priests, neither from Proconsularis, nor from Numidia, receive an honorary inscription (their inscriptions are either dedicatory or funerary, like those of the

\[\text{ILAE} 290=\text{ILS} 9406=AE 1910, 78; \text{ILAE} 384=AE 1920, 29; \text{CIL} 8, 25808b=\text{ILS} 9403=AE 1009, 162; \text{CIL} 8, 26615=\text{ILS} 9404; \text{CIL} 8, 2255=\text{ILS} 9401=AE 1908, 263; \text{CIL} 8, 1478=\text{CIL} 8, 15503=\text{CIL} 8, 26519=\text{ILAE} 520=\text{ILT} 1496; \text{AE} 1997, 1655. \text{Cf. Santangelo} (2008) 465.\]

\[\text{Ob merita: AE} 1997, 1665; \text{no municipal offices, only benefactions: CIL} 8, 805=\text{ILS} 4464; \text{CIL} 8, 26419. \text{No career or benefactions, but a father who had been benefactor: CIL} 8, 23820. \text{Priests without municipal offices: this suggests 'that it [the priesthood] could be held simply as an honorific position, outside of any municipal career,' Rives (1994) 285.}\]


\[\text{Municipal career: CIL} 8, 15585; \text{this man had been member of the decuriones, aracius, aedilis and praefectus iure dicundo. Military career: ILT 1204=AE 1931, 34. Series of religious offices: CIL} 8, 15589. \text{A special case is the religious career of a man, whose name has not been preserved, CIL} 8, 14447. \text{The many religious offices this man had held were listed in full: [--- flamen divi] Antonini [P]i] fl[am[e]n divi Traiani sacerdos Cereris et Aesculapi s[ac[erdo[s] ---] [--- flamen] divi Magni Antonini sacerdos unicus(s) (Henchir Bir El Afi; beginning of the third century); Cadotte (2007) 358. Perhaps because this inscription is a dedication to Fortuna Redux, either only the religious offices of this man were inscribed, or they were listed before his non-religious municipal ones, for the inscription is broken after the word unicus(s).}\]

\[\text{CIL} 8, 24522=AE 1897, 36; \text{Rives} (1995) 153. \text{The fact that Clinia as libertus – and accordingly of low social rank – had been sacerdos of the single Ceres is another argument against the link between status and single or plural Ceres, as suggested by Audollent. Clinia was probably priest of one of the less significant Ceres cults of Carthage (a 'respectable but not necessarily official cult', \text{Rives} (1995) 154), \text{Rives} (1995) 153-154, in which Sallustia Luperca – cat.no. 161 – had served as well?}\]

\[\text{CIL} 8, 26615=\text{ILS} 9404; \text{CIL} 8, 26419: \text{ Sextus Pullaenius Florus Caecilianus.}\]
priestesses) or act as benefactor to his town.\footnote{There is one possible exception from Carthage, but it is uncertain whether the men mentioned here were benefactors or dedicators: \textit{CIL} 8, 24586=\textit{ILS} 4462a=\textit{AE} 1899, 196: \textit{neptot\ I[\ uici]} Memmi / [Tusc\] Ill\ pr\ neptot\ Memmi / Senecionis consularis / sacerdotes Cereris\ et\ Aesculapi\ uniuersi / sua pecunia(Ia) f\ (ere)\ (unf).} Thus it seems that these men were of lower social rank\footnote{The sacerdos Cereris et Aesculapi (\textit{CIL} 8, 14447) is probably an exception, for he had also been \textit{flamen}, and this religious office was usually reserved for members of the elite.} than the ‘annual’ \textit{sacerdotes}, and accordingly the prestige of the ‘annual’ cult was probably higher than that of the other, local Ceres or \textit{Cereres} cults.\footnote{This is also mirrored by the lack of something comparable to the formula \textit{sacerdos anni} and a reference to the colony of Carthage.} This all fits with the lack of rank indicators in the inscriptions recording the female \textit{sacerdotes} \textit{Cereris/Cereraun}, these women presumably served in cults that possessed less standing than the Carthaginian cult – although this does not necessarily imply that these cults were not significant at the local level.\footnote{Gaspar (2011) 486.}

\subsection*{3.7: Some conclusions about the African cults of Ceres}

As may be clear, there is no direct connection between the cults of the single Ceres and the plural \textit{Cereres}, and the standing or the ‘Romanness’ of their religious officials. Nor was the worship of the \textit{Cereres} reserved for the lower strata of the population. However, not much can be said about the ‘Romanness’ and the social standing of the female \textit{sacerdotes} of Ceres in North Africa. The names they used are mainly Latin(ised), but some are partly Punic. The situation is different for the names of the male priests that are all, with one exception, Latin(ised), as are those of the Ceres priests who did not serve in the ‘annual’ Carthaginian cult. The social rank and standing of the priestesses was probably not very high, for otherwise it would have been indicated on the inscriptions or could be deduced from their (honorific) character, as is the case with the inscriptions of the Italian \textit{sacerdotes} \textit{Cereris}. Several Italian priestesses seem to have been of higher social rank than their female colleagues in northern Africa, and possessed a social prominence that was roughly similar to that of the \textit{sacerdotes anni} from Carthage. Many of these ‘annual’ priests – though not all – belonged to the highest echelons of the local elite. They had had brilliant municipal careers and were praised for their patronage of, and benefactions to, the local community.

This is not the case with the other male \textit{sacerdotes} for whom no benefactions have been attested; most of them seem to have belonged to the middle classes, just like the African priestesses. This is reflected by the nature of the inscriptions that have been preserved: the ‘annual’ priests are mostly known to us through honorific decrees, whereas the other priests and priestesses are recorded on dedications or epitaphs. Furthermore, the title \textit{sacerdos Coloniae Itiae Karthaginis anni} indicates a difference in standing between the Carthaginian cult and the other, local cults of Ceres or the \textit{Cereres}. 

\footnote{There is one possible exception from Carthage, but it is uncertain whether the men mentioned here were benefactors or dedicators: \textit{CIL} 8, 24586=\textit{ILS} 4462a=\textit{AE} 1899, 196: \textit{neptot\ I[\ uici]} Memmi / [Tusc\] Ill\ pr\ neptot\ Memmi / Senecionis consularis / sacerdotes Cereris\ et\ Aesculapi\ uniuersi / sua pecunia(Ia) f\ (ere)\ (unf).}
Excursus: African priestesses of Tellus

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, Ceres and Tellus were closely connected to each other and therefore the priestesses of Tellus are discussed in a separate section in this chapter. It has been suggested by Cadotte that the *sacerdotes Telluris* were in fact priestesses of Ceres, for in Africa Demeter was identified with Tellus, but in my opinion the evidence is rather unconvincing. Cadotte mentions an inscription dating from AD 2, found in Vaga (Africa Proconsularis) where the cult of Ceres was very ancient, that attests to the restoration of an *aedes Telluris*. However, I cannot see why there could not have been several sanctuaries in Vaga, one for Tellus and one for Ceres. The second piece of evidence Cadotte mentions, is an inscription from the territory of the *gens Bacchuiuina* in which both goddesses were directly linked to each other. In my opinion, this may show the close ties of the goddesses but need not necessarily mean that they were identified with each other.

Furthermore, Cadotte states that in most places where evidence of the worship of Tellus has been found, the *Cereres* have been attested. I think that this could equally well show that Tellus was not Ceres, for why would Ceres need a different name and a special cult, if she could be worshipped perfectly well in the cult of the *Cereres* under her own name? Cadotte’s last argument is based on the Greek precedent of linking Pluto to Demeter and to the *Thesmophores* in the temple of Tellus in Thugga a dedication to Pluto was erected, which in Cadotte’s view also suggests that Tellus was equated with Demeter-Ceres. However, one dedication is no proof of a general practice and besides, it was not unusual to set up dedications for other deities in a sanctuary than for those to whom the sanctuary was consecrated. In sum, I think Ceres was not the same as Tellus, and accordingly, that the priestesses of Ceres served in a different cult from the priestesses of Tellus. Obviously, this does neither mean that both goddesses were not closely related to each other, nor that there were no similarities between the two priesthoods, as I will show below.

The priestesses of Tellus had comparable epitaphs to those of the priestesses of Ceres, and therefore it is likely that they originated from the same social group, i.e. the ‘middle class.’ Furthermore, the male relatives recorded on the inscriptions are not attested as magistrates in the towns where the priestesses

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270 Carcopino (1928) 4-5; Carcopino (1942) 17. Cf. Wagenvoort (1956) 162.
272 *CIL* 8, 14392 = *ILPBardo* 184 (Vaga, Africa Proconsularis): *Imperatore Caesaris/ Aug(uste) / X[II]I/ M(arco) Plauto Silvano / co(n)s(uribus) M(arcus) Titurius M(arci) I(illius) / Arn(ensi) Africanus aede(m) / Tellariss refec(it) HNC.
274 Carcopino (1942) 19, writes that in the Tellus temple in Carthage (built in 40 BC, Gesztelyi (1972) 79) possibly de *Cereres* were worshipped.
275 For this dedication, see: Golffeto (1961) 44; Gesztelyi (1972) 81.
lived, and most are not recorded on other inscriptions than those of the priestesses at all.\footnote{On \textit{ILAlg} 1, 2306 possibly the father of Caelia Sperata from Madauros (cat.no.187) is mentioned, and \textit{CIL} 8, 5092 = \textit{ILAlg} 1, 1791 may record the father of a priestess from Thubursicu Numidum (cat.no.229).} This implies that the male relatives of the \textit{sacerdotes Telluris} – and, accordingly the priestesses themselves – were no part of the local elite. The only possible exception is a certain Quintus Calpurnius Festus, who seems to have been the husband of Iulia Katullina from Madauros.\footnote{\textit{AE} 1914, 50.} There are several other Quinti Calpurnii attested in Madauros, but no Quintus Calpurnius Festus except the one recorded on \textit{ILAlg} 1, 2087. This man erected a statue in honour of his aedilate for the wellbeing of the emperor Septimius Severus, his sons and Plautilla.

In contrast to the female \textit{sacerdotes Telluris}, the only male priest of the goddess seems to have belonged to the local elite. He lived in Calama in Numidia. The altar he dedicated – which provides us with a good example of a specific local manifestation of the goddess, see also above about Ceres in Capua – contains the following inscription:\footnote{CIL 8, 5305 = \textit{ILAlg} 1, 232 = \textit{ILS} 3958 = \textit{AE} 1983, 944; \textit{Cadotte} nr. 361.}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Telluri Gilvae Aug(ustae) / sacr(um) C(aius) Arrius Ne/potis fil(ius) Sabinius Papir(ia) / Datus aedil(is) sacer[d(os)] Te[I]a[ris] / [---]VF}
\end{quote}

“Dedicated to Tellus Gilva\footnote{Gilva was a town in Mauretania (modern Mersat Madar). As the dedicator records specifically this uncommon Tellus, it is likely that this Tellus differed from the one in Calama, \textit{Cadotte} nr. 361.} Augusta. Caius Arrius Sabinius Datus, son of Nepos, of the tribe Papiria, aedile, priest of Tellus…”

No other inscriptions of this priest have been found in Calama, but as may be clear, he was a Romanised member of the \textit{decuriones}. Yet, the office of aedile mentioned here, was not really important and usually reserved for young men.\footnote{Castrén (1975) 62-63.} This could imply that the priesthood of Tellus was one that was held at an early stage of a man’s career, and that it was therefore probably not very important. This means that the difference in standing between the priestesses of Tellus and the priest was probably less than it may seem at first sight. However, as there is only one inscription of a male \textit{sacerdos Telluris}, we cannot conclude that the priesthood of the goddess was often held by young men at the start of their career.

\textit{Conclusions}

In the cults of the goddess Ceres women played an important role. In Rome, the priesthood of Ceres was one of the few of which women have been attested epigraphically. The connections between
Rome and *Magna Graecia* helped to shape this priesthood. In many Italian – mainly Campanian – towns where the Ceres-Demeter cults were very ancient, priestesses served the goddess. In northern Africa both men and women are attested as *sacerdotes*. The inscriptions they have left behind offer some insight into their rank, social standing and background. These varied between the two main areas where priestesses and priests have been attested, and between the sexes of the religious officials. In Africa, the priestesses belonged to the middle classes (just like the *sacerdotes Telluris*, priestesses closely resembling the *sacerdotes Cereris*) while the male (annual) *sacerdotes* from Carthage were members of the local elite. In Italy most priestesses of Ceres were of relatively high social rank and standing. This may lead to the conclusion that the standing of the priesthood of Ceres was not linked to the popularity of the cult: in Africa the cult was widespread as many votive inscriptions show, while in Italy virtually the only epigraphic evidence for the Ceres cult are the inscriptions recording the priestesses.

Apart from these conclusions regarding rank, standing and popularity, the inscriptions of the priestesses illuminate local preferences and peculiarities that resulted from the blending of Roman, Greek and native influences. Superficially similar cults were managed in different ways in various Italian regions, Sicily and North Africa, even surviving unifying factors like colonization. Examples of these local characteristics are the worship of the *Cereres* in Africa, the variety in title of the *sacerdotes* in Capua, the explicit addition *Sicula* in the Roman Casponia’s otherwise short inscription and the references to local or regional manifestations of Ceres like *Ceres Maurusia* or *Ceres Graeca*. This shows that the cults of Ceres and the goddess’ priesthoods were on the one hand local, but on the other products of acculturation, implying that the women who held the priesthood where very much involved in local life but at the same time clearly part of the large cultural changes that were brought about first by Hellenization and later by Romanization.