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 5: Being a woman, holding a priesthood: the social life of the priestesses

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have discussed the religious aspects related to priesthoods and ancillary functions held by women. Here I will focus on the non-religious side of the lives of priestesses, and discuss the social, economic and political significance in their communities of women who held religious offices. The main theme will be the relation between priestesses and others, both their towns and their families. I will examine the marital status and family relations of the priestesses. Furthermore, I will deal with the image of priestesses as propagated by their epitaphs. Were priestesses praised for stereotypical female qualities like castitas and pudicitia and did their image resemble that of the ideal matrona (cf. chapter 1) or were they remembered in connection to their priesthood (section 1)?

The second section discusses the way a woman acquired a religious office. We have seen in chapter 1 (section 5.7) that the procedure of the appointment of priest(esse)s is not fully clear, and the question is whether the inscriptions in the catalogue shed some light on this problem and tell us something about the role of the ordo in this process. Another question concerns money matters: it is well-known that male magistrates and priests had to pay an obligatory sum (summa honoraria) on entering their (religious) office, but is there evidence that the same rule pertained to priestesses? The last topic connected with the appointment of priestesses is family relations. As municipal offices were often held by members of the socio-political elite that was made up of families who were – often closely – related to each other, the question can be asked whether the same applied to female priesthoods: what role did family relations play in acquiring a priesthood and were priesthoods held by women from particular families?

As a priestess, a woman had a special connection with her city: we have seen that she represented her fellow citizens in their relationship with the gods. This special relationship between priestess and community could be consolidated and strengthened by the system of euergetism. Like many other wealthy people, priestesses gave benefactions to their towns or acted as patronesses. A priestess who was benefactress or patroness usually received public honours in return. Being granted public honours resulted in an increase of prestige, and together with the fact that giving benefactions was simply very expensive, it can be expected that most priestess-benefactresses belonged to the local elite. In order to find out if this was indeed the case, section 3 deals with the social rank and standing of the priestesses and other women with religious offices. In the fourth section, I will discuss the priestesses who had acted as benefactresses or patronesses and the public honours they were granted.

All these topics lead to the question in how far dynastic politics played a role in the choice for women as sacerdotes. In the East, women were used by their male family members to increase the
prominence of the family in the public and ritual lives of the towns, by holding priesthoods and honorific magistracies. Can a comparable situation be found in the West or does the evidence point to other underlying mechanisms that influenced the presence of women holding religious offices? By discussing the family life of priestesses, their appointment, rank and standing, benefactions and public honours, I hope to come a step closer to answering this question.

1: *Family life and public image*

In chapter 4, I have dealt with the formal roles of priestesses, exercised in public. This section deals with aspects of the *private* life of priestesses, for it should not be forgotten that priestesses also had families. I will pay attention to the relatives that are recorded on the inscriptions and discuss the image of priestesses as propagated by funerary inscriptions.

1.1: *Marital status and the role of family members*

Despite the possible requirement of living a (temporarily) chaste life, we have seen in chapter 4 that many African *sacerdotes Cereris* seem to have had an ordinary family life as married women and as mothers. The inscriptions of other priestesses provide the same picture, though it has to be noted that recording commemorators on epitaphs was not common everywhere; it varied from one region to another. As a consequence, it can certainly not be concluded from the absence of family members on inscriptions that the priestess in question did not have living family members or had never been married.

In 93 inscriptions, (possible) male relatives are recorded. This number excludes filiations, for these were so common that they are meaningless in the context of this section, but includes former masters (patrons) and freedmen, considered by the Romans as family members. Sometimes, mentioning male relatives seems to have been used as an indicator of rank rather than as a way to stress the priestess’s role as wife and/or mother. It has been suggested that the frequent appearance of male relatives in the inscriptions of city patronesses can be explained by the fact that women did not have an independent claim to rank and that these male relatives were needed to show the honourable background of the patroness. I think it is likely that this holds for many priestesses as well, considering the fact that relatively many fathers, husbands and sons of priestesses were of high rank (decurial or equestrian) or held honourable offices, be it municipal, military or religious (*duumvir*, prefect of an *ala, flamen*).

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2 Saller and Shaw (1984) 130, 132, 133.
4 That is: if their offices are recorded, which is, regarding the sons, not very often the case.
Female relatives are recorded on 34 inscriptions of priestesses and women with other religious offices.\(^5\) Compared to the number of male relatives, this is surprisingly high, especially considering the fact that women are underrepresented in the epigraphic record in general (see chapter 1) and that they did not pass their rank to their family members – unless they were unfree and got daughters. When women are mentioned, they are mothers or daughters, and in a few cases patronesses (former mistresses) or libertae of the priestesses (and once, a friend\(^6\)). Brothers are seldom mentioned, and sisters never (unless the ‘pious sisters’ of Caesia Sabina were her sisters by kin, see chapter 4 and below). This is in accordance with the general pattern in epitaphs as identified by Saller and Shaw.\(^7\)

In sum, apart from the relatively many female relatives recorded (but as often, the number is very small, and accordingly, one should not attach too much value to it), the evidence of family members of priestesses shows no deviations from what could be expected. Therefore, there is no reason to suppose that their family life differed from that of other women in the Roman Empire.

1.2: The public image of the priestess: death and remembrance

In the first chapter we have seen that the ideal woman was a chaste and modest *matrona* who lived an unostentatious life with her family. From the evidence discussed so far, it can be concluded that priestesses did not really fit into this ideal: they had prominent positions in the public life of their towns. In this section, the public image of female religious officials will be discussed, based on grave monuments and epitaphs, which could, as a result of their visibility, be used in the same way as erecting a building as benefaction, i.e. to show of one’s standing and wealth, and to gain more prestige. The tombs built by priestesses will certainly have furthered this goal.

Like many other people from all over the Empire, priestesses could build their own grave monuments and had their own epitaphs inscribed. To mention a few examples: the short epitaph of Ulpia Secunda, *sacerdos* in modern Ain Barouri in Africa Proconsularis ends with the words [*se*] *viventi* / [*sibi* *fécit.*\(^8\) And in Arelate (Gallia Narbonensis) the *antistes* Valeria Urbana built a grave monument for herself, her husband Sextus Mantius Eros, her freedwoman Charis and her friend (*amica*) Octavia Hilara.\(^9\) Although the epitaphs themselves were often simple, the monuments to which they belonged could be very impressive. The best examples are provided by priestesses from Pompeii. The grave monuments that were erected by the rich women from the local Pompeian elite, several of whom held priesthoods, were as remarkable as those built by men. One of the most

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\(^5\) This number includes inscriptions in which the priestess is a *liberta* of a woman, and the name of her patroness can be deduced from her own name.

\(^6\) Cat.no.253.

\(^7\) Saller and Shaw (1984) 136.

\(^8\) Cat.no.146.

\(^9\) Cat.no.253. Spickermann (1994a) 100; Spickermann (1994b) 238, nr. 15; he writes about Octavia Hilara: ‘Möglicherweise handelt es sich um eine mit Urbana eng ver-bundene Frau aus der Kultgemeinde, der sie vorstand.’
impressive Pompeian grave monuments was even built by a woman – Eumachia – but several other priestesses were well-matched to her and had built themselves or their families large grave monuments. The priestesses from Pompeii will figure again at the end of this thesis.

What is inscribed on stone shows how people wanted to present themselves when still alive, or wanted to be presented by others in front of a special group (the whole city, a collegium etc.). Alternatively, it shows how one wanted to be remembered after death or how those commissioning the stone wanted the deceased to be remembered. When the virtues were recorded of the person who was commemorated, these virtues were deliberately chosen, even though epitaphs were partly formulaic. This formulaic character and the often conventional characteristics can sometimes ‘obscure individual testimony.’ As the ideal for Roman women was to become the mother of sons and live a chaste life, women in general were praised for domestic virtues, like chastity, modesty and obedience, as I have pointed out in the first chapter. The image of women on inscriptions reflected on her husband and by way of praising her domestic virtues, the place of women in a men’s world was defined.

Women in general were praised on epitaphs as carissimae, amantissimae, desiderantissimae, obsequentissimae, honestissimae and castissimae, all domestic virtues. As they were generally honoured in relation to their male family members, for their chastity or other specific female qualities, Levison and Oswald speak of ‘the predictable continuity that existed between the manner in which wealthy Roman women lived and died.’ Many women were praised because of things they did not do (e.g. commit adultery), instead of ‘positive’ qualities and their own accomplishments or benefits for their cities, for which men were usually praised. The question is whether the evidence of the priestesses is in accordance with this general practice.

Indeed, on the epitaphs of priestesses virtually all qualities mentioned above can be found, though they are rare: on most funerary inscriptions no qualities at all are recorded, or only very

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11 Cf. Hemelrijk (2008a) 141.
16 For Spain: Navarro Caballero (2001) 196. Although they were also praised for their benefactions, Navarro Caballero (2001) 197, 198. In Africa, we find often the same qualifications (castitas and pudicita) as those used for matrons in Rome, Corbier (2005) 263. Optimae, piissimae, and indulgentissimae were also often used, but these are more general qualities, also applied to men.
17 Levison and Ewald (2005) 636, 641. Cf. Sisigmund-Nielsen (2006) 206. Levison and Ewald base this statement on evidence mainly provided by Josephus (Ant. Jud. 1.237; 4.78), whose descriptions of public burials are adjusted to Roman practice and views, Levison and Ewald (2005) 637, 639, 640. CIL 10,1784 is an example of a woman from Puteoli who was granted a public funeral because of the qualities of modesty and chastity and her male family members.
18 Levison and Ewald (2005) 641, 642-644. Of course, this does not imply that men had more discontinuous transformations on their death than women.
general ones: a priestess is often circumscribed as sacerdos pia\textsuperscript{20} (a common word in epitaphs, but not on honorary inscriptions\textsuperscript{21}), and her epitaph was erected bene merenti. In the more elaborate epitaphs, priestesses are characterised as optimae, castissimae, amantissimae, carissimae and other comparable female qualifications. Several times, the common word sanctissimae was used.\textsuperscript{22}

Although much of what has been discussed in chapter 4 (and the rest of this chapter) shows that priestesses were very prominent and often very wealthy women, the general picture that emerges from the priestly epitaphs is standard. Like other women, they were praised for general female qualities: a priestess was a woman in the first place. The priestesses themselves, their relatives and social peers considered only female qualities appropriate. This confirms that most Latin epitaphs were formulaic and shows the power of convention.

2: Becoming a priestess

As for other municipal offices, there seem to have been special procedures to elect and invest a sacerdos. Whether a woman was perceived to be a suitable candidate depended on several aspects, very different from what according to a modern, Christian view makes someone fit for a religious office. No special devotion or vocation were needed to become sacerdos. Instead, wealth and standing were generally decisive factors, although we have seen in chapter 3 that the African priestesses of Ceres presumably did not belong to the decurial elite. In most cases though, the same people who made up the main political body of a town, i.e. the propertied classes, provided the candidates for priesthoods in the provinces.

2.1: Election and appointment

Generally speaking, in Republican Rome good parentage, a good reputation and proper behaviour were required of men and women who aspired to a religious office. However, there was a difference between men and women: proper behaviour and an unspoil\textsuperscript{23} reputation were more important for candidate priestesses than for priests.\textsuperscript{23} Furthermore, physical aspects could play a role: the Vestals had to be free from bodily defects.\textsuperscript{24} Another element that could be of importance, was the geographical origin of the priestess: originally, sacerdotes Cericis in Rome had to come from Magna Graecia, as has been discussed in chapter 3. Changes occurred in the imperial period and personal

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. the nine years old priestess of Minerva from Butuntum we have encountered in chapter 4 who was praised \textit{ob infatigabilem pietatem eius.} And cat.no.172 from modern Djenun in Africa Proconsularis.

\textsuperscript{21} Forbis (1990) 505. In addition, it was generally used for parents and children, rarely for spouses, Saller (2001) 103. \textit{Fides} and \textit{pietas} were a good excuse for public activities, Hemelrijk (2004) 191.

\textsuperscript{22} E.g. cat.no.105; 180; 214.

\textsuperscript{23} Schultz (2007) 11-12, 13. E.g. for the priestess of Fortuna Muliebris (Schultz, 20),

relations became more important, at least regarding male priests in the city of Rome. A connection to the emperor, whose influence was of ‘prime importance’ as Várhelyi writes,\textsuperscript{25} an important family and a role as patron were needed when one wanted to acquire a priesthood. There is no reason to suppose that this did not apply to priestesses as well, although family relations may have been more important to them.\textsuperscript{26}

Imperial influence was rare on the municipal level, but networks and family were also important in the provinces. An aspect that was crucial – in the provinces as well as in Rome – and that applied to both priests and priestesses, was wealth,\textsuperscript{27} as holding a priesthood was expensive (see section 2.3).\textsuperscript{28} In Pompeii, Alleia, daughter of Cnaeus Alleius Nigidius Mauis, is a good example of the importance of both family relations and wealth for acquiring a priesthood. She was member of a rich family and likely became priestess because of the high social position of her father, Cnaeus Alleius Nigidius Mauis (see the Epilogue).\textsuperscript{29}

Várhelyi writes that in Rome, members of the priestly colleges nominated the candidates. This was followed by the actual election, which was assigned to the senate in AD 20.\textsuperscript{30} Afterwards, the priest was ritually inaugurated.\textsuperscript{31} In Rome, women could be elected in a different way.\textsuperscript{32} The Vestals for instance, were appointed by lot from a group of girls already selected, and were therefore chosen by the gods themselves. As these priestesses were special, there is no reason to suppose that this procedure was common in Rome or in the provinces.\textsuperscript{33} Concerning the appointment of priestesses and priests of ‘foreign’ cults, the quindecimviri played a role in the process. This implies that they were involved in the investiture of the sacerdotes Cereris in Rome.\textsuperscript{34}

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27 Cf. Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 116. These aspects were important for male priests in the provinces as well. E.g., the priest recorded in ILT 720 may have acquired his priesthood because of the wealth of his family, Gascou (1987) 112.
30 This election procedure had changed over time. Velleius Paterculus 2.12.3 writes that after 104 BC, male priests in Rome were chosen by the people. Previously, they had been chosen by their colleagues: Quo anno Cn. Domitius tribunus plebis legem tulit, ut sacerdotes, quos antea conlegae sufficiebant, populus crearet- ‘In this year Gnaeus Domitius, the tribune of the people, passed a law that the priests, who had previously been chosen by their colleagues, should now be elected by the people.’ Transl. by F.W. Shipley. Cassius Dio 37.1 writes that this law was re-installed by Labienus. See also: Latte (1960) 395.
31 Várhelyi (2010) 58-59. After the inauguration a festivity was organised by the new priest, attended only by his new colleagues, Várhelyi (2010) 75.
32 Schultz (2007) 19, writes that in some cases special mechanisms existed for electing women in priestly functions, e.g., matrons choosing priestesses. In my opinion, there is not much convincing evidence for this. It can certainly not be used as evidence for the election procedure of priestesses in the provinces.
33 In Greece, assignment by lot was the usual procedure, Kunz (2006) 182.
34 Some modern scholars, e.g. Matthews (1973) 178, maintain that the quindecimviri also had to approve of the choice for the priests and priestesses of Magna Mater in the provinces, who for this reason were sometimes called sacerdos XVviralis. This would be very unusual if it were true, for normally Roman priests did not have jurisdiction in the provinces. Schultz (2006) 71, 175, note 82, writes that sacerdotes XVvirales were ‘members of the board of fifteen priestesses’, i.e. that they were part of a priestly collegium with fifteen members. Some probably served Magna Mater, but the priestess recorded in cat.no.104 is a sacerdos XVviralis who may have
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The procedure of election in the provinces is not clear. In the lex Ursonensis it was decreed that the priestly colleges – i.e. the pontifices and augures – should be appointed by way of cooptation.\(^{35}\) Nothing is said about the way priests of individual gods were elected; as it is unknown whether they served in a priestly college, it cannot automatically be assumed that they were also coopted. Peterson writes that in Campania priests were appointed in the same way as magistrates, first by general election, then by the decurions;\(^{36}\) so it is possible that the procedure has changed over time, as in Rome. As flaminicæ were appointed by the local senate or the provincial assembly,\(^{37}\) like their male colleagues, it is likely that this obtained to other priestesses as well.\(^{38}\) And indeed, some inscriptions refer to the ordo decurionum, though not in all cases it is certain that a role of the council in the appointment of the priestesses was meant.

Several examples come from Latium and Campania. These inscriptions contain the words sacerdos decreto decurionum (in this order). Savunen has interpreted this as proof of election by the ordo. According to her, the Pompeian priestesses Clodia and Lassia were both sacerdos publica Cereris decreto decurionum.\(^{39}\) She writes that this title is unique in Pompeii, but was used elsewhere in Campania as well. According to Savunen, it means that these women were not elected by popular assembly.\(^{40}\) However, other interpretations are also possible. Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba write that decreto decurionum could have been meant to indicate that the ordo had paid for the grave monument of the priestesses.\(^{41}\) This is equally possible and in my opinion much more convincing than Savunen’s interpretation, mainly because generally the formula decreto decurionum (or something similar) refers to a statue or grave monument that was erected with consent of the ordo, or to public land given by the decurions.\(^{42}\) When decreto decurionum (or a comparable phrase) referred to the way a priest(ess) was

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36 Peterson (1919), 33. However, Peterson writes that he found no examples of general election in Campania, so his statement cannot be proved. Castrén (1975) 68, writes that the election of priests was similar to that of magistrates: they were elected by the people at public assembly.


38 Delgado Delgado (1998) 147, 148, however, writes that there was no standard election procedure for the various priesthoods, and that election was the result of specific needs or circumstance in the cities. Usually the ordo played a role.

39 Cat.no. 101 and 102 respectively.

40 Savunen (1997) 138, 142. She bases this on Cicero and Castrén but does not give proper references which makes her statement dubious.


42 E.g., in CIL 8.1495=26590; CIL 8.26591=ILT 1427; CIL 8.10580=14472; CIL 10.6018=ILS 6293; CIL 10.7352; CIL 11.3933=ILS 3352; AE 1979. 670; CIL 2.7.303=2.5525; CIL 2.7.370=AE 1982.539; CIL 8.7119=ILAlg 2.1.693; CIL 10.6018=ILS 6293; CIL 11.415=ILS 6658; CIL 11.3013.
elect, in most cases additional words were added, like \textit{decurionum decreto sacerdotium datum est}.\footnote{AE 1991. 514a from Larinum (region 2), recording a priestess of the imperial cult.} Alternatively, an unambiguous formula was used, like \textit{ab ordine electus}.\footnote{E.g., \textit{CIL} 8.8995\textasciitilde;20710=\textit{ILS} 6874=AE 1956. 131.}

This last formula is used in the inscription of a public priestess from Capua, whose name is partly lost. The inscription ends with the phrase \textit{decreto decurionum}, in this case likely relating to the (place of) the priestess’s statue that was given by decree of the local senate:\footnote{Cat.no.55.}

\textit{[--\ldots\textit{apert}i\ae\ldots] / C(ai) \textit{f}(ilia) Tett[iae] / Prisc[ae] / \textit{s}jacer[ot]j \textit{pub}[lic][ae] / \textit{n}juminis \textit{Cap}[uae], \[\ldots\ldots\] elect\textit{(ae) a splendid[\ldots]} / ord\textit{i}ne \textit{/d(creto) d(ecurionum)}

“To \textit{apert}i\ae\ldots Prisca, daughter of Caius, public priestess of the Capuan \textit{numen}, \[\ldots\ldots\] appointed by the most splendid \textit{ordo}, by decree of the decurions.”

Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba write that if this \textit{sacerdos} indeed was a woman – which seems likely – the explicit reference to an election by the \textit{ordo} is unique.\footnote{Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 115.} However, there is another example\footnote{An uncertain one from Caesarea in Mauretania, \textit{AE} 1902, 12 (not included in the catalogue, for the goddess seems to have been the eastern Ma-Bellona): \textit{Deae Bellonae / Scantia C(ai) \textit{f}(ilia) Peregrina sa\textit{c}er\textit{dos} ex decre\textit{to ordin\textit{s} area ad\ldots} / d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(ecit). Here we find in fact the same problem as with the Pompeian inscriptions mentioned above: \textit{ex decre\textit{to ordin\textit{s}} can belong to the word \textit{sacerdos}, or refer to the building. \textit{CIL} 3, 14206,13 from Philippi in Macedonia (not included in the catalogue) is another example: \textit{Valeria / Severa an[tistes] / D\textit{e}\textit{i}r=E\textit{\ldots}an(a)e / Caszoriae p[e]tit\textit{u} a sanct\textit{is}s/simo ord\textit{n}e / et decre\textit{to d}\textit{[e(\ldots)] imaginem p[ecunia] s\textit{u}a si\textit{b}i et Atiar\textit{f}ij\textit{o} / Ac\textit{\ldots}neo nepo\textit{t(i) / suo li\textit{b}ens} p(osuit). The formula \textit{petit\textit{u} a sanct\textit{issimo ord\textit{n}e could, but need not, point to a role of the \textit{ordo} in the election of this woman.}} from Cartima in Baetica:\footnote{Cat.no.285. Delgado Delgado (1998) 148, thinks this inscription is no proof of the election by the council, but that the decree of decurions refers to the grant of perpetuity and not to the priesthood in general. This could be possible, but there is no evidence to back this view.}

\textit{Valeria C(ai) \textit{f}(ilia) Situllina / sacerdos perpetua d(creto) d(ecurionum) m(unicipii) C(artimitani) f(\ldots) / de sua pecunia solo suo f(\ldots) / et epulo dato dedicavit

“Valeria Situllina, daughter of Caius, made perpetual priestess by decree of the decurions of the \textit{municipium} of the \textit{Cartimitani}, made this on her own land of her own money and dedicated it after a banquet had been given.”

Even though the evidence is meagre, I think it is possible to conclude that, based on these two inscriptions from Capua and Cartima and on the parallels of \textit{flaminicae} and male priests, the \textit{ordo} could play a role in the appointment of a priestess. It does not mean though, that this applied to \textit{all} priestesses, certainly not those acting in semi-public cults like those of \textit{collegia}. In my opinion it is
possible that priestesses of *collegia* were chosen and appointed by the members of the *collegium* or its main officials, though there is no evidence in the catalogue to support this view.

2.2: *The familial background of the priestess and hereditary priesthoods*

As I have mentioned above, apart from a connection to the emperor, family relations played an important role in distribution of priesthoods in imperial Rome.\(^{49}\) Being appointed as a priestess in the City could in special cases depend on the office of her husband, as in the case of the *flaminica Dialis* and the *regina sacrorum.*\(^{50}\) The question is whether a comparable situation can be found in the provinces. For a long time, modern scholars have been convinced of a marital link between *flamines* and *flaminicæ* in the provinces, but it has been demonstrated that they were usually not a married couple, although some *flamines* and *flaminicæ* were members of the same family.\(^{51}\) It is worth investigating whether the priestesses acting in other cults were also members of families that often held priesthoods, and if so, what kind of priesthoods. In addition, the families themselves need to be examined: were they wealthy? Did they possess a large social network? And did the male members hold other municipal offices as well? Furthermore, it is interesting to recover whether a specific priesthood could be held by various female members of the same family, and again, in what kind of families these priesthoods were held. An aspect that is related to this is the size of the city in which the priestesses served, for it could be expected that in small towns fewer families were available that were wealthy (and prestigious) enough to pay for a priesthood, and that, as a consequence, many priesthoods were held within the same family.

*Priestesses with relatives (including husbands) holding priesthoods*

There is some epigraphic evidence of women with male or female relatives holding priesthoods. A few inscriptions attest to family members who were active within the same *collegium*, like the *Sflaccii* from Puteoli.\(^{52}\) Other examples are inscriptions that record freedmen and women from the same household, who were, in Roman eyes, members of the same families (when they record only family members, these inscriptions are not included in the catalogue, as I consider them to be private, see chapter 1).\(^{53}\) The best examples of women with male or female relatives holding priesthoods are those...

\(^{49}\) Várheleyi (2010) 65, 71-72; From the Julio-Claudians onwards there was a trend towards familial continuity concerning the flaminates in Rome.

\(^{50}\) Schultz (2007) 18.

\(^{51}\) There is no evidence of *provincial* priests of the imperial cult who were members of the same family, Fishwick (2002) 190; Hemelrijk(2007) 322.

\(^{52}\) Cat.no.109. Dubois (1907) 134; Bruhl (1953) 294; Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 113; North (2003) 210. Sflaccia’s *thiasos* had a mixed membership, while in the original Bacchic groups men and women were separated, according to North (2003) 205-206.

\(^{53}\) *CIL* 6, 409 (not included in the catalogue); cat.no.113: the man and woman could also have been father and daughter. See Spickermann (1994a) 201 about possible family relations in an inscription recording priestly offices of Magna Mater within the same family.
of priestesses who were active in municipal cults and were members of the local elite. As often Pompeii offers the best material: the Clodii, Eumachii and Alleii were the main gentes, all related to each other. Members of these families held the local priesthoods, i.e. those of Venus, Ceres and the flamineate, and various municipal offices. Besides, they were wealthy and several of them gave benefactions (see also the Epilogue).\textsuperscript{54}

In most cases, the priestesses’ family members who held religious offices were male.\textsuperscript{55} This is, of course, unsurprising regarding the fact that many more priests have been attested on inscriptions than priestesses. The priesthoods of the male family members of the priestesses could vary from the traditional ‘Roman’ religious offices that can be found in many municipalities across the western part of the Empire (pontifices, augures), to flaminates of the imperial cult, and to local priesthoods that were confined to certain areas.\textsuperscript{56} In some cases, the priesthood(s) of the male family members were not recorded on the inscriptions erected by or in honour of priestesses.\textsuperscript{57} Holconia, sacerdos publica in Pompeii, mentioned her filiation, but the fact that her father had been sacerdos Augusti and flamen is omitted.\textsuperscript{58} Obviously, this was so well-known in Pompeii that it need not be repeated on Holconia’s inscription, and besides, her father’s priesthood was recorded on other inscriptions.\textsuperscript{59}

**Female priesthood held within one family**

Some examples can be found of women who had held the same priesthood as one of their female relatives. The evidence stems Italy, and for a great part from the Republican period and the first century AD.\textsuperscript{60} The priestesses acting in the Ceres (and Venus) cult of Sulmo and its surrounding area were members of a limited number of gentes. The gens Tet(t)ia provided the anac(eta) Cerr(ia) Tettia, daughter of Salvius, and Aula Tetia, daughter of Sextus and sacerdos Cereris.\textsuperscript{61} The Caiedii (or: Caiedita) supplied Sulmo with an ancea Ceri and a sacerdos Cereris et Veneris. Helvia Pothine (sacerdos Cereris in Corfinium) and Helvia Quarta (sacerdos Cereris et Veneris in Sulmo) originated from the gens Helvia, while Brata Pofennia and Brata Ania (the nomen and cognomen are reversed) were ancea Ceria and ancea Criei respectively in Sulmo. Poccetti writes that this limited number of

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\textsuperscript{54} Van Andringa (2009) 81.

\textsuperscript{55} The data are based on inscriptions mentioning more than one individual (e.g. the one of Stlaccia) and on the prosopographical matching of names between different inscriptions (e.g. the Pompeian examples).

\textsuperscript{56} Some examples are cat.no.126; 128; 129; 178; 186; 215; 222; 238; 244.

\textsuperscript{57} It needs to be kept in mind though, that persons with the same nomen who lived in different ages did not necessarily have to be direct family members, Witschel (1995) 301. See e.g. M. Baebius Palmianus, sacerdos loci secundi templi Sittianae (\textit{CIL} 8, 19512a) and Baebia Casta, sacerdos Iunonis (cat.no.167), both from Cirta. Both Marcellae from Antipolis – one flaminica et sacerdos, the other sacerdos Minervaet Diuane – are another example; cat.no.249 and 250. It is unknown whether these people were directly related to each other.

\textsuperscript{58} Cat.no.97. Father: \textit{CIL} 10, 830 = ILS6361b; \textit{CIL} 10, 837 = ILS6361; \textit{CIL} 10, 838 = ILS6361a; \textit{CIL} 10, 947; \textit{CIL} 10, 948.

\textsuperscript{59} Cf. Manlia Severina, virgo Alba Maxima from Bovillae (not included in the catalogue) whose brother had been rex sacrorum, tector of the pontiffs and quattorvir according to \textit{CIL} 14, 2413; this was omitted on the inscription of Manlia Severina (\textit{CIL} 14, 2410)

\textsuperscript{60} For the Republican inscriptions in the Pelignian dialect, see the appendix.

\textsuperscript{61} See also chapter 3.
families providing priestesses of Ceres is in accordance with the Greek tradition in Eleusis, where the priesthood was held by the *Eumolpidae* and *Ceruchs*.\(^{62}\)

However, examples can be found of priestesses from the same family and from the same area but acting in another cult: the *gens Varia* provided Vara from Teate Marrucinorum as *sacraeix Herentatia* (i.e. of Venus), while Varia, daughter of Caius was *sacerdos Ceresis* in Sulmo. In Corfinium a certain Acca, daughter of Quintus, and Accia (without patronymic) were both *sacerdos Veneris*. In addition, in the same town Attia Mirallis had been *sacerdos Ceresis*.\(^{63}\) In my opinion, these examples show that Poccetti’s suggestion that the limited number of *gentes* involved in the Ceres cult was based on the Eleusinian influences is questionable. I think an easier and better explanation is that there were simply a limited number of (elite) families able to afford the (costly) priesthoods of Ceres and Venus, which by all evidence were the most important ones open to women in Italy. This is supported by two passages in Ovid’s *Amores*, where Sulmo is described as a small town,\(^{64}\) with, accordingly, few wealthy (elite) families.

With one exception, all other evidence of priesthoods held within one family is also limited to the cults of Venus and Ceres. The only exception concerns two women who served Minerva. In Ticinum (region 11) and Butuntum (region 2) two female members of the *gens Petilia* were priestesses of this goddess. The *prenomen* of both women’s father was Quintus. The *gens Petilia* was a plebeian family that provided its first consul in 176 BC. In the imperial period Quintus Petillius Cerialis Caesius Rufus (born AD 30) held several important military offices, became consul in AD 74 and married Flavia Domitilla, the emperor Vespasian’s daughter. Another Quintus Petillius Rufus had been *consul ordinarius* in AD 83; he may have been the son of Cerialis.\(^{65}\) The inscriptions of both priestesses cannot be dated and it is unknown what their exact consanguinity was. Considering the mother’s name of the priestess from Butuntum – Messia Dorcas – and the lack of any male relatives on the other Petilia’s inscription, it is likely that the two women were not close relatives of the prestigious *Quinti Petilii* mentioned above, and presumably of less high social standing.

Pompeii provides – again – a better example: Lassia, daughter of Marcus, and the oldest known priestess of Ceres from Pompeii, and Clodia, daughter of Aulus held the same priesthood. Likely, they were grandmother and granddaughter. Clodia built a tomb for several people, including Lassia.\(^{66}\) More about this tomb and the relationship between the persons buried here will be given below. In Beneventum, polyonymous Gaia Nummia Ceonia Umbria Rufia Albina, a girl of senatorial rank, held a public priesthood (likely of Venus, as is suggested by Raepsaet-Charlier).\(^{67}\) The name Nummia can be linked to that of Nummia Varia, who had been priestess of Venus Felix in Peltuinus

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\(^{63}\) In Corfinium, several *Attii, Accii* and *Accaei* are attested epigraphically. *CIL* 9, 3146 = *ILS* 4107 records an Acca Prima who had been *ministra* of Magna Mater.  
\(^{64}\) In *Amor* 2.16, the word *parva* is used, and in *Amor* 3.15 the word *quantalumque*.  
\(^{65}\) *PIR* 3, p.25.  
\(^{66}\) Cat.no.101; 102. Clodia’s father had never held a priestly function, Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 104.  
\(^{67}\) Cat.no.40. Raepsaet-Charlier (2005) 195.
Vestinum (the elaborate inscription of this woman will be discussed below).⁶⁸ Nummia Varia’s father
had been cīvis et patronus of Beneventum, where Gaia Nummia Ceonia lived.⁶⁹ Raepsaet-Charlier
writes that Gaia Nummia Ceonia may have been the (grand)daughter of Nummia Varia.⁷⁰ However
the precise relationship between the two women may have been, it is clear that they were family
members who both held a priesthood, to all likelihood of the same goddess. In the third century the
gens Nummia, which had acquired patrician status possibly around AD 191/199, was a senatorial
family that provided consuls (from AD 206 onwards) and proconsuls.⁷¹ It had links to other important
families like the gens C(a)eonia,⁷² as is attested by the name of Gaia Nummia Ceonia. The fact that
the gens Nummia was so influential may also explain why Gaia Nummia Ceonia was only a girl when
she was appointed as priestess (see also chapter 4).

It seems there are various examples of priestesses who had male or female relatives who also held a
priesthood, sometimes in the same cult. These priesthoods varied from local ones of individual deities
to (in case of male relatives) pontificates and flamines. In several cases the families of the priestesses
were wealthy and prominent, with male members holding municipal offices. In addition, these families
were part of a large social network like that of the Nummi. However, in many other cases this is
unknown. The towns of the families who held more than one priesthood varied in size, though they
were not very large, which seems to back the hypothesis that small towns had only a limited number
of families willing and able to hold priesthoods.

2.3: Summae honorariae and gifts

When they took office, magistrates and (male) sacerdotes had to pay a summa honoraria,⁷³ defined by
Garnsey as ‘the compulsory fee fixed by municipal statute and payable by every magistrate, priest or
councillor.’⁷⁴ For ‘priest’ also ‘priestess’ can be read, as we shall see. The summa honoraria was
usually not recorded on inscriptions, because it was not honourable to mention something that was
compulsory – and that was probably not set very high, as all potential candidates, which in many
towns was presumably a very small number, had to be able to afford them.⁷⁵ On inscriptions recording

⁶⁸ Cat.no.88. Raepsaet-Charlier (2005) 195.
⁶⁹ AE1969/70, 169.
⁷¹ Mennen (2010) 42, 43, 55, 61; see pages 96-99 for a list of the consular Nummii.
⁷³ In Rome the summa honoraria was used as a ‘vehicle for the institutionalizing of euergetism towards the
people of Rome, as a means of compelling the senatorial elite to imitate the emperor’s generosity.’ Gordon
(1990b) 224. Suetonius, Caes. 22.3 mentions the use of wealth in the competition for priesthoods.
⁷⁵ Garnsey (1971) 117. The average ordo decurionum seems to have consisted of one hundred members, but
smaller examples can be found, Edmondson (2006) 272.
flaminicae, summae honorariae are only mentioned when the priestesses paid more than usual in which case the gift can partly be seen as more or less ‘spontaneous’ euergetism (see section 4). In those cases the formula ob honorem flamonii was used to show their ‘spontaneous’ munificence. The same seems to have been true for priestesses serving in other cults, although in their case the words sacerdoti or sacerdotalem instead of flamonii were used. In Baetica, two women paid for public banquets in honour of their election to the priesthood ob honorem sacerdoti.

Sometimes, the inscriptions referring to ‘spontaneous’ munificence on the occasion of the inauguration as priestesses were very elaborate. On entering her priesthood Iulia Paulina from Capena (region 7) had performed ‘the most honourable ceremonies’, which she probably financed from her own resources as summa honoraria. When she became a priestess of Venus she gave twice a meal and sportulae to the decuriones and to the municipes as the inscription on her statue base announces:

Juliæ Ti(beri) fil(iae) Paulinae / sacerdoti Cereris municip(ii) / Capenatium foederatorum / ob honorem sacerdotalem / honestissimis caerimoniiis / praebitum decuriones / item municipes / et postea sacerdoti Veneris / bis epulum et sportulas decur(ionibus) / et municipibus praebuit / l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecretum) d(ecurionum) // Dedicata VI Kal(endas) Mar(tias) / Glabrione II [co(n)s(ule)] / curat(ore) L(ucio) Mucio Muciano / marito eius

“To Iulia Paulina, daughter of Tiberius, priestess of Ceres of the municipii of the federate Capenians, in honour of her priesthood, undertaken with the most honourable ceremonies, the decurions and the citizens [gave this statue]. And afterwards as priestess of Venus, she gave a banquet and sportulae to the decurions and citizens twice. The place is given by decree of the decurions. Dedicated on the sixth Kalend of March, when Glabrio was consul for the second time and Lucius Mucius Mucianus, her husband, was curator.”

76 Hemelrijk (2006a) 88. Or when a mother promised extra benefactions if her daughter was appointed as flaminica, CIL 8.1495. The same was true for priests or magistrates, see e.g., AE 1979. 670 and CIL 8, 858= ILS 5073.
77 Peer pressure played an important role, so it was never really spontaneous or voluntary. Contra Veyne (1990) 10-11. See also Garmsey (1991) for a critique on the simplified model of voluntary euergetism versus euergetism connected to office holding.
78 However praiseworthy the payment of large summa honoraria may have been, it was supposed to be a great honour when a priestess was allowed to hold her religious office without paying summa honoraria, according to Hemelrijk (2006a) 88. Apart from some flaminicæ, there is only one example – and very uncertain at that – of a priestess of Ceres who did not have to pay when entering her religious office (cat.no.131). The inscription, which is badly damaged, contains a name, the priesthood of Ceres and ends with the words publica summa. Perhaps these words meant that the summa honoraria were paid for with public money (summa could then have been followed by remissa), but this is only speculation. It is also possible as I have pointed out above, and in my opinion more likely, that the word publica belongs to the priestly title, as several ‘public’ priestesses of Ceres have been attested epigraphically.
79 Hemelrijk (2006a) 88.
80 Cat.no.242 and 246.
81 Unless the word bis refers to her priesthood of Venus, which, in that case, she held twice.
82 Cat.no.52. See also Clark (2011) 354 footnote 32. Often those honouring a benefactor, and those receiving his or her gifts were the same, as in this inscription, Mouritsen (2006) 246.
The clause *ob honorem sacerdotalis honestissimis caerimonii praebatum* in Iulia Paulina’s inscription, which dates from AD 186, resembles that in cat.no.53. This inscription was also erected in Capena by a priestess of Ceres, named Flavia Ammia, who was honoured publicly ‘because of the honour of the magnificent ceremonies given’ (*ob honorem caerimoniorum honestissime praebitorum*). Possibly, the ceremonies that were paid for by Flavia Ammia were given on assuming her priesthood, which might imply that they were meant as extras to the *summa honoraria*. Providing additional gifts was not uncommon, but admirable and worth imitating by other women appointed as priestesses. This is shown by the elaborate honorific decree erected for Agusia Priscilla, who lived in Gabii:83

*Agusiae T(iti) f(iliae) Priscillae / sacerdoti Spei et Salutis Aug(ustae) / ex d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) Gabini statuum publice po/nendam curaverunt quod post / inspensas exemplo inlustrium feminar(um) / factas ob sacerdotium etiam opus portic(us) / Spei vetustate vexatum pecunia sua refectu/ram se promiserit populo cum pro / salute principis Antonini Aug(usti) Pii / patris patriae liberalorumque eius / eximio ludorum spectaculo edito / religioni, veste donata, / universis satis fecerit / cuius statuae honore contenta / inspensam populo remiserit / l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)*

“To Agusia Priscilla, daughter of Titus, priestess of Spes and Salus Augusta. By decree of the decurions, the Gabinians took care of erecting a statue publicly. After paying the expenses on account of her priesthood, following the example of illustrious women, she also promised the people that she would repair the *porticus* of Spes which was dilapidated by age, from her own money. And for the wellbeing of the *princeps* Antoninus Augustus Pius, father of the country, and of his children, she gave a magnificent set of games,84 funding the rituals and providing costumes, enough for everyone. Content with the honour of her statue, she would return to the people its costs. The place is given by decree of the decurions.”

By erecting this inscription, the *ordo* obviously hoped to ensure that Agusia Priscilla kept her promises. On an inscription dating from the reign of Septimius Severus, another formula indicating the munificence of a priestess who entered her office is used (if indeed her gift was related to her priesthood, which is uncertain). Stlaccia, who had been priestesses of the *Cereres* in Puteoli, provided the *thisius Placidianus* with a (unfortunately unknown) gift *introitus causa.*85

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83 Cat.no.78.
84 Giving different kinds of games was a common liturgy for (provincial) priests of the imperial cult, see Fishwick (2004) 305-349.
85 Cat.no.109.
Pro salute? Imp(eratoris) Caesaris L(uci) Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Augustus and Publius Septimius Geta, most noble Caesar and Iulia Domna, mother of the Augustes and of the army. Stlaccia, priestess of the Cereres, gave this to the thiasus Placidianus because of her inauguration, when Flavius Eclectianus, son of Titus was priest, and Titus Stlaccius Soter and Titus Stlaccius Reparator…

Perhaps the uncommon formula introitus causa\textsuperscript{86} was inscribed because this woman was appointed as priestess of a thiasos, which was, after all, a semi-public community in which people ‘entered’.\textsuperscript{87} However, I think it is illogical that she would have served the Cereres as priestess in a cult organisation devoted to Liber-Dionysus. A second possibility is that Stlaccia, already being priestess of the Cereres, was initiated in the cult of Liber-Dionysus and became a member of the thiasus, on which occasion she made her donation. Another option is that she made her donation on account of her inauguration into the municipal priesthood of the Cereres and that the gift to the thiasos was simply what most needed funding in the town.\textsuperscript{88}

Apart from priestesses, it is possible that other religious officials also made gifts on account of their office, although there is only one example in the catalogue.\textsuperscript{89} This inscription was erected in Fidenae (region 1).\textsuperscript{90} The liberta Italia dedicated something, probably a sanctuary ob magisterium Bonae Deae to the Numen of the domus Augustae. She did so together with the freedmen Blastus Eutactianus and Secundus, also because of this last man’s sexvitate (ob honorem Viviratus). On the day of the dedication which marked the restoration of probably a sanctuary that was destroyed by fire, they also

\textsuperscript{86} In Claudius 9, Suetonius uses the word introitus in connection to a priesthood: Postremo sestertium octogies pro introitu novi sacerdottii coactus impendere – ‘At last he [Claudius] was forced to pay eight million sestercies to enter a new priesthood.’ Transl. by J. C. Rolfe.

\textsuperscript{87} A thiasos was a group of people devoted to Liber; the name was based on that of the founder, the patron or most important member, in this case a certain Placidianus, Dubois (1907) 135; Peterson (1919) 145.

\textsuperscript{88} I would like to thank Professor Greg Woolf for suggesting this.

\textsuperscript{89} Another example, concerning a ministra of Isis Augusta, is CIL 11, 1916 = ILS 4366 = SIRIS 577. See also chapter 4, footnote 44. In addition, there is a relevant inscription (CIL 3, 1969) from Salona in Dalmatia, where a certain Aurelia Renata erected an unidentified object magisterio suo (because of her office). However, we do not know whether this woman was a magistra attached to a temple, deity or cult, or to something else, and whether her gift was voluntary, so this inscription can certainly not be taken as proof for a standard procedure, and is not included in the catalogue.

\textsuperscript{90} Cat.no.70.
held a banquet. Although donations on account of a religious office were usually provided by priestesses, it seems that at least in the cult of Bona Dea, magistriæ could do the same. A main difference is though, that the priestesses whose gifts are recorded, seem to have been women of high social standing who received public honours in return.

3: Priesthoods and social rank

As has often been mentioned in this thesis, priesthoods and social standing were closely connected. In the first chapter I have explained that social standing is partly made up of rank. This section deals with the relationship between rank, standing and priesthoods. In Rome, the prestige a priesthood gave to the person who held it was used by Augustus to provide the nobility with the opportunity to acquire honour, for they had lost their political influence since the end of the Republic. Freedmen were more and more restricted from holding priesthoods, although they could acquire important religious offices within groups like the Augustales and could hold ancillary functions as several examples mentioned in the second chapter show. Still, in general, the most important priesthoods in Rome were reserved for senators, and the less important ones for equestrians. It is remarkable that many prestigious priests in Rome did not explicitly record their priesthoods on inscriptions; on dedications for example, their priesthoods are only rarely mentioned. This was different regarding the priests – and priestesses! – in the provinces who proudly announced their religious offices on inscriptions, even while their social rank often remains obscure.

3.1: The rank of the priestesses in the provinces

We have seen in chapter 4 that women could hold many different religious offices. In this section I will give an overview of the social rank to which the priestesses belonged and link this to the kind of religious office they held, in order to see if these offices held reflected the social hierarchy, as one would expect.

91 Brouwer thinks that this may show that Secundus was a sexvir Augustalis, because giving banquets was one of their tasks, Brouwer (1989) 60, 378.
92 Hoffman Lewis (1955) 17-18; Eck (1989) 25-26, 34; Rüpke (2005a) 283-284. A parallel from the provinces may be the Carthaginian Ceres cult. We have seen in chapter 3 that the two freedmen-priests were among the first men to hold the priesthood that afterwards was held by men of (much) higher social standing; 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.
93 In Rome several freedwomen acted in ancillary functions and one was even a sacerdos, though likely in a collegium, cat.no.270.
94 Hoffman Lewis (1955) 164; Eck (1989) 22.
95 Rüpke (2005a) 284-287.
96 The omission of information about social rank may have been the result of a smaller gap (than in Rome) between the top and bottom of the social order in provincial towns.
Many inscriptions recording priestesses do not mention their rank. As we have seen in chapter 3 in relation to the African *sacerdotes Cereris*, this is probably an indication of a social background that was not very high. In general though, most priestesses of whom the social rank is known, belonged to the *decuriales*, although also some *libertae* have been attested. Other priestesses were of equestrian rank, and a very small number belonged to the senatorial elite.\(^9^7\)

The rank of circa 67% of the women recorded in the catalogue is unknown. Of the others, only eight may have been unfree. Three acted as *ministra* or *magistra* in the cult of Bona Dea.\(^9^8\) One was (possibly) *magistra* of Mercurius Ianarius in Arpinum (region 1), another had been *sacraria* in Verona (region 10) and a certain Doris from Rome held office as *aedita* in the cult of Diana.\(^9^9\) The last two were *saevae Veneris* in Gades (Baetica), although it is uncertain whether these religious slaves were really unfree, as we have seen in chapter 4.\(^1^0^0\) About forty-one women recorded in my database were *libertae*, which may seem quite a large amount, compared to that of the priestesses of (possibly) decurial rank (thirty-one), but most of these women held no priesthood but lower religious offices: only thirteen of them were *sacerdotes*, while the others were *magistrae* or held other low religious offices.\(^1^0^1\) This shows the greater prestige of priesthoods compared to ancillary functions.

Some of the freedwomen who were *sacerdotes* acted in unknown cults, but three *sacerdotes* of Bona Dea,\(^1^0^2\) a *sacerdos Cereris* (from Corfinium), a *sacerdos Veneris* (from Casauria or Teate Marrucinorum) and a freedwoman who held the combined priesthood of those two deities (from Sulmo) have also been attested.\(^1^0^3\) This last woman, Helvia Quarta, deserves some extra attention, for as the only Sulmonan priestess (except one, who served Ceres alone) she lived in the first century AD, while the other priestess attested in this town lived in the second and first century BC. This shows that Augustus’s restrictive policy towards freedmen holding religious offices was not followed everywhere in Italy, or that it did not concern women.\(^1^0^4\)

As has been remarked, thirty-one women were of decurial rank.\(^1^0^5\) Virtually all lived in Italy and acted in respectable Romano-Italian cults like that of Venus, Ceres, Fortuna and Juno. A large percentage of the women of decurial rank, circa 32%, were *sacerdotes publicae* (often of Ceres or

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\(^{97}\) This pattern is largely comparable to that of *flaminicae*, Hemelrijk (2006a) 86; Hemelrijk (2006b) 189.

\(^{98}\) Brouwer (1989) 292, 293. Cat.no.71; 134; 267.

\(^{99}\) Cat.no.272; 139; 6.

\(^{100}\) Cat.no.287; 288.

\(^{101}\) This is in accordance with Schultz (2006) 74: Freeborn women usually held more prestigious offices than freedwomen or slaves. The tomb stones of the *sacerdotes* were usually no part of group tombs in contrast to those from women with lower religious offices. This shows that in general the *sacerdotes* were richer. Brouwer (1989) 281 writes that both freeborn and freed women could hold the office of *magistra* or *ministra* in the Bona Dea cult. He lists these women on pages 282-289, 382.

\(^{102}\) Brouwer (1989) 280. One priestess was a freedwoman of the empress Livia, Brouwer (1989) 282; the others were freedwomen of private people, Brouwer (1989) 285-287.

\(^{103}\) Cat.no.67; 58; 120. The priestesses from Corfinium and Sulmo were both named Helvia. Freedwomen also acted as *sacerdos* in the cult of Magna Mater, see e.g. *CIL* 6, 2260; *AE* 1989, 192; *CIL* 6, 496.

\(^{104}\) Unfortunately, the rank of the other priestesses from Sulmo is unknown, so we do not know if the priesthood of Ceres in which most of them served, was generally held by freedwomen.

\(^{105}\) Raepsaet-Charlier (2005) 194, writes that there were fewer priestesses of equestrian rank recorded than could be expected, regarding the number of equestrians active at a local level.
Venus), which may lead to the conclusion that this type of priesthood was more prestigious than one that was not explicitly called publica. This is supported by the fact that relatively many other ‘public’ priestesses were of equestrian rank.\(^{106}\) Five, which is nearly half of the equestrian priestesses in the catalogue, were sacerdotes publicae, the others served goddesses like Juno Populona and Venus Iovia.\(^{107}\) This last one from Abella, however, is uncertain for the woman was mother of an equestrian, which does not necessarily imply that she was of the same rank.\(^{108}\) One of the very few senatorial women – Gaia Nummia – also held a ‘public’ priesthood.\(^{109}\) We have seen in chapter 2 that sacerdotes publicae probably served the most important deities of their towns, so it is unsurprising to see so many women of high rank carrying the title sacerdos publica.

Only four of the total of the total 296 priestesses and other women with religious offices were of senatorial rank. Nummia Varia (cat.no.88) served Venus Felix, likely the same goddess as served by Gaia Nummia, sacerdos publica. The third priestess was lampadifera of Ceres. She is one of only a few women who were called clarissima femina on an inscription.\(^{110}\) According to Raepsaet-Charlier senatorial women were active in provincial or municipal priesthoods; these women took part in local life, mainly by euergetism and religion.\(^{111}\) This was a general trend, starting in the middle of the first century AD: senators and equestrians felt stronger connections with their area of descent, which was expressed by holding local priesthoods.\(^{112}\) As may be clear the small number of senatorial priestesses does not reflect this trend at all. It seems that the municipal priesthoods held by senatorial women were those of the imperial cult, which shows the importance of this specific priesthood.

Regarding the numbers mentioned so far, we can conclude that the social hierarchy was reflected in a priestly hierarchy for women. Senatorial women held the most prestigious priesthoods like that of flaminica or sacerdos publica, equestrian women were endowed with ‘public’ priesthoods of city goddesses or important Roman deities; decurial women served sometimes as sacerdotes publicae, and otherwise in various cults of important Roman deities and ‘middle class’ women served local deities or Roman deities that were influenced by indigenous traditions (e.g., the African Ceres). Generally, libertae and servae held ancillary religious offices. It may be clear that this is a very rough outline and that there were several exceptions to it (e.g., libertae serving as sacerdotes) but a trend is clearly visible.\(^{113}\)

\(^{106}\) Cat.no.116, commagistra of Bona Dea, is an exception, see Brouwer (1989) 275.
\(^{107}\) Rives (1994b) 299 writes that this particular Venus was a peculiar and very old form of the goddess.
\(^{108}\) Cat.no.15.
\(^{109}\) Cat.no.40.
\(^{110}\) Cat.no.200; Chastagnol (1979) 20.
\(^{113}\) This supports Schultz’s statement that ‘(...) the division of religious responsibility (...) reflected the stratification of Roman society along the lines of social status (...’), see Schultz (2006) 146.
3.2: Multiple and joint priesthoods, social rank and standing

The accumulation of priesthoods in Rome was ‘considered a mark of great honor.’\textsuperscript{114} Regarding the limited number of priesthoods available and the costs involved in holding a priesthood, it could be expected that this was also true for priests – and priestesses – living in towns in Italy and the provinces of the Empire. Accordingly, it may have been reserved for a select group only – likely one of high social standing and in the possession of a certain amount of wealth.\textsuperscript{115} In this section I check whether this is backed by the epigraphic evidence.

There is only one example of a woman who explicitly recorded that she had held more than one separate priesthood, indicated by a repetition of the word \textit{sacerdos}. Iulia Paulina from Capena had been priestess of Ceres and also priestess of Venus – probably even twice. Her inscription (quoted in full above\textsuperscript{116}) underlines the prestige she possessed. Iulia Paulina’s standing and priesthood may even have influenced the career of her husband, see below. Apart from this priestess who served in two separate cults, there are several examples of women who served more than one deity in what I will call a ‘joint cult’, like that of Ceres and Venus in Italy. Two of the ten \textit{sacerdotes Ceteris et Veneris} were of equestrian rank of a total of only ten equestrian women in the catalogue, while four others seem to have been of decurial or maybe higher rank.

An example of a woman who served in a totally different ‘joint cult’ is attested in Antipolis in Gallia Narbonensis. She was \textit{sacerdos Minervae et Dianae} and was honoured with a statue by the \textit{Augustales}:\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{lstlisting}[language=Latin]
Ma[-----] / Ma[re]ellae / sa[ce]rdot(i) Minervae et Dia/nae, in honor(em) / Calpurni(i) Her[metis, marit(i) eius / IIIIIvir(i) Aug(ustales) cor(porati) A(ntipolitani)
\end{lstlisting}

“To Ma… Marcella, priestess of Minerva and Diana, in honour of Calpurnius Hermes, her husband, the sevirs Augustales corporati of Antipolis (erected this).”

The \textit{IIIIVir(i) Aug(ustales) cor(porati)} were probably an association of \textit{seviri} who had finished their year of duty; they are the dedicators of the inscription. It is likely that Calpurnius Hermes was a \textit{libertus} (as the \textit{seviri} usually were) and accordingly that his wife was not of higher social rank. This is \textit{not} to say that the priestess did not possess a reasonably high \textit{standing}, for the \textit{Augustales} – who

\textsuperscript{114} Hoffmann Lewis (1955) 23. Generally in Rome, one person held one priesthood at the same time, Rüpke (2011) 30. There were some exceptions though, Várhelyi (2010) 66-67.
\textsuperscript{115} In small towns though, this might have been different: here, wealthy individuals of lower social standing could not be excluded from priesthoods because in that case a shortage of candidates would be the result.
\textsuperscript{116} Cat.no.52.
\textsuperscript{117} Cat.no.250.
owned a certain amount of wealth\textsuperscript{118} – were a group of people that often received public honours.\textsuperscript{119} Ostrow writes that becoming an \textit{Augustalis} was ‘a path to civic esteem parallel to, and perhaps only just below, that enjoyed by members of the local \textit{ordo}.’\textsuperscript{120} This shows that the priestess of Minerva and Diana was probably a highly regarded citizen of Antipolis, and therefore a suitable candidate for the joint priesthood.

Of some priestesses who served in a ‘joint cult’ their formal rank is unknown, for example Agusia Priscilla, \textit{sacerdos Spei et Salutis} in Gabii. I have found no other \textit{Agusii} recorded on inscriptions from Gabii, nor from other towns around Rome. However, Agusia’s inscription seems to suggest that she was an esteemed member of her community (see above). This backs the suggestion, also provided by the other inscriptions mentioned here, that ‘joint cults’ were often held by women of considerable social standing. The fact that most inscriptions of priestesses acting in ‘joint cults’ were honorary and belonged to statue bases also suggests that the standing of the women was relatively high. However, as often, the evidence is too limited and the difference with other priestesses too small to state that the priestesses serving more than one deity were \textit{generally} of a higher social standing than the others, or that they belonged to a select group.

3.3: Holding a priesthood as a way to consolidate or enhance one’s standing

Apart from \textit{consolidating} one’s social standing, holding a priesthood was a way to \textit{enhance} one’s standing. At the same time, holding a priesthood was a \textit{result} of that standing, for a certain ‘amount’ of at least one of the elements that made up social standing (see chapter 1) was needed to obtain a religious office.\textsuperscript{121} This is illustrated by the few \textit{libertae} who had been priestess; presumably they derived their standing from their wealth. Kleiner and Matheson aptly write: ‘The office of priestess brought distinction both to the woman who held it and to her family, and it was generally a reflection of the prominence her family held in the community in which she served.’\textsuperscript{122} Therefore, it can be said that religion did not only reflect the socio-political order, but also formed it.\textsuperscript{123} That a priesthood brought distinction to the family of a priestess is nicely illustrated by an epitaph from Thubursicu Numidarium in Numidia.\textsuperscript{124}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{119} Ostrow (1985) 71-72; Mouritsen (2006) 243, 245-247. They organised their own finances, membership and possessions. It has been stated that the \textit{Augustae} formed a second \textit{ordo}, below the \textit{ordo decurionum}. D’Arms (2000) 129. Ostrow (1985) 71 calls the \textit{Augustales} a ‘second town council’. This is disputed by Mouritsen (2006) 244-245.
\textsuperscript{120} Ostrow (1985) 64. However, as Mouritsen (2006) 245, points out, this varied between towns.
\textsuperscript{121} Spickermann (1994b) 189. Cf. Hemelrijk (2006b) 189, writing about \textit{flaminicae} of the imperial cult.
\textsuperscript{122} Kleiner and Matheson (2000) 3.
\textsuperscript{123} Cf. Whittaker (1997) 148.
\textsuperscript{124} Cat.no.231.
\end{flushleft}
D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) / Calpurnia Se/data Asprena/tiana Calpur/ni Gemini nepos / Calpurni Sedit(i) / et Vassidiae Ru/filae sacerdo/tis filia pia vi/xit annis XXXII / mensibus III / monum(entum) f(ecit) caris/simae et fidelissim[ae] / coniugi C(aius) Ann(ius) L() / maritus h(ic) s(ita) e(st).

“Dedicated to the spirits of the deceased. Calpurnia Sedata Asprenatiana, granddaughter of Calpurnius Geminus, pious daughter of Calpurnius Sedatus and of the priestess Vasia Ruffilla, lived thirty-two years and three months. Her husband Caius Annius L() made this monument for his dearest and very faithful wife. She is buried here.”

In this inscription the relationship of the deceased to the priestess is clearly stressed; unfortunately we do not know in which cult this Vasia Ruffilla served. It is noteworthy that no municipal offices of both male Calpurnii are recorded, and neither any functions of the husband of Calpurnia Sedata Asprenatiana. This might imply that they had not had any, which would increase the importance of the priesthood of Vasia Ruffilla for her family even more. Another example is the priesthood of the above mentioned Iulia Paulina. Dondin-Payre convincingly argues that Iulia Paulinus’s husband, L. Mucius Mucianus acquired his office as curator as a result of his wife’s priesthood. Mucius Mucianus had not held any important offices, yet he was appointed as curator of Capena twice in his life. This is shown by two inscriptions, the first that of Iulia Paulina from AD 186, the second a dedication erected during the reign of the emperor Pertinax in the spring of 193. As a result of his wife’s prestigious office he became curator for the first time, while he was probably appointed for the second time because he had done so well seven years before.

In sum, apart from reflecting the social hierarchy, which has been discussed in section 5.3.1, priestesses also helped to shape the socio-political order. This connection between religious offices and social hierarchy was consolidated by the system of euergetism. Euergetism institutionalised power relations, and incorporated both the rich – in this case the priestesses – and the poor in the same value-system. By using her (his) social network or spending her (his) own money to the benefit of others, the benefactress (benefactor) demonstrated her (his) higher standing, while those who received the gifts expressed their gratitude publicly. In the next section, priestesses who acted as benefactresses will be discussed.

125 On the other hand, the long name of the deceased might indicate a higher rank. PIR’1, p. 67 mentions various Anni L() who had held high magistracies; a Calpurnius Aspernas (without further information), p. 170 and a Calpurnia, married to L. Nonius Aspernas and mother of a man with the same name as his father. Both were consuls, p. 290. They may have been related to Calpurnia Sedata Asprenatiana, but this is unknown. Still, even if the men in Calpurnia Sedata’s inscription were high-ranking, the fact remains that the priesthood of her mother was explicitly recorded, stressing its value.

126 CIL 11, 3873 = ILS 409.
4: Priesthoods, euergetism and public honour

We have seen in the previous chapter that priestesses literally entered the public sphere when fulfilling their religious duties. Apart from this physical presence in public, priestesses were also present in the centre of their town and of municipal life in a few other ways: they played a role in the system of euergetism as benefactresses or patronesses and as the recipients of public honours. While in the city of Rome, euergetistical priesthoods were relatively unimportant, financial generosity of private persons holding religious offices, played an important role in many Italian and provincial towns. Euergetism could be either in the form of giving benefactions, or in the form of assisting people – individuals or groups – by acting as patron(ess). Women from the local elite also paid their share. In this section I will discuss firstly the priestesses who were also benefactresses and secondly those who were patronesses.

4.1: Benefactions and patronage

There were several ways in which women could gain public recognition. Acting as benefactress or patroness was reserved for the richest and best connected women, while priesthoods were open to a wider circle. These roles often overlapped each other. In order to gain more insight into the phenomenon of priestess-benefactresses I will start with a discussion of the relation between priesthoods and benevolence. This is followed by an overview of the geographical spread of the priestess-benefactresses. We have seen in chapter 1 that Roman influences played an important role in shaping civic religion, but the system of euergetism had also strong links with Romanization. Therefore, it can be supposed that priestess-benefactresses appear in those areas that were the most Romanized; we shall see whether the epigraphic evidence supports this hypothesis. Furthermore, the type of benefactions will pass under review in order to investigate whether priestess-benefactresses provided their towns with gifts that had a close relation to their priesthoods.

Priesthoods and benevolence

Euergetism and (some kinds of) patronage required money, and at the same time money was needed to acquire a priesthood which in its turn often imposed on its holder the obligation to provide benefactions. This was no problem for wealthy women who possessed Roman citizenship, because in many cases they had a de facto control over their possessions, as has been explained in the first

130 See also chapter 1, footnote 31.
132 Beneficence and patronage were not identical, Hemelrijk (2004) 222.
133 Raepsaet-Charlier (2005) 207.
As these women held most priesthoods, the appearance of priestesses-benefactresses need not surprise us, and we may put aside Gold’s view that women ‘were rarely in a position to give or receive substantial gifts.’ It has been estimated that in the second and third centuries AD, about 30 to 45 % of all private property belonging to the local elites was owned by women. Often, certain benefactions were attached to a priesthood, like providing public banquets or organising festivals in honour of a god or goddess, but priestesses could also be expected to act ‘spontaneously’ as benefactresses. In section 5.2.3 several priestesses have been discussed who gave benefactions ob honorem sacerdoti(i), so here I will mainly concentrate on ‘voluntary’ benefactions (which was presumably never really voluntary). Benefactions of this kind could be much grander than (obligatory) gifts paid for on account of being appointed as priestess.

Despite the fact that several priestesses acted as benefactresses, there was not necessarily a direct link between ‘voluntary’ benefactions and priesthoods: not all benefactresses may have chosen (or have been entitled) to hold a religious office. And, which is more important: nor may all priestesses have been able to afford great gifts, for wealth was usually very unequally distributed. Some towns had a broad curial elite that provided the possible candidates for priesthoods, because it was useful to maximise the number of suitable office-holders available. This implies that not all curiales were wealthy. Only the richest, who were very few in number, could afford to give lavish benefactions; others had problems even paying for the minimum required summa honoraria. In addition, we do not know whether the benefactions were given before (perhaps with the purpose to get the office?) or after acquiring a priestly office.

Priestess-benefactresses
Circa 13% of all inscriptions record women who either list their benefactions (or those carried out in their name by someone else) or are praised ob merita eius or ob munificentiam. This number of priestess-benefactresses is about 9% of the circa 354 epigraphically attested benefactresses that have been collected by Emily Hemelrijk. It has to be noted that this number of 354 includes women who

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141 The same holds true for men, and for the relationship between priesthoods and patronage, and between patronage and benefactions.
142 Duncan-Jones (1990) 141: A very small part of the population owned a relatively large territory.
143 Duncan-Jones (1990) 161. A shortage of candidates could be a reality, see Duncan-Jones (1990) 171.
144 Duncan-Jones (1990) 171.
146 Cat.no.114.
147 Cat.no.289.
148 Hemelrijk, forthcoming.

191
gave gifts to *collegia*, but excludes women who gave relatively small gifts like a statue. If these smaller gifts would be included, the number of benefactresses would be much higher, which implies that many more women could acquire prestige by spending their money for the public good than by holding a religious office. This illustrates not only that priesthoods were relatively rare, limited to a smaller group of people and therefore probably extra valuable, but also that being both benefactress and priestess was very exceptional.

The priestess-benefactresses from the catalogue all lived in Italy and Baetica except two, who were from Hispania Tarraconensis and Africa. This African exception is Valeria Concessa, priestess of Ceres; she was praised because of her merits (see chapter 3). The concentration of priestess-benefactresses in Italy and Baetica diverts partly from the spread of benefactresses in general. In the first century AD most benefactresses that are attested lived in Italy; in the second century they could still be found in Italy, but epigraphic evidence shows that they also were active in northern Africa and Spain. In the third century, benefactresses are attested mainly in Africa, to a lesser degree in Italy and only a few times in Spain. As Hemelrijk has stated, generally speaking, the inscriptions of benefactresses have been found in the provinces that were most Romanized. This pattern of inscriptions can be connected with the spread of Roman citizenship, combined with urbanisation and economic prosperity.

The lack of African priestess-benefactresses in my sample is striking, especially considering the fact that many African *flaminicae* were benefactresses. Hemelrijk suggests that the large number of *flaminica*-benefactresses may be the result of local or regional habits. As only one of the African priestesses in my database had acted as benefactress these ‘regional habits’ were certainly not a closer link between priesthoods and benevolence than elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Likely, the standing of the priesthood and the social rank and wealth of its priestesses were more important. We have seen in chapter 3 that the African priestesses of Ceres were probably not of a high social rank; they seem to have belonged to the ‘middle class’. Regarding the other African priestesses in my database, they were probably part of the same social group, for the same reasons as the *sacerdotes Cerceris*: in none of the relevant inscriptions, a reference is made to social rank and all inscriptions were either funerary or dedicatory. In addition, only in a few cases something is known about the male relatives of the priestesses. So possibly the large number of benefactions given by *flaminicae* in Africa can be explained by a concentration of prestige and wealth within an elite group that held the most important priesthood, i.e. the flaminate, and possessed most money.

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150 Hemelrijk (2008b) 14; Hemelrijk, forthcoming 2012. The spread of male benefactors is wider, Hemelrijk (2008b) 14 (who lists several works about male benefactors); Hemelrijk, forthcoming 2012.
151 Hemelrijk (2008b) 14-15; Hemelrijk, forthcoming 2012. However, it needs to be kept in mind that for much of this we rely on inscriptions, and these are not an independent variable.
152 Hemelrijk (2006a) 91.
This link between high social rank and acting as benefactress seems to be backed by the fact that of relatively many priestess-benefactresses in the catalogue their social rank is known. Furthermore, the priestesses whose rank is known were relatively often of decurial rank (likely, fourteen of all thirty-one decurial priestesses), of the equestrian order (one of all ten equestrians) or of senatorial rank (two in four). These numbers show the important link between social rank and benefactions.\textsuperscript{153} This link between social rank and benefactions is also visible when we take into account the priestesses who gave small – and cheaper – gifts to a deity.\textsuperscript{154} Ten other women (apart from the thirty discussed above) spent their own money on gifts for a goddess. Their rank is either unknown – which might indicate that it was not very high – or they were libertae. Additionally, most of them were magistrae and no priestesses. In sum, priestess-benefactresses who gave impressive gifts were usually of high social rank, while their humbler colleagues tended to spend smaller amounts of money on gifts.

\textit{Types of benefactions}

There is no straightforward link between the priesthoods held by the priestess-benefactresses and the specific type of their benefactions, for many sacerdotes erected buildings that had nothing to do with religion, or they gave sportulae and public banquets. This fits with Hemelrijk’s statement that gifts with a religious connotation were not more common among flaminicae-benefactresses than other benefactions.\textsuperscript{155} A good example of a priestess who gave benefactions that had nothing to do with her priesthood is Caesia Sabina from Veii, mentioned above. She had given benefactions to the women of her town, at the same day her husband entertained the men:\textsuperscript{156}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Caesae Sabinae / Cn(aei) Caesi Athicti / haec sola omnium / feminarum / matribus Cvir(orum) /et / sororibus et filiab(us) / et omnis ordinis / mulieribus municipib(us) / epulum dedit / diebusq(ue) / ludorum et epuli / viri sui balneum / cum oleo gratuito / dedit / sorores piissimae}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{153} The \textit{magistrae Bonae Deae} who gave benefactions are exceptions: two of these four women were freed and the other two belonged to the \textit{plebs ingenua}; this seems due to the special character of the cult in which freedwomen and women of low social rank played such an important role. Clark (2011) 364: Brouwer (1989) 277, 278, 284, 287.

\textsuperscript{154} However, it has to be noted that the difference between gifts for the public good and dedications to a deity is not always clear, only in cases when a vow was solved. When a god was presented with a gift, did the public profit at the same time? In cases of a religious building, the answer seems yes, but what about smaller gifts? Several \textit{magistrae Bonae Deae} for instance, gave the goddess objects like clothing, probably meant to clothe the cult statue, a mirror, chests and a silver statue (cat.no.72; 83; 115. Brouwer (1989) 379). One can hardly maintain that the general public profited \textit{directly} from these gifts, but \textit{indirectly} it did. By presenting such gifts, a proper relationship between the deity and the people was maintained. In addition, the money that otherwise had to be spent by the temple or the community (which could be a city or a \textit{collegium}) for such religious equipment, could now be used for something else. Therefore, I consider these inscriptions of the \textit{magistrae Bonae Deae} and the others in which small gifts are mentioned, as benefactions.

\textsuperscript{155} Hemelrijk (2006a) 97-99; Hemelrijk (2008b) 16.

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{CIL} 11, 3811. Four inscriptions in Veii (\textit{CIL} 11, 3807-10) honour her husband, who was adlected in the local senate because of his benefactions to the city of Veii and his \textit{pietas} to the imperial house.
“To Caesia Sabina, (daughter/wife of) Cnaeus Caesius Athictus, who alone of all women gave a banquet for the mothers and Cvirī and sisters and daughters and citizen-women of every order, and who provided bathing and free oil on the days of the ludi and a banquet given by her husband. Her most pious sisters [erected this].”

The fact that her priesthood is not recorded on this inscription implies that Caesia Sabina either had not acquired her religious office yet, or that it bore no relation whatsoever to her benefactions. In other cases though, the benefactions of priestesses seem to have been related to their religious office or to local religion in general. There were several priestesses who paid for statues of gods, shrines and temples. The magistae of Bona Dea and their gifts have already been mentioned, but there were many others: Caesia Sabina’s husband paid in her name for the schola of the collegium of Fortuna; Staberia, sacerdos in Corfinium paid for the porticus in front of a sacarium, Claudia Persina, priestess in Tarragona, paid for a sanctuary, and in Pompeii the public priestess Mamia provided her town with a temple (either of the Genius of the colony or that of Augustus). In Arucci-Turobriga in Baetica a certain Baeba Crinita paid for a temple of Apollo and Diana, possibly the same deities she served as priestess. The temple cost 200 hundred thousand sesterces; according to Curchin these are the highest specified building costs in Spain. Junia Rustica from Cartima (Baetica) erected a bronze statue of Mars on the forum, amongst many other more mundane things, e.g. a banquet.

Banquets were given by three priestesses (or four, if Caesia Sabina’s inscription on which her priesthood is omitted, is included). Only two priestesses gave sportulae. In Iulia Paulina’s inscription from Capena the word sportulae is explicitly used (see above). Antia Cleopatra, priestess on Sicily, gave to all members of the plebs one denarius, two denarii to the children of the decurions and five denarii to the decurions themselves. Giving sportulae was not limited to sacerdotes; women with other religious offices provided them as well: in Ameria, a magistra of Fortuna, rejoiced the members of a collegium with money.

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157 In Africa and Italy, circa ¼ of all public benefactions were building structures with a religious character, Duncan-Jones (1982) 75, 90-93, 157-162; Nichols (2006) 46.
158 Cat.no.61.
159 Cat.no.247.
160 Cat.no.96.
161 Cat.no.240.
162 Curchin (1983) 228. This public building activity was of course supervised by the decurions, who authorized private persons to build or restore temples and altars, and place votive gifts in temples, Castrén (1975) 60.
164 Cat.no.52; 242; 246. Caesia Sabina: CIL 11, 3811 = ILS 6583.
165 Usually, giving sportulae was less expensive than erecting a public building, but this was not the case in bigger cities, except when only the decurions were endowed with the gift. Therefore, in the northern part of Italy where the biggest Italian cities could be found, giving sportulae was rare, Patterson (2006) 172.
166 Cat.no.52.
167 Cat.no. 145.
168 Cat.no.21.
Juliae M(arcìi) f(iliae) Felicitati, / uxori / C(ai) Curiati Eutychitis / IIIivir(i), magistrae Fortu/nae Mel(ioris), coll(egium) centonaria(rum) / ob merita eius; quo honore / contenta sumptum omnem / remisit et ob dedic(ationem) ded(it) sin/gulis HS XX n(ummum), et hoc amplius / arkae corum intul(it) HS V m(ilia) n(ummum), / ut die natalis sui V Id(us) Mai(as) / ex usu ris eius summae epu/lantes i<n=M> perpetuum divider(unt); / quod si divisio die s(upra) s(cipta) celebrata non / fuerit, tune pertineb(at) om(nia) summa / ad familiam publicam

“To Iulia Felicitas, daughter of Marcus, wife of Caius Curatus Eutyches, quattorvir, magistra of Fortuna Melior, the college of the centonarii (gave this) because of her merits. As she was content with this honour she gave back all that was spent and because of the dedication she gave to each member twenty sestertii, and besides this she put in their cash 5000 sestertii, so that they could celebrate her birthday on the fifth Ide of May from the interest of this sum in perpetuity with a meal and a distribution; when the distribution on the day above described is not celebrated, then the total sum will fall to the public familia.”

To enforce the celebration of her birthday, Iulia Felicitas who was one of only three known female patrons of all collegia centonariorum, had included the clause that if this banquet was not held on the stipulated day, the money would fall to the familia publica. All benefactions of Iulia Felicitas consisted of money, but we have already seen that several other priestesses gave more than one type of benefactions, for instance Agusia Priscilla, the sacerdos Spei et Salutis Augustae from Gabii we have encountered above. She promised to restore the porticus of (the temple?) of Spes which was damaged by old age. Furthermore, she gave great shows (judi) for the health of the emperor Antoninus Pius and she gave clothes. Another example is the often mentioned Caesia Sabina, priestess of Fortuna Redux in Veii, whose inscription has already been quoted on above. She provided a banquet and free oil to go with free bathing. Furthermore, her husband Cnaeus Caesius Actictus restored the schola of a collegium and adorned it with porticoes and statues in her name.

In sum, priestesses and women with other religious offices could give a variety of benefactions to their town or to a selected group of its inhabitants, to a collegium or to a deity. These gifts could have a religious character and be related to the cults in which the women served, but equally as often the gifts were not religious at all. In this, the priestesses did not differ from other wealthy women (and men), although these could obviously not give benefactions related to their religious office.

170 Cat.no.78.
171 CIL 11, 3811.
172 CIL 11, 3810.
**Priestesses and patronage**

Like benefactresses, women who acted as patronesses to individuals, *collegia* and towns were not uncommon in the Roman Empire,\(^{173}\) especially in the West.\(^{174}\) Patronage and priesthoods were closely linked, certainly regarding male priest.\(^{175}\) Patterson has stated that priestesses-benefactresses-patronesses were important, not only in the third century – although that is the period when most are attested – but also earlier, in the first and second centuries AD.\(^{176}\) Therefore, we can expect to find some priestesses in the catalogue who had acted as patronesses. And indeed, they have been attested, though compared to priestesses-patronesses who acted in the imperial cult, their number is very small.

All priestesses in the catalogue were patronesses of their *liberti* (which was very common, of course), except one. Nummia Varia, priestess of Venus Felix in the Italian town Peltuiniun is the only example of a priestess-patroness of a town who was no *flaminica*. In AD 242 she had been patroness of her native town Peltuiniun, while her parents had supported the town before her.\(^{177}\) That she is the only example may seem surprising at first sight, because in Italy and Africa patronage of cities by women was not uncommon, mainly in the third century,\(^{178}\) but this can be explained by the social rank of the priestesses in the catalogue. Most city patronesses came from families with a high social rank\(^{179}\) like Nummia Varia who was of senatorial descent, but only very few other priestesses in the catalogue were *clarissimae feminae* or women of equestrian rank.

Often, patronesses also gave benefactions.\(^{180}\) Many times however, the benefactions given by them are not listed in full, according to Nichols because the title of patron was so prestigious that nobody wanted to give the impression that they had ‘bought’ their position as patron.\(^{181}\) In case of Nummia Varia this is true indeed; she is praised for her *adfectio, benevolentia* and *pronus animus*, words that indicate ‘a general attitude of goodwill and emotional involvement’, but which are ‘usually interpreted as referring to financial generosity’.\(^{182}\)

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177 Cat.no.88; Patterson (2006) 219-220. In honour of this woman a certain Marcus Nummius Iustus, a relative (or freedman?) of hers, was honoured as a patron of the same city Peltuiniun and was granted *bisellium* and *cubitum*, *CIL* 9, 3436 = *ILS* 6528. Hemelrijk (2004) 217 note 38. Her father had also been patron of Beneventum, *AE* 1969/70, 169. Sometimes, city patronesses were related to each other, but the patronage of a city was not hereditary, Hemelrijk (2004) 216-217.
Motives and rewards

By acting as priestess-benefactress and/or priestess-patroness women could gain extra public attention and the respect of their local community. This respect was sometimes expressed in a statue or other public honours (see below section 4.2). In addition, inscriptions, buildings and other durable benefactions reminded later generations of the generosity of the priestesses. This ‘perpetual’ remembrance could also be achieved by clauses like that determined by the *magistra* of Fortuna Melior, who wished her birthday to be celebrated in perpetuity (see above). Acquiring ‘perpetual’ fame was one of the ways to gain symbolic capital, which in its turn could result in a higher social standing, while the formal social rank of the priestess-benefactress-patroness stayed the same. This interaction can be seen as a sign of Romanization, because it fitted well into the Roman pattern of values, in which benefactions given for the public good were highly regarded. ‘Public generosity (…) was part of what it meant to be a good and responsible citizen’, as Hemelrijk writes. Benefactresses showed their wealth, the love for their city and their own civic identity. Besides, benefactions stressed the prestige of the elite and of the city in general.

Furthermore, benefactions could help to enlarge the prestige of the *family* of the priestess-benefactress. A good example is Iunia Rustica from Cartima in Baetica. She had been *sacerdos perpetua et prima*. Statues of herself and her son Caius Fabius Luniarius had been decreed by the local *ordo*, but she paid the costs. She also erected a statue of her husband Caius Fabius Fabianus. Presumably, the statues of the priestess and her son were granted because of the multiple benefactions of Iunia Rustica, who had restored the public colonnades, donated land for a bath-house, used her influence so the public taxes were returned, erected a bronze statue of Mars on the Forum, built porticoes at the bath-house on her own land with a swimming-pool and a statue of Cupid and gave a banquet and spectacles on top of it.

Like giving benefactions, acting as patroness resulted in public visibility – not only directly at times when the patroness was asked for favours, but also indirectly. *Tabulæ patronatus*, for instance that of Nummia Varia which is the only one for a city patroness that has been preserved, could be

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185 Gordon (1990a) 194; Hemelrijk (2006) 87-88. In contrast to men, who could be promoted to the equestrian and senatorial orders.
187 Patterson (2006) 171-172, 175-176; Hemelrijk (2008b) 17. In Africa many cities may even have been financially dependent on the local elite; this meant that ‘the possession of wealth and the willingness to spend would certainly hold the key to both the acquisition and the retention of power,’ Garnsey (1971) 116.
189 Cat.no.283.
191 Cat.no.88; Hemelrijk (2004) 222.
displayed on public buildings, and be constant reminders of the patroness and her benevolence. Apart from social pressure – which may partly have been hostility from the crowd or their peers because of the women’s extreme wealth – and the ideology of good citizenship, motives for women to become patronesses were mainly prestige and acknowledgement of their standing. This is very clear in Nummia Varia’s inscription: becoming patron of Peltuinum is described as the highest honour a citizen of the town could receive (magis magisque hoc honore qui est aput nos potissimus), and the patronage was offered ‘for the enhancement of her standing’ (pro splendore dignitatis suae). Nummia Varia is a perfect example of a typical Romanized euergete. She was a prestigious high-ranking woman who was benefactress, patroness and priestess at the same time. Her high rank and membership of an important family enabled her to gain favours for her town that honoured her for her benevolence. It may be clear though that Nummia Varia’s example is exceptional, compared to the other priestesses-benefactresses-patronesses in the catalogue. However, there is one major similarity: they all were ‘perpetually’ remembered as benevolent priestesses.

4.2: Public honours

As a reward for their munificence, their patronage or the liturgies attached to their priesthood, sacerdotes could be granted several public honours. As visibility was important in the self-representation of the elite, these public honours were desirable. Furthermore, because in the provinces statues and public burials were connected to the level of Romanization, not only the generosity of the priestesses was stressed, but their adherence to Roman values as well. Presumably, this gave an impetus to the prestige they already possessed (and which they needed to be granted public honours). Regarding the connection to Romanization, it is unsurprising that the further from Rome one goes, the less Honorary inscriptions can be found. Forbis writes that most Italian honorary inscriptions were erected in the Augustan region 1; the others are from south and central Italy. This spread is not surprising, because region 1 was not only close to Rome; it was also densely populated, was home to many rich towns and had the highest epigraphic density. This is in accordance with the

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192 Nichols (2001) 104. However, Hemelrijk (2004) 212, 221, writes that most inscriptions in which patronesses are recorded, were erected for their benevolence instead of their patronage.
194 In one case, a woman was honoured because of her religious office: the epitaph of Veturia Sennen from Rome shows that she had been honoured ofb/ / magistratum / colleg(i) Bonae deae, cat.no.10. Brouwer (1989) 376; Clark (2011) 354 footnote 32.
196 Hemelrijk (2006a) 100, 102.
198 Cf. Forbis (1996) 99, 101. Although of course the general epigraphic density is lower, the further from Rome one goes.
199 Forbis (1996) 32-33. The Honorary inscriptions collected by Forbis (1996, 99) follow the epigraphic habit, although no sharp decline in the third century can be seen; this decline can neither be traced in my catalogue.
data I have collected. Of the twenty-one Italian honorary inscriptions in the catalogue, seven were erected in region 1; four in region four; three in region 7; two in regions 2 and 3; one in region 6 and two on Sicily. The other thirteen honorary inscriptions stem mostly from Baetica (6), the African provinces, Narbonese Gaul and the rest of Spain.

Who honoured the priestess?
People could be honoured publicly by groups or by individuals. The more prestigious this group or individual, the more honour the recipient acquired, and accordingly the higher his or her standing became. Members of the decurial elite were generally honoured by their family members or collegia, while equestrians and senators tended to be honoured by larger and more important groups of people, like the ordo and the plebs. In order to recover the place of priestesses in this ‘rank of honour and standing’, in this section I will pay attention to the persons who paid for the public honours given to the priestesses. It has to be noted though, that in all cases when someone received a public statue or a grave monument built on public ground, the consent of the ordo was needed, which was an honour in itself.

Like other men and women, female religious officials were honoured by private persons, often family members. To mention a few examples: Valeria Concessa, sacerdos Cererum, from Bulla Regia (Africa Proconsularis) was honoured by her sons, while the husband of Publicia Similis, magistra Matris Matutae from Praeneste (region 1) erected her honorary inscription and statue. Flavia Coelia Annia Argiva who had been priestess of Juno Populona in Teanum Sidicinum (region 1) was honoured by her father. In all three cases it was explicitly stated that the place (presumably for a statue) was given by decree of the decurions. A sacerdos (or magistra) could also be honoured by a collegium, as six examples in the catalogue show. The Pompeian ‘public priestess’ Eumachia received a statue from the fullers (cat.no.95) and Iulia Felicitas, magistra Fortunae Melioris from America, was honoured by the collegium centonariorum (cat.no.21). The sacerdos Minervae et Dianae Ma? Marcella from Antipolis and Voconia Severa, priestess of Ceres in Velia were both honoured by the Augustales (cat.no. 250 and 137).

In two – possible – cases, women decided to honour a priestess. Caesia Sabina’s statue and accompanying inscription were erected by her ‘pious sisters’ (sorores piissimae) after she – as the only woman – had given a banquet for the mothers, sisters and daughters of the decurions and for the citizen-women of every order (see above). It is not clear who these ‘pious sisters’ were, but

201 It is also similar to that of other types of inscriptions, e.g. the municipal decrees collected by Sherk (1970).
204 Women in general were often – for example in Hispania – publicly honoured by their husbands, who accordingly shared in the honour, Navarro Caballero (2001) 195-196; Hemelrijk (2004) 228. E.g. CIL 14, 2997 and AE 1939, 111.
205 Cat.no.155; 105; 128 respectively.
206 Cat.no.13; 21; 80; 95; 137; 250.
considering the fact that Caesia’s special donation was given to the women of Veii, it is likely that the ‘sisters’ were the Veian women, and not Caesia’s kinswomen, if she had any. The other priestess who was honoured by women lived in Surrentum during the reign of Tiberius. The local matrons provided her with a statue:207

---s]acerd(oti) public(ae) Vener(is) / [et Cereris? h]uic matronae statuam /[ex aere coll]ato in aedem Veneris / [ponendam cu]raverunt huic /[decuriones p]ublice locum sepulturae et /[in funere quinque milia numnum?] et statuam decreverunt /(…)"

“To ?, public priestess of Venus and Ceres (?), for her the matrons took care of erecting a statue in the temple of Venus after collecting money, and for her the decurions decreed a burial place in public and five thousand sesterces for the funeral and a statue. (…)”208

Being honoured by a group of matrons209 was rather exceptional, and was therefore probably quite prestigious.210 As the ordo paid for the funeral and a statue, the honos this priestess from Surrentum acquired, must have been even higher.211

In at least ten cases, a priestess was honoured by the ordo,212 though it is likely that another seven honorary inscriptions were also erected by the ordo: Alsöldy writes that when no dedicator was mentioned, it is likely that the ordo had fulfilled this role.213 Sometimes the ordo honoured a priestess together with the cives or with all people. Two sacerdotes Cereris et Veneris received their statues from the ordo and citizens of Capena, while Iulia Aemilia Callitta, sacerdos in Regium Iulium, and Antia Cleopatra, sacerdos in Thermae Himeraeae on Sicily, were honoured by the ordo and populus.214 Priestesses could also be honoured by the citizens alone, for instance Agusia Priscilla from Gabii,215 or by the plebs, like Licinia Rufina from Ipsca in Spain.216

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209 There are several (Republican) examples of matrons who decided to act collectively, see Schultz (2006) 33-33; a supplicatio in 212 BC, Schultz (2006) 38; the matrons of Rome established and paid for the temple of Fortuna Muliebris, Schultz (2006) 54-55. However, it does not seem to have been common.
210 When fund-raising was needed, money was usually collected from the plebs, Alsöldy (1984) 40.
211 Together with this priestess a certain Lucius Cornelius M? was honoured for his benefactions that consisted, amongst other things, of circus and gladiatorial games. Like the priestess, he received a public funeral and a statue. See also Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 109.
212 This number includes only honorary inscriptions; those inscriptions in which the ordo granted the use of public land for a burial are excluded.
214 Cat.no.51; 52; 114; 145.
216 Cat.no.78 and 290 respectively.
In sum, priestesses and other women with a religious office were relatively often honoured by groups instead of individuals, which resulted in a higher social standing and showed that they were considered very prestigious and were important members of their local communities.

Kinds of public honour

The public honours women in general received, could vary from crowns and reserved places in the theatre to statues and public burials; these honours were the same as those granted to men.\(^{217}\) In Rome, Augustus had given the Vestals privileged seats at the gladiatorial games,\(^{218}\) while Nero allowed the Vestals to watch athletics, a privilege originating from Greece, where the priestesses of Ceres [i.e. Demeter] were allowed to watch the contests in Olympia.\(^{219}\) Despite the fact that special seats at the games were provided for *flamines* and *flaminicae* of the imperial cult, according to the *lex Narbonensis,*\(^{220}\) there is no epigraphic evidence in the catalogue of priestesses who were granted the same (Greek) honours as the Vestals.

Nevertheless, other Greek public honours could be bestowed on priestesses, as an inscription from *Magna Graecia* shows (not included in the catalogue). In the Greek text, dating from AD 71, that records the decree of the local Neapolitan *proskletos,* the honours granted to Tettia Casta are, in the words of Lomas ‘a curious mixture of Greek and Roman’.\(^{221}\) It was decided that the recently expired priestess should receive public mourning, a silver statue that was to be adorned with a crown in honour of the gods, a statue of herself and inscribed shields. Furthermore, the costs of her funeral were to be paid by public money (though the funeral had to be organized by her family), and a place for the grave monument and the costs for the monument itself were also publicly given. I have found no comparable Latin inscriptions of Greek honours granted. Below, I will discuss the two public honours that were most often granted to the priestesses in the catalogue: statues and public funerals.

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\(^{218}\) Suetonius, Aug. 44, transl. J. C. Rolfe: *Feminis ne gladiatores quidem, quos promiscue spectari sollemne olim erat, nisi ex superiore loco spectare concessit. Solis virginibus Vestalibus locum in theatro separatim et contra praetoris tribunal dedit* – ’He [Augustus] would not allow women to view even the gladiators except from the upper seats, though it had been the custom for men and women to sit together at such shows. Only the Vestal virgins were assigned a place to themselves, opposite the praetor’s tribunal.’

\(^{219}\) Suetonius, *Nero* 12: *Ad athletarum spectaculum invitavit et virgines Vestales, quia Olympiae quoque Cereris sacerdolibus spectare concedidit.* The Vestals had other privileges, like the right to have lictors. Seneca, *Controv.* 1.2.3 also mentions a lector as attendant of a priestess, he had many similarities with a Vestal. Examples of Greek priestesses of Demeter who were granted comparable honours: the priestess Chamyne from Elea was, as only woman, allowed to visit the games, Pausanias, 6.20.9. The priestess of Demeter Kourortrophos Achaia was granted place in theatre of Dionysos, *RE* s.v. Demeter, 2738.

\(^{220}\) *CIL* 12, 6038 = *ILS* 6964. The *lex* records several other privileges of (ex)*flamines*, but these – e.g. those related to a role in the local and provincial council – do not seem to have been shared by *flaminicae*. See Van Andringa (2002) 216 about the privileges and prescriptions of the *flamines*.

\(^{221}\) *IG* 14, 760; Lomas (1993) 180. The words used to justify the honours she received after her death are a mixture of Greek and Roman (Tettia Casta is praised as a lover of honour, which was typically Greek, while being an exemplary wife and citizen was a combination of Roman and Greek praise). This makes the decree a good example of acculturation, according to Lomas (1993) 177, 179-180. Cf. Bielman and Frei-Stolba (1998) 23.
**Statues**

Statues and public funerals are frequently mentioned in inscriptions of other priestesses. Twenty-four of the forty-three priestesses who received public honours were granted a statue, either during their lifetime, or after their death. Several examples have been mentioned in the previous section. These statues, that were probably at least life-sized, were in nine cases given by the *ordo*, sometimes together with others groups. Only a few times, priestesses were honoured with a statue by private persons. Like other kinds of public honours (see above) statues erected by the local or provincial council were more honourable than those erected by private persons.

Statues were erected on the *forum* according to social standing; their order and size was a direct representation of the existing power relations. Unfortunately, the inscriptions belonging to the statue bases of the priestesses in the catalogue are not found *in situ*. The only certain exception is inscription belonging to the statue of Eumachia, which was erected and found inside her aedificium on the *forum* of Pompeii; obviously in this case no approval of the *ordo* was required. Besides, it is possible that the statue of the Surrentine public priestess of Venus (and Ceres?) whose name has been lost (see above), was erected in the temple of Venus. Likely, the approval of the decurions was needed here.

In half of the inscriptions (probably) belonging to statue bases, the formula (*locus datus* *decreto decurionum* was used, so these statues were erected on public land. The other statues of the priestesses in the catalogue may have been set up in more private areas like *atria* of houses or semi-public buildings of *collegia*. It has to be noted though, that several inscriptions are damaged, so the part recording the approval of the *ordo* may have been lost and, as has been mentioned above, the consent of the *ordo* was not always inscribed.

**Public burials**

The largest honour someone could acquire was a *funus publicum*. Accordingly, this was reserved for a limited number of women – and men – only. Still, several examples can be found of women – very often priestesses – who were publicly buried, or usually: were granted public land for their graves. Of the priestesses in the catalogue a possible eleven received a public funeral. Like other public

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222 Only one preserved statue has been identified as belonging to a priestess in the catalogue, i.e. that of Eumachia.
224 Cat.no.51; 52; 53; 126; 145; 283; 284; 289; *CIL* 11, 3811, which records the priestess of cat.no.136.
225 Cat.no.105; 130; 200; 244; it is unknown whether all these inscriptions belonged to statue bases.
226 Hemelrijk (2006a) 94.
227 Whittaker (1997) 146-147.
228 See Mürer, forthcoming, for a discussion of the statues of priestesses.
230 Savunen (1997) 153; Levison and Ewald (2005) 635; Hemelrijk (2006a) 94, 96. This happened most frequently when a magistrate or a member of his family died during his time of office, Castrén (1975) 61-2. It cannot be recovered whether the same applied to priestesses.
231 Apart from the land for the tombs that was donated by the decurions, the expenses of the burial were sometimes also paid by municipal funds, Castrén (1975) 61.
honours, a public burial seems to have been linked primarily to merits, rank and standing and not to priesthoods.\textsuperscript{232} This can be concluded from the fact that of twenty-six of the forty-three priestesses who were publicly honoured their rank is known, which is higher than the average, and from the fact that this rank is relatively high (see below).

Virtually all priestesses in the catalogue who were honoured with a \textit{funus publicum} lived in Campania (the few others in Latium, also in the Italian region 1) and this suggests that regional habits may have played a role (and of course a high epigraphic density which in itself can also be seen as a result from regional habits).\textsuperscript{233} And indeed, in Campania in general many public burials have been attested.\textsuperscript{234} Most information concerning public funerals of priestesses stems from Pompeii; the Pompeian \textit{sacerdotes} and their funerals will be discussed in the Epilogue.

Here I will only mention the role of a priestess from Surrentum in the \textit{funus publicum} of one of her family members. A \textit{sacerdos publica Veneris et Cерeris}, whose name has partly been lost, is mentioned on an inscription that records the deaths of several members of a family who lived in the Augustan period. One of them – the priestess’s son who was a boy of little more than a year old – was granted a public burial, i.e. both the place and a sum of money for the funeral. The grave contained the bodies of the boy, his mother and – probably – his stepfather, a certain Titus Clodius Proculus.\textsuperscript{235} Like this man, the priestess did not receive a public burial herself (that is to say: there is no clear evidence for this), although obviously she shared in the honour of being buried on the same (previously) public land as her little son. Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba write that the decurions granted a public funeral to the son of the priestess, ‘par ce geste ses parents, en premier lien sa mère, la prêtesse de Vénus et de Céres.’\textsuperscript{236} Obviously the boy could not have been granted this honour because of his own merits. In my opinion it is unlikely that the rank and career of Titus Clodius Proculus played a role, even though he had had an impressive military career and had been pro-censor in Lusitania. However, he does not seem to have adopted the boy. Furthermore, the priestess held a \textit{locally} important office (in contrast to Titus Clodius Proculus), and therefore I think it is likely that Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba are right and his mother’s priesthood was an important factor in granting the honour to the boy.

\textit{The link between public honours and holding a priesthood}

Although in many cases women member – called ‘intermediaires’ by Bielman and Frei-Stolba – were publicly buried because of a prestigious male family they were also honoured because of their own merits, for example as benefactresses or priestesses.\textsuperscript{237} The example from Surrentum, mentioned above shows that men (or, in this case: a boy) could also be honoured as ‘intermediary’ for a priestess.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{232} Savunen (1997) 158.
\item \textsuperscript{233} See Bielman and Frei-Stolba (1998) 19, about the regions in which women were granted public burials.
\item \textsuperscript{234} Gregori (2007-2008) 1067.
\item \textsuperscript{235} About Titus Clodius Proculus: Demougin (1992) 142.
\item \textsuperscript{236} Zimmermann and Frei-Stolba (1998) 110.
\item \textsuperscript{237} Bielman and Frei-Stolba (1998) 26-27, 28-29, 30.
\end{itemize}
Bielman and Frei-Stolba write that the Campanian priestesses – most of whom stemmed from important *gentes*, possessed a lot of money and were rewarded with the same honours as men[^238^] – are the best examples of women who belonged to the group that was honoured publicly because of its public activities.[^239^]

According to Hemelrijk, public honours could be granted both as a reward and as an *encouragement* to give (more) benefactions, as only a few *flaminicae* were honoured *because* of their gifts.[^240^] And indeed, even though some priestesses were granted their statues *ob munificentiam or ob merita*, terms generally used to indicate benefactions,[^241^] in most cases, no reason for the honour is mentioned. In case of the *flaminicae* acting in the imperial cult it was the priesthood and/or the social position of the priestess and her family that was the reason to be honoured.[^242^] This seems to be supported by the fact that ‘special’ *flaminicae* – those acting in the provincial cult and the *flaminicae perpetuae* – were more often granted a statue than common *flaminicae*, obviously, they were held in higher esteem (and were useful tools in inter community rivalry).[^243^]

Regarding the forty-two priestesses in the catalogue whose inscriptions explicitly record public honours, relatively many of them were of a high social rank, which backs Hemelrijk’s argument. Five were of equestrian rank, possibly two were *clarissimae feminae* and probably eighteen belonged to the local elite (the *decuriones*). In addition, although many different kinds of priestesses were publicly honoured, a relatively large part (12) was made up by public priestesses (*sacerdotes publicae*), which may lead to the conclusion that it were indeed the most ‘special’ priestesses of a high social standing who were granted public honours.

4.3: *The cause and result of acting in public: auctoritas*

So far, we have seen that many priestesses were clearly ‘visible’ in their cities: in the first place because they had to represent their community as part of their religious office (see chapter 4); secondly because they often belonged to the local elite that lived in the middle of society; thirdly because priestesses frequently acted as benefactresses and/or patronesses and fourthly because several of them were granted public honours. All these factors contributed to and at the same time resulted from, a certain amount of power.[^244^] Power in this context means what the Romans called *auctoritas*, i.e.

[^243^]: Hemelrijk (2006a) 100.
[^244^]: The difficulty is obviously to answer the question how far priestships changed a priestess’ (or her family’s) standing and how far they recognised it. I do not agree with Marshall (1975) 125-126, who writes: ‘Money and social standing secured office, but not vice versa, and it was the realities of the former which earned Roman respect.’ I think it worked both ways. Forbis (1996) 4: People who were publicly honoured could claim a certain
no direct political control that was a consequence of the right to vote, but unofficial influence, practiced through social networks. Acting in roles and religious offices that were limited to a small number of people led to auctoritas stretching beyond religious matters.

On one inscription in the catalogue, the word auctoritas is even explicitly mentioned. It is the much-quoted inscription of Nummia Varia from Peltuinum Vestinum (cat.no.88), certainly the woman who appeals most to the imagination of all priestesses in the catalogue. It is said that that Nummia Varia ‘by interceding with her authority and standing, guarantees safety and protection’ (intercedente auctoritate dignitatis suae tutos defensosque praestet) to the ‘state’ of Peltuinum, both to individual members and to the city as a whole (singulos universosque nos remque publicam nostrum). The reciprocity of rank and standing, acting in public (in this case as priestess and as patroness of a town) and auctoritas is voiced in this inscription by the choice of words in the final part about the reasons given to co-opt Nummia Varia as a patroness: firstly, her priesthood of Venus Felix is mentioned, followed by the statement that her standing will be enhanced because of her cooptation as patroness (see also above) and then the authority by which she will exercise her patronage is recorded. Obviously, as a senatorial woman Nummia Varia must have possessed a reasonable amount of authority before she got her priesthood and patronage, but it is clear that her auctoritas in her community was enhanced by both, and that all elements had to be mentioned to stress the soundly based prestige of this impressive woman.

Conclusion

Even though they were not commemorated as such, for they were characterised by common female qualities in their epitaphs, priestesses were women who played prominent roles in their local communities. Like their religious tasks, discussed in the previous chapter, their non-religious roles in public life show their importance. They were highly regarded inhabitants of their towns and were keen on keeping and strengthening their prestigious positions. Although their families may have profited from the prestige of the priestesses, family members were not more present in the inscriptions of priestesses than in those of other women.

The consent of the ordo was needed to be elected and invested with a priestly function, apart from money to pay the summa honoraria. Furthermore, it was often helpful (and in many cases probably even essential) to have an influential family, of which several other members already held civic offices and priesthoods. All this implies that priesthoods could not be obtained by everybody, which is unsurprising regarding the important position a priestess had as mediator between gods and men. Priestesses were often members of the local elite, which was connected through ties of kinship.

authority. Cf. Veyne (1990) 44: The elite had political power because of its prestige that resulted from wealth, and this wealth gave them power elsewhere as well.
Several priestesses showed their prestige and wealth by acting as benefactresses or patronesses. In turn, they were honoured with statues and public burials. Therefore, the relationship with their city can be termed active and reciprocal.

This relationship between priestess and town, and priesthood and prestige may hint at the use of female priesthoods as devices whereby powerful families increased their collective prominence in the public and ritual lives of the towns – a comparable situation with that in the East. At first sight that is, for the priestesses in the West seem to have played a far more active role in these dynastic politics than their eastern colleagues. Of course, various priestesses (like priests) were honoured after their death, which implies that not they themselves but only their relatives profited from the honour. Furthermore, they could continue the role other family members had had before them, like Nummia Varia as patroness of Peltuinum, or help their husband in gaining an office, like Iulia Paulina from Capena, but there is no sign of daughters being put forward by their fathers, or wives by their husbands, and of male family members paying for their relatives’ priesthoods. In some cases the priestesses were even the last surviving members of their family, and accordingly they decided how to act and how to show their own prominence and that of their families (we see this situation in Pompeii, see below).

After all, women in the West who were *sui iuris* could dispose of their own possessions, and the power of guardians was limited (see chapter 1). This implies that in this respect there was no major difference with their male family members: everyone who belonged to an important *gens* will have taken his or her share in promoting the family. This situation may have fuelled the wish of local communities to make as much use of the available wealth as possible, by providing women with a chance to hold priesthoods and to pay for the accompanying liturgies. However, as women could only hold office as priestesses, and not as (honorable) magistrates, as was the case in the East, it seems that female priesthoods in the western part of the Empire must have had a special significance of their own, and were considered as proper religious offices, contributing to the *pax deorum*. 