UNIVERSITÀ
DI PAVIA

DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI UMANISTICI

CORSO DI LAUREA MAGISTRALE

THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD: HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY, & ART

The cult of Isis in Northern Italy and its decline (3rd–5th centuries AD)

Relatore: Prof. Livia Capponi

Correlatore: Dr. Dario Anelli

Tesi di Laurea Magistrale di Anatolii Viktorov

Numero di Matricola: 532287

Anno accademico 2024/2025

Contents:

Acknowledgements

Every piece of scholarship is a product of its time. The contributions of this work cannot be objectively assessed without considering that it was shaped not only by ancient sources and previous research, but also by the author's own academic trajectory and the prevailing intellectual currents of the first quarter of the 21st century.

The significant influence of the scholars with whom the author has collaborated over the last three years is equally indisputable. First and foremost, I must express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors at the University of Pavia, Professor Livia Capponi and Dr. Dario Anelli. Their insightful comments and suggestions were instrumental in ensuring that the structure and content of this thesis are as cohesive as the complexity of the topic allows. Furthermore, the valuable feedback on epigraphic material provided by Professors Gianluca Gregori (Sapienza University) and Rita Scuderi (University of Pavia) deserves special mention. I am also sincerely grateful to Professor Emeritus Barbara Scardigli (University of Siena) and Professor Peter Shuvalov (St. Petersburg State University) for recommending essential literature on the broader problems of Late Antique studies. Finally, the practical experience gained during excavations at San Casciano dei Bagni and Taneto, under the supervision of Professors Emanuele Mariotti (University for Foreigners of Siena) and Paolo Storchi (Sapienza University), proved invaluable to my research.

It is both a sincere pleasure and a debt of gratitude to thank my friends and colleagues in Pavia, particularly those who shared the daily rigors of research in the Humanities Library at Palazzo San Tommaso: Gabriele Brusa, Generoso Cefalo, and Pablo Suescun. Without our daily, vivid discussions on Roman history, which were as full of energy as they were of constructive and objective criticism, this work would never have reached completion. I would also like to acknowledge the students of the Master's program in "Ancient Mediterranean World: History, Art and Archaeology", with special thanks to Nickolas Macchione and Saikat Mukherjee for their support. Finally, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my family for their unwavering hope and belief in me throughout this journey.

Annotation

Religions arise, flourish, transform into new forms, and sometimes disappear. The worship of Isis is a typical example of this cycle. Thanks to the development of the overseas contacts, Isis penetrated into Italy from Egypt and became popular in high circles and at the imperial court, but, like other pagan cults, began to fade away in Late Antiquity. This study attempts to trace evidences of the cult of Isis in Northern Italy during its decline period, from 3rd century AD to the beginning of the 5th century AD. Both archaeological data and literary sources are extremely insufficient and preclude definitive conclusions. Therefore, we attempt to integrate the "Material turn" and the "Linguistic turn" approaches to analyse the inscriptions, sarcophagi, gems, and historically significant letters of the first Christian bishops. The decline of the cult was remarkably swift, occurring within a single century. By the beginning of the 5th century AD in Northern Italy, Isis had transitioned from a figure of active worship to a mere product of literary imagination.

Chapter I: The cult of Isis in the Roman Empire and its historiography

The diversity of Roman beliefs has been a subject of interest to many generations of scholars. In speaking of Roman religion, we must first of all emphasize that religion in the Roman world was not what we think it is today. Religious beliefs were very closely related to the daily life of the Romans and at the same time were much less private. According to all popular beliefs, the gods lived among humans. Religion was based on a system of rituals that were performed to establish a communication between deities and humans. At the same time, the world of the Roman gods was open to transformation. As the Roman state expanded its territory and contacts with other cultures increased, the Romans adopted many foreign beliefs and cults. The cult of Isis[1] was one of them.

Studies of Egyptian cults in the regions of the Roman Empire have become popular from the middle of 20th century, as can be seen in works that cite evidence of beliefs in Germany, Hungary, the Black Sea region, etc. Ch. B. Rüger states the difficulty to trace how the provincial religion looked like outside the administrative centres of the Empire, and cites the hopes of A. Von Domaszewski, "to have correctly pieced together the chain of religious thought" one day[2]. For some of the western provinces of the Roman Empire the studies were later done, including Gaul and the German territories[3].

The Italian regions and, in particular, Northern Italy cannot be left out of the existing wave of interest in Roman religious history[4]. Geographically, the work is limited to the Cisalpine territory, since Cisalpine Italy has long been considered a

[1] Hereinafter we will use the term "cult" in connection with the works of F. Dunand, according to which the goddess Isis was only a part of the great Egyptian Pantheon, and the veneration of Isis, included in the polytheistic system of Roman beliefs, is difficult to distinguish from the veneration of the original Roman gods. See Dunand 2010, p. 41; p. 50.

[2] "*…die immer und überall zerrissene Kette in der Entwickelung der religiosen Gedanken richtig zussamengefügt zu haben*" – Rüger 1991, S. 227.

[3] Derks, 1998, 325 p.; Spikermann 2003, 663 S., 2008, 392 S.; Kunz, 2006, 424 S.

[4] A good list of references was provided by Laurent Bricault in his work: Bricault 2000, pp. 189–194. Works related to Northern Italy that appeared later in time: Fontana 2010, 411 p.

naturally separated region. Modern research in Italian archaeology considers the area between the Appennines and the Alps as a self-sufficient.

Chronologically, this work covers mainly the time interval from the beginning of the third century AD to the beginning of the fifth century AD. These time borders are justified by the enactment of two important historical documents that distinguish this period from other times in the history of the Isis cult in the Roman Civilization.

The first is a legislative act of AD 212 by the emperor Caracalla (*Constitutio Antoniniana*), who is known as the last Roman emperor who was actively interested in Egyptian cults[5]. By this act, all inhabitants of the Roman state were given the status of Roman citizens and were brought into official relations with the gods by the emperor[6]. Epigraphic evidence suggests that the cult of Isis reached its zenith during the reign of Caracalla, followed by a "sharp decline"[7].

The second is the edict of emperor Theodosius the Great banning all pagan religions, and forbidding the use of any hieroglyphics (AD 391). Following this edict, the Christians of Alexandria with the Roman army support[8], led by the bishop of the city, Theophilus, destroyed the Serapeum[9], which was still in use, despite the fact that the last mention of it dates no later than the first quarter of the fourth century AD[10].

The cult of Isis did not cease in Egypt, despite literary praise of the fierceness with which the Christians destroyed the cults' sites at Alexandria, as we have discussed above. As J. H. F. Dijkstra has shown, except for few examples, temples in Egypt disappeared without the direct intervention of Christian clergy. "The sacred landscape remained basically the same until the 6th century"[11]. Egyptian temples lost imperial support after the 3rd century AD, but some of them remained active for a long time, surviving into the time Christianity became the state religion of the Roman

[5] On Caracalla's interest in Egyptian cults: Podvin 2014, pp. 307-309; p. 325; Galimberti 2019, 133.
[6] Scheid 2019, p. 4.
[7] MacMullen 1981, p. 116 & n. 10.
[8] Theophile followed the permission of the Prefect of Egypt. See Chuvin 2011, p. 71; p. 286, n. 24.
[9] Many different accounts exist in literary sources, among them: Theodoret. HE. 5. 22; Ruf. HE. 11, 24-27; Sozomen HE. 7. 15; Eun. VS. 472.
[10] Bagnall 2021, p. 194.
[11] Dijkstra 2008, p. 342.

Empire[12]. The temples of Philae even served the political purposes of the Roman state, for they were important to the believing tribes of the Blemmians, and it was important for the maintenance of peace on the southern frontier of the Empire that these places be open for worship[13]. Philae was the center of worship where the old beliefs existed until the 6th century AD. The "final integration" of Christianity into society in this region occurred only in that time[14]. Despite this time frame, we must remember that very often the archaeological evidence we have still cannot be dated very precisely, so possible inaccuracies in the actual chronology may throw us to a later time.

Despite official prohibitions, we know of the Egyptian cults' existence in the 5th century's Italy. A festival in honor of Osiris celebrated by peasants in *Falerii* is mentioned by the poet *Rutilius Namatianus* in his poem *De reditu suo*[15] around AD 417[16]. In this poem, the vitality of a pagan cult with Egyptian roots is contrasted with the somber sadness of the Judeo-Christian tradition[17]. Another poet, Claudian, refers to a festival procession in a poem from AD 398, comparing emperor Honorius to a statue carried by Egyptian priests in Memphis[18]. A. Cameron suggests that this reference might not describe a festival in Italy, where Honorius was located in AD

[12] Dijkstra 2008, p. 342.
[13] Dijkstra 2008, p. 343.
[14] Dijkstra 2008, p. 344.
[15] Rut. Nam. 1, 371-376:
"*lassatum cohibet vicina Faleria cursum,*
quamquam vix medium Phoebus haberet iter.
et tum forte hilares per compita rustica pagi
mulcebant sacris pectora fessa iocis:
Illo quippe die tandem revocatus Osiris
Excitat in fruges germina laeta novas."

(The neighbouring Faleria checks our weary course, though Phoebus scarce had reached his mid-career. That day it happened merry village-bands along the country cross-roads soothed their jaded hearts with festal observances; it was in truth the day when, after long time restored, Osiris wakes the happy seeds to yield fresh produce - trans. by J. W. & A. M. Duff). The feast of Osiris described by the poet is probably the *Heuresis* ("Inventio") of the god, which was celebrated probably in November. To summarize the recent controversy about which day the feast was celebrated: Fo 1992, p. 97.
[16] For the date of the event in AD 417 see: Cameron 1967, p. 39.
[17] Fo 1992, p. 96; Tommasi 2020, p. 148.
[18] Claud. 8, 570-576. Cited after Cameron 1970, p. 201.

398, but rather a celebration Claudian witnessed firsthand during his youth in Egypt[19]. As P. Chuvin observes, Claudian's comparison suggests that following the Isis cult was no longer stigmatized among the Roman nobility, a sharp contrast to the likely social judgment of the 1st century AD[20]. In another poem[21], Claudian (authorship uncertain) refers to Egyptian festivals once again. While we cannot be certain if these are based on his personal experiences in Egypt, one thing remains clear: the ban on Egyptian religion in AD 391 did not immediately transform the literary landscape.

We will therefore be more confident in our conclusions if we formally assign this work to the time from the third century AD to the early fifth century AD. The work follows the so-called longue durée concept of Late Antiquity[22].

1. From the Middle Ages to the Age of Enlightenment

After the fall of the Roman Empire and the decline of Roman pagan religions, the process of Isis' oblivion was long, as evidenced, for example, by the depiction of Isis in the decoration of the 11th century ambo in Aachen Cathedral (Fig. 1). But understanding the use of this image of Isis must be objective. This ivory tablet was placed among other Byzantine and late Roman decorations in a large and elaborate structure that was presented to St. Mary, the cathedral's patroness, by Holy Roman emperor Henry II[23]. A total of six such plaques have survived. From the dedicatory inscription that was added to the Ambon, it is clear that the main value of the gift was judged by its expensive components and materials: "*[HOC] OPVS AMBONIS AVRO [GEMMISQVE MICANTIS REX PI]VS HEINRICVS CELAE[STIS HONORIS ANHELVS DAPSILIS EX PROPRIO TIBI DAT SANCTISSIMA VIRGO QVO PRE]CE SUMMA TVA SIBI [MERCES FIAT VSIA]*"[24].

There are several references to Isis in Medieval literary sources. Isidore of Seville in the 7th century AD devoted a small amount of text to Isis in his *Etymologies*,

[19] Cameron 1970, p. 201.
[20] Chuvin 2011, p. 270.
[21] Claud. carm. min. 11. See the discussion in Cameron 1970, pp. 203-205.
[22] Brown 1971, p. 20.
[23] Rehm 2019, S. 100.
[24] Ibid. S. 101–102.

as did the later Carolingian writer Rabaun Maur, but their interest in mentioning Isis was rather based on their knowledge of classical texts, especially poetry[25].

Interest in Isis arose with renewed vigor during the Renaissance. Thanks to Gutenberg's revolution, the readership grew considerably and literature written in national languages became popular[26]. Interpretations of the past in favor of contemporary political realities in the pages of books have become more relevant. Egyptian cults and the cult of Isis were placed by late medieval authors at the center of an important historical process.

One such author was Emmanuel-Philibert de Pingon (1525-1582), a nobleman, member of the Council of the Duchy of Savoy and vice-chancellor of the state, who published a history of Turin – *Augusta Taurinorum* (1577). On the very first page of the book, he linked the foundation of the city to a certain Eridan, who arrived from Egypt, and drowned in the river nearby[27]. Then a cercope named *Diphyes* started to sacrifice bulls ("*Tauros*") to Jupiter, as Io was venerated under the name of Isis and so the name of the city was born[28]. Using earlier myths collected by Annius of Viterbo and Giovanni Boccaccio, Emmanuel-Philibert de Pingon was probably also influenced by the discovery in 1567 of inscription, dedicated to Isis[29]. The Pingon's work, created using a large number of sources, with the main objective of glorifying the royal dynasty of Savoy, was accompanied by poor critical rigor, legends and falsifications[30].

At the same time, in Switzerland, the chronicler Aegidius Tschudi (1502-1572) tried to find a temple of Isis after a inscription from the 1st or 2nd century AD was found near Mount Lägern, west of Wettingen[31]. Examples of research related to the regional past, such as those mentioned above, were only part of the great interest in

[25] Castelli 1997, p. 599.
[26] Anderson 1991, pp. 37–47.
[27] Pingon 1577, p. 1.
[28] Pingon 1577, p. 1.
[29] Mandolesi 2006, p. 14.
[30] Doglio 1998, p. 620. n. 51.
[31] Shaer 2022, passim.

ancient times that began to develop in late medieval Europe. One of the main centers of Egyptian studies was Rome.

The famous "*Mensa Isiaca*", a 1st century BC bronze tablet with decoration resembling a hieroglyphic inscription, was found when the Eternal City was looted by Charles V's landsknechts after the emperor had taken the city following a long siege. The find later became part of the Pope's collection at the Vatican. Deciphering the "inscription" revealed that the tablet was not produced in Egypt, as previously thought, but was a product of Roman art, and the result of a high interest in Egyptian culture on the part of Roman society[32].

These examples bring us to one of the main problems in the study of Egyptian cults in Roman times, which is the true origin of the available sources. This problem has been well characterized by F. Dunand: "*On peut se demander en effet si un scarabée, un oushebti, voire une statuette d'Isis, retrouvés dans ces conditions, conservaient aux yeux de leurs possesseurs leur valeur originelle, religieuse et symbolique, ou s'il ne s'agissait pas tout simplement de « curiosités » exotiques*"[33].

In addition, analyzing written Egyptian sources was impossible until 1822, when the hieroglyphs were deciphered by Jean-François Champollion. Nevertheless, even in the absence of written evidence, in the late eighteenth century scholars began to conclude that there was a continuity of the pagan beliefs in Egypt[34].

Much interest in the eastern cults of the Roman Empire arose after the rediscovery of the city of Pompeii in the eighteenth century. Due to the fact that the city was buried under layers of ash, it is still considered one of the best-preserved ancient sites in the world. This discovery provided a new perspective on archaeological excavations. Thanks to Karl Weber and Francesco La Vega, excavations at Pompeii became more systematic than ever before[35]. The discovery of the city contributed not only to archaeology in general, but also to the study of

[32] Swetnam-Burland 2015, p. 7. On the influence the *Mensa Isiaca* produced on the image of Isis in 16th century see also Bricault 2019, pp. 283-284.
[33] Dunand 2010, p. 39.
[34] As can be seen, for example, from the views of J. J. Winckelmann: Grimm, 2004, p. 168.
[35] Trigger 2006, pp. 58–59.

Egyptian cults. The Iseum at Pompeii and the Serapeum at Pozzuoli, also discovered in the eighteenth century, were the first architectural evidence for the existence of Egyptian cults in Italy, which had previously been known only from literary sources[36]. Numerous reliefs, paintings, statuettes and amulets have been preserved under the ashes. Pompeii is probably the only place where the Isis temple has survived "*presqu'integralement*"[37]. The temple has been mentioned in many travelogues and scientific studies. It influenced on European culture – Mozart was inspired by the temple while writing his opera "The Magic Flute" (Egyptian scenery for the opera was used until the end of the XIX century[38]), and numerous popular prints depicting the temple were created (Fig. 2-3).

However, the discovery of human remains outside this temple, who came to be regarded as priests of the cult of Isis who had chosen to flee the city rather than stay as custodians of the building, supported the negative view held at the time of the discovery about the followers of Egyptian cults in the Roman world. Because these cults were associated with the East, they were considered inferior[39]. And this view was already well established in the literature prior to these discoveries.

When Edward Gibbon (1737 – 1794), speaking about the causes of the decline of the Empire, mentioned Egyptian cults several times in his famous work, these cults were seen by him as something of which the Romans should be ashamed: "The Egyptian superstition, of all the most contemptible and abject, was frequently prohibited" (by Senate)[40]; "the effeminate priests of the Nile were abolished" (by Constantine)[41]. Perhaps the style of sources (including authors such as Tertullian) that E. Gibbon used was retained in his book, so we get the impression that Egyptian cults were enemies of Roman culture. It should be noted that Gibbon used Christian

[36] Kunze 2004, p. 35.
[37] Tran Tam Tinh 1964, p. 8; short summarize on temple found in: De Caro 1997, pp. 338–343.
[38] Humbert & al. (eds.) 1994, p. 393.
[39] Moormann 2016, pp. 108–109.
[40] Gibbon 1887, p. 39.
[41] Gibbon 1887, p. 613.

sources but did not follow the Christian view of Roman history[42]. Egyptian cults were always alien to the Romans in the sense in which Gibbon represents them.

At Gibbon's time, ancient sources written in Latin and Ancient Greek became available to all who knew the classical languages[43], so this opinion could have been challenged; however, it took many years before that happened.

2. The cult of Isis in 20th century research and methodological considerations

A generalization of research on the history of the study of Roman religions, if such a thing is possible at all, has yet to be undertaken. This is also true for studies of Egyptian cults in ancient Rome. In this work only a few key studies will be mentioned, which will further allow us to better understand the problems associated with the study of Egyptian cults in Italy.

Franz Cumont wrote one of the major works in the early 20th century that is still often referred to today, *"Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme"* (1906). Cumont rejected the view still popular in his time, that eastern cultures were inferior to Roman culture[44], and clearly demonstrated the high level of ties between Rome and the East, supporting the idea of "*penetration pacifique de l'Occident par L'Orient*"[45]. One important novelty, that followed the new diffusionist view of ancient history that became popular at the time of F. Cumont's lectures was that Egyptian cults entered the Roman world through increased contact between cultures through trade and military links[46]. However, the influence of the East on the original nature of these cults was still exaggerated[47]. F. Dunand, for example, believes that the spread of the cult of Isis outside Egypt had nothing to do with Egyptian priests[48].

[42] Wootton 1994, p. 103.
[43] Anderson 1991. p. 72.
[44] Cumont 1929, p. 2.
[45] Cumont 1929, p. 4.
[46] Cumont 1929, pp. 34–36.
[47] "*l'éclat éblouissant du soleil d'Orient avait fait pâlir les astres du ciel tempéré de l'Italie*" – Cumont 1929, p. 306.
[48] Dunand 2010, p. 50.

Franz Cumont was convinced, that Egyptian religion became attractive to the Romans because it did not contain a clear theological basis[49], but at the same time it promised immortality after death[50]. The Romans were primarily attracted by "*seduction puissante de leur rituel*"[51]. We see the same viewpoint in the published lectures of F. Cumont's contemporary, A. D. Nock, "*Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*" (1933). Nock credits the mysterious ritual of the cult of Isis as the main base for Romans to become interested in this eastern religion[52].

The first criticism appeared as early as the 1900s. According to J. Toutain, the cult of Isis was not so popularized[53]. Contradicting F. Cumont and A. D. Nock, R. MacMullen, following J. Toutain, refused to consider the cult of Isis popular in the Roman Empire outside of Egypt, and refused to consider it popular among the Romans, all believers having to be immigrants or slaves (and their descendants) who came from the eastern parts of the Roman Empire[54]. Similar to MacMullen' explanation, T. Derks later shares a similar view: "their (oriental) cults appear to have hardly any followers among the native rural inhabitants"[55]. The Romans' own interest in the Egyptian gods was only part of their worship of the many existing gods in general, which over time was increasingly supported by collective memory of the past and collective opinion[56].

A significant result of R. MacMullen's work remains his challenge, based on epigraphic records, to F. Cumont's assertion that Isis worship was ubiquitous among the Roman population[57]. This assertion probably stemmed from Cumont's undue emphasis on literary sources and the prevailing perception of Rome as a multicultural society unified by a common ethnic identity. Considering the question of who

[49] Cumont 1929, pp. 145–146.
[50] Cumont 1929, pp. 156–157.
[51] Cumont 1929, p. 146.
[52] Nock 1933, pp. 80–81.
[53] MacMullen 1981, p. 114. On Cumont's theory and its critics see also Briaud 2015, pp. 26-27.
[54] MacMullen 1981, pp. 116–118.
[55] Derks, 1998, p. 26.
[56] MacMullen 1981, p. 91.
[57] Cumont 1929, pp. 34-35.

venerated Isis in Rome, MacMullen's analysis of epigraphy inscriptions found in Italy highlights the significant popularity of Isis inscriptions commissioned by Greek-speaking slaves and freedmen[58]. While it was previously suggested that merchants and soldiers brought the cult of Isis from Egypt to Italy, MacMullen argued that migrants "brought by force" and slaves were the primary agents of its dispersion[59].

However, R. MacMullen's work is not without its own generalizations. By prioritizing the quantity of inscriptions over their qualitative context, he suggested that "in the provinces, soldiers are not much seen in Isiac Lists"[60]. This assertion appears to be at odds with the extant material, particularly if one examines the specific clustering of the epigraphic record. In third-century *Faesulae* (modern day Fiesole) statues of Isis and Osiris were found, with the dedications written in the basements[61] (Fig. 4). Both inscriptions were dedicated to Isis by a Roman veteran, Caius Gargennius Maximus, on behalf of his brother, Marcus Gargennius Macrinus, who was also a veteran[62]. The reference in one of the inscriptions to the sacred city of *Taposiris Magna*, located 45 km from Alexandria, has led scholars to conclude that these veterans were soldiers returning homeland after serving in the East[63]. Thus, even if Roman soldiers were not the ones who initially introduced the cult of Isis to

[58] MacMullen 1981, p. 114: "In Campania generally as in Apulia and Etruria, three quarters of the dedicants in inscriptions to Isis are slave or freed…elsewhere, three fifths, in Rome or Venetia". See also p. 199, n. 8.

[59] MacMullen 1981, p. 114.

[60] MacMullen 1981, p. 114.

[61] The description of the statues and the context of their finding see in Guidotti 1997, p. 368.

[62] *CIL* XI, 1543 (*RICIS* 511/0101): "*Domino Osiri* / [*C.*] *Gargennius Sp*(*urii*) *f*(*ilius*) *Sca*(*ptia tribu*) *Maximus* / *veteranus nomine fratris sui* / *M. Gargenni Sp*(*urii*) *f*(*ilii*) *Sca*(*ptia tribu*) *Macrini veterani" ("À notre maître Osiris, Caius Gargennius Maximus, fils de Spurius, de la tribu Scaptia, vétéran, au nom de son frère Marcus Gargennius Macrinus, fils de Spurius, de la tribu Scaptia, vétéran" – trans.by L. Bricault)*; *CIL* XI, 1544 (*RICIS* 511/0102): "*Dom*[*in*]*ae Isidi Taposiri* / *C*(*aius*) *Gargennius Sp*(*urii*) *f*(*ilius*) *Sca*(*ptia tribu*) *Maximus veteranus* / *nomine fratris sui M*(*arci*) *Gargenni Sp*(*urii*) *f*(*ilii*) *Sca*(*ptia tribu*) *Macrini veteran" ("A notre maîtresse Isis de Taposiris, Caius Gargennius Maximus, fils de Spurius, de la tribu Scaptia, vétéran" – trans. by L. Bricault)*. Cited after Bricault 2005, pp. 627-628.

[63] Malaise 1972a, p. 188; Guidotti 1997, p. 368.

Italy, they remained deeply involved in its maintenance and practice across various parts of the Empire well into Late Antiquity [64].

MacMullen believes that sources such as artwork and coins have nothing to do with the actual history of cults[65]. We do not completely agree with the assertion concerning the coins. Sometimes the numismatic evidence gives us the valuable information. For example, it is the numismatic evidence from the era of emperor Antoninus Pius that helps us understand that near Corinth, in the harbor of Kencrae (*Κεγχρεαί*), there was a sanctuary of Isis when coins were minted depicting a harbor with a statue of Poseidon in the center and temples on the sides (Fig. 5). The coin's legend, "*C(OLONIA) L(AVS) J(VLIA) COR(INTHVS)"*, entitles us to assume that the coin represented either Kencrae or Lechaion[66]. One of the earliest coins of this type shows the same harbors, but the deity is not Poseidon, but a different one. R. L. Hohlfelder suggested that the statue of Poseidon probably replaced the statue that had previously stood on this site [67]. D. E. Smith considered this statue to be a representation of Isis Pelagia, Isis with a sail[68]. L. Bricault agrees with E. Smith, arguing that we are dealing with an attempt to demonstrate that the harbor was under the patronage of two sea deities, Poseidon and Isis[69]. Thus, numismatic evidence, along with epigraphy, archaeological finds, and literary sources, can provide us with valuable information.

Another point of view was provided by J. W. B. Barns (1978): the Romans hated everything Egyptian, "were unsympathetic to Oriental Civilizations" [70]. Egyptian religion, according to J. W. B. Barns was abandoned by Egyptians as "it had

[64] Seems interesting also the idea, that the magic gems with the images of Egyptian gods were brought to Italy from Egypt by the Roman soldiers, as many deities were represented with military equipment – Neverov 2000, C. 157. On the magic gems see Chapter II.
[65] MacMullen 1981, p. 92.
[66] Hohlfelder 1970, p. 326.
[67] Hohlfelder 1970, p. 328.
[68] Smith 1977, p. 202.
[69] Bricault & Veymiers 2006, p. 409; Bricault 2019, p. 178.
[70] Barns 1978, p. 14.

been pressed into the imperial service"[71]. At the same time, according to him, "paganism dies hard".

Today we cannot fully agree with this attitude towards Roman Egypt. Despite the persecution of Egyptians mentioned by J. W. B. Barns[72], the attitude of the Romans towards foreigners does not explain their interest in foreign cultures and traditions. The Roman historian Tacitus mentions the interest that Germanicus had in the new Roman province of Egypt: he was going without soldiers, dressed in Greek fashion and visited many temples, asking priests to translate the hieroglyphical inscriptions for him: "*Tiberius cultu habituque eius lenibus verbis perstricto, acerrime increpuit quod contra instituta Augusti non sponte principis Alexandriani introisset"* ("Tiberius passed a leniently worded criticism on his dress and bearing, but rebuked him with extreme sharkness for overstepping the prescription of Augustus by entering Alexandria without the imperial consent" – trans. by Clifford H. Moore)[73]. This example clearly shows that the official policy of the Roman state did not support but at the same time did not prohibit interest in Egyptian culture[74]. The distinction the Romans made between the inhabitants of Egypt was not really based on any ethnic origin[75]. We observe not only the penetration of the Romans into Egypt, but also the spread of the influence of Egyptian culture in Italy. After the conquest of Egypt, mosaics and paintings with Egyptian subjects became popular among the Romans, as well as burials in the form of pyramids and pillars, which can still be seen in the squares of modern Rome[76]. Egyptian antiquities were surrounded by an aura of magical function, which is why they became popular[77].

Another question that can be raised in connection with Barnes' view concerns religion in Egypt during the Roman period. When a foreign government co-opts religion for its own purposes, the functions of supernatural forces (in this case, local

[71] Barns 1978, p. 17.
[72] Barns 1978, p. 16.
[73] Tac. ann. 2, 59-60.
[74] "*l'opposition des premiers Césars (to Egypt) avait fait place a une tolérance allant parfois jusqu'a la sympathee déclarée*" – Beaujeu 1955, p. 229.
[75] Vandorpe 2012. p. 262; Bagnall 2021, pp. 112–113.
[76] Alfano 2001, p. 281.
[77] Swetnam-Burland 2015, p. 68.

deities) inevitably change. But, as F. Dunand has clearly shown, despite the transformation that took place in the case of Isis, in Roman Egypt the goddess was still regarded as responsible for the patronage of mothers and childbirth, functions that were Egyptian in origin[78]. What really happened in the Roman period of Egyptian history was a complex process of unification and assimilation of the goddess and other deities of the Pantheon (since the Ptolemies, not only the Egyptian Pantheon) among themselves[79]. This was probably due to the absence of "a unifying theological system" in Egyptian Religion[80]. However, it would be difficult to argue that this process contributed to the downfall of pagan religions. The loss of state support, as discussed above, has not resulted in the destruction of beliefs[81]. But the loss of education of the priests, their isolation[82], and thus the erasure of the meaning of the rituals, together with the long coexistence with Christianity, led to a banal forgetfulness of the past, which was subsequently overridden by a Christian literary tradition that invented the past for its own purposes, which now leads to difficulties in reconstructing the true picture of the last years of Egyptian cults.

In the second half of the twentieth century, however, a large number of works appeared attempting to catalogue all the objects that are directly related to eastern cults in the Roman world. These attempts were part of a functionalist approach – catalogues of objects could provide explanations in which matters of daily life Isis and other Egyptian gods acted as patrons[83]. Particularly noteworthy are the works of, M. Malaise[84], M. Ch. Budischovsky[85], F. Dunand[86]and V. Tran Tam Tinh[87]. This research culminated in the major 1997 exhibition in Milan, "*Iside: Il mito, il mistero,*

[78] Dunand 1979, p. 62.

[79] In case of Isis the assimilations in Egypt we can observe through the iconographical and inscriptions between Isis and Hathor, Aphrodite, Demeter and Tyche, Thermoutis, Sothis: Dunand 1979, p. 32; 62–77.

[80] Alfano 2001, p. 282.

[81] See p. 5, n. 9.

[82] Dijkstra 2008, p. 215.

[83] A definition of the Structuralist approach by R. Barthes: "The goal of all structuralist activity is to reconstruct an object in such a way as to make evident the rules of its functioning". Cited after Clark 2004, p. 43.

[84] Malaise 1972 a, 529 pp; Malaise 1972b, 400 pp.

[85] Budichovsky 1977, 248 pp.

[86] Dunand 1979, 287 pp.

la magia". Following the event, an extensive catalogue was published under the editorship of E. Arslan. Through this book, the study of Isis in the Roman world has secured a permanent and significant place within the field of Classical Studies.

The vast amount of the collected data, regarding the cult of Isis has led researchers to estimate and summarize its specific role within the Roman world. We shall limit our analysis to two primary scholarly trends that currently dominate the trajectory of new research on the cult of Isis.

The primary trend of Isis studies, established by M. Malaise[88] and furthered by L. Bricault and his students, emphasizes the necessity of examining the cult through its regional manifestations[89]. This approach explores how the worship of Isis, initially taken shape in Rome, evolved into distinct regional forms as it spread through provincial urban centers. While L. Bricault acknowledges a decline in the cult beginning in the middle of the 3rd century AD, he views this process as gradual and lacking a definitive terminus, drawing primarily on evidence from Rome and the eastern provinces[90].

The second trend of thought, led by the German scholar J. Rüpke, suggests, that our understanding of Roman religion is contingent upon the perspective from which it is examined. These interactions are situated within a temporal system which — sustained by the tangible outputs of ritual[91] and maintained through a continuity of imperceptible transformations, eventually coalesces into what is now, perhaps anachronistically, termed a "cult"[92]. J. Rüpke views the worship of Isis as a good exemplar of Roman religion, interpreting it as the result of a "communication of individuals who decide to frame their religious action as communication with such a goddess or group of related deities"[93]. J. Rüpke, therefore, interprets worship of Isis as a form of religious communication rooted not in spiritual foundations, but rather

[87] Among the works: Tran Tam Tinh 1964, 206 pp; 1972, xxi + 261 pp; 1973, 225 pp.
[88] Briaud 2015, p. 51.
[89] Bricault 2000, passim; Briaud 2015, p. 59.
[90] Bricault 2014, p. 359.
[91] Rüpke 2016, pp. 137-138.
[92] Rüpke 2016, passim.
[93] Rüpke 2018, p. 72.

in social networks and perceived benefits[94]. As societal support and the tangible benefits of this worship diminished, the associated material contributions ceased; consequently, the presence of the deity during the Late Antique period slowly vanished from the daily life of Northern Italy.

3. The cult of Isis in Roman world

Although the cult of Isis will be the focus of our study, we cannot avoid discussing the multifaceted nature of ancient beliefs that allowed for the veneration of several gods. Given the parallels that are often drawn between Egyptian and Greco-Roman deities[95], mention may be made of the temple of Mithreo under the church of St. Prisca in Rome, on the Aventine hill, where Serapis was venerated on a par with Venus, Mars, Asclepius, Dionysus, Hecate and Fortuna[96]. In Pompeii there are many images preserved in which Isis is represented inseparably with other Egyptian and Roman deities[97]. We see the same thing in the literature evidences. We also learn that Isis was worshipped along with other gods in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (2nd century AD). According to Apuleius, Isis and Osiris were to be venerated as one: "*quanquam enim conexa, immo vero unita ratio numinis religionisque esset, tamen teletae discrimen interesse maximum"* ("for although the principle of the deity himself and of his faith was associated, and indeed was at one, with that of Isis, yet a very great distinction was made in the rites of initiation" – transl. by J. G. Griffiths)[98]. The goddess was part of a complex pantheon of gods where each deity had its own niche.

---

[94] Rüpke 2018, p. 72.

[95] For Isis see for example Pakkanen 1996, pp. 90–91.

[96] Santangelo 2022, p. 107. See also Derks 2024, p. 236.

[97] Tran Tam Tinh 1964, pp. 123–172: catalog. No. 1. *Isis-Fortuna (?) et Bacchus (Caupona, I, 2, 20. Mur nord du Viridarium(1)*)6: *Isis, Serapis et Anubis (Praedia Juliae Felicis, II, 4, 3. Aedicula Sud du Portique)*, 8. *Isis et Serapis (Praedia Juliae Felicis, II, 4, 3. Aedicula Sud du Portique)*; 13 *Isis, Serapis et Harpocrate (Casa delle Amazoni, VI, 2, 14. Viridarium)*; 17 *Isis, Serapis, Harpocrate et Anubis (Casa degli Amorini dorati, VI, 16, 7. Angle Sud-Est du Peribole)*. 25. *Isis, Serapis, Harpocrate et Anubis (Casa di Giuseppe II, VIII, 2, 38-39. Aile droite de l'Atrium)*; 51. *Isis et Serapis (Temple d'Isis. Mur Sud-Ouest du Sacrarium)*; 58. *Isis et Luna (Pistrinum, IX, 3, 10/12)*; 59. *Isis et Harpocrate-Helios (IX, 3, 15. Mur Nord du Cubiculum Sud-Ouest du Peristyle. M. N. inv. 8836)*; *Isis, Harpocrate, Anubis (Casa degli Amorini dorati, VI, 16, 7. M. N. inv., 19. 286.)*; 133. *Isis, Harpocrate, Anubis (Cabaret, VI, 16, 40. M. N. inv., 133.377)*; 133b. *Isis, Harpocrate, Anubis (Provenance inconnue. M. N. inv., 19.301)*; 134. *Isis et Bacchus*; 136. *Isis, Serapis et Harpocrate (Villa rustica de la campagne pompeienne). Antiquarium de Pompei, no. 1090/4.*

[98] Apul. Met. 11, 27.

The first evidence of Egyptian cults in Roman Italy dates back to the 2nd century BC[99]. Campania was the region where Egyptian cults began to spread. The oldest known Serapeum on the peninsula was founded at Pozzuoli around 105 BC[100]. The cults probably became popular due to trade ties with the Greek island of Delos. From the names found in inscriptions on Delos and in the Campania, we know that many Roman merchants maintained good contacts between the two places[101]. When the island became an Athenian colony (after the end of the Third Macedonian War, 166 BC), trading contacts increased and many of these merchants also became followers of the cult of Isis[102]. The influence of Delos on the spread of the cult is not in doubt, for the cult of Isis had been established here long before. As we know from inscriptions found in one of the three temples of Serapeum on the island of Delos, the cult of this god was already established in the first half of the 3rd century BC[103]. Serapis and Isis were venerated there on a par with Anubis and later with Harpocrates[104].

The cult quickly spread throughout Italy and "was not restricted to trading zones, harbours and places of high level of immigration"[105]. However, the popularity of Isis among sailors and the existence of the cult of Isis Pelagia (Isis of the Sea) from Hellenistic times should be emphasized[106]. In the 2nd century BC, a temple of Serapis was also built in Pompeii[107]. This temple was rebuilt immediately after the AD 62 earthquake, while public buildings such as the Forum and the Basilica were still destroyed by the time Vesuvius erupted[108].

Cleopatra's visit to Rome in 46 BC, described by Cassius Dio and Suetonius[109], according to C. Alfano[110] and Sarolta A. Takács[111] was able to be "decisive" for the

[99] Tran Tam Tinh 1964, p. 19; p. 25; 1972, p. 3.
[100] Tran Tam Tinh 1972, p. 3; Alfano 2001, p. 279; Coarelli 2019, pp. 118–119.
[101] Tran Tam Tinh 1964, p. 25.
[102] Tran Tam Tinh 1964, p. 19; p. 26; Heyob 1975, p. 10.
[103] Bruneau 1970, p. 461.
[104] Bruneau 1970, p. 461.
[105] Alfano 2001, p. 278.
[106] Bricault 2019, passim.
[107] For example: Gregori & Nonnis 2016, p. 253, n. 75; Alfano 2001, p. 279.
[108] Alfano 2001, pp. 279–280.
[109] D. C. Hist. rom. 43, 27, 3; Suet. Iul, 52.

increase of interest in Egyptian culture in the Roman society. The self-representation of the queen was placing her near the Roman gods. As we know from Appian, in the shrine of *Venus Genetrix*, one built by Caesar in the very center of Rome, an image of Cleopatra was placed near the one of the goddess ("*τε εἰκόνα καλὴν τῇ θεῷ παρεστήσατο*")[112]. Cleopatra was "*χρυσῆ ὁρᾶται*" ("seen in gold")[113]. The installation of the statue may have followed Egyptian traditions, as we know that another example of a gold statue of Isis existed in the temple of Philae[114]. As Plutarch describes, Cleopatra presented herself as the 'New Isis': "*στολὴν ἱερὰν Ἴσιδος ἐλάμβανε καὶ νέα Ἶσις ἐχρημάτιζε*" ("*assumed a robe sacred to Isis, and was addressed as the New Isis"*- trans. by B. Perrin)[115]. Since, such a statue in the Forum area, along with her visit, could indeed have greatly influenced Roman interest in Isis. However, the correctness of this interpretation needs a remark. The temple of *Venus Genetrix* was primarily built to glorify Caesar and his family[116]. Thus, the deification of Cleopatra was probably regarded as personal affair of Caesar.

Because the Roman state was primarily interested in maintaining public order, the persecution of various non-Roman beliefs was not systematic until the third century AD[117]. Egyptian cults were no exception. The first prohibition of the cult occurred in 59/58 BC[118]. In 53 BC, all the existing temples of Serapis and Isis in Rome were ordered to be demolished[119]. The prohibitions were related to the great popularity of the cult in Rome, as can be evidenced by the fact that between 90 and 64 BC several coins with Isiac symbols appeared[120]. However, as early as the 40s BC, likely prompted by Cleopatra's visit, a new temple of Isis was proposed, probably in line with the decision ("vote") of Augustus, Antonius and Lepidus to erect a new

---

[110] Alfano 2001, p. 278.
[111] Takács 1995, pp. 69-70.
[112] App. BC. 2, 102.
[113] D. C. Hist. rom. 51, 22, 3.
[114] Capponi 2023, p. 55.
[115] Plu. Ant, 54.
[116] Dobesch 2000, p. 117; Sauer 2021, pp. 217-218; Capponi 2023, p. 54.
[117] Takács 1995, p. 56; Scheid 2019, p. 2.
[118] Ensoli 1997, p. 306.
[119] Ensoli 1997, p. 306.
[120] Coarelli 2019, p. 118, n. 54.

temple of the goddess in Rome ("*τῷ τε Σαράπιδι καὶ τῇ Ἴσιδι ἐψηφίσαντο*")[121]. We don't know, whether the mentioned temple was the one, that existed on *Campus Martius*. After destruction by Tiberius, this sanctuary was rebuilt under Caligula[122]. Unfortunately, we cannot visualize the temple from the time of AD 70 as well, as fire destroyed the building in AD 80. Domitian rebuilt the temple about the same year[123]. The reconstructed building was even reflected on the reverse of some of his coins[124].

The personal attitude of the aforementioned emperors to the Egyptian cults can be disputed, as it has always been linked to social rituals or political events. Caligula brought the statues of the Ptolemies from Egypt to Rome (Fig. 6-7), and later Domitian did the same[125], that uncover a growing interest in connecting the imperial power with the pharaonic image, however, the choice of a pharaonic garment does not make the statues connected to the Egyptian religion[126].

The only surviving story about the Flavian dynasty's personal relationship with Egyptian cults is a brief mention by Flavius Josephus of Vespasian and Titus spending the night in the Temple of Isis in Rome:

"*Τοῦ δὲ στρατιωτικοῦ παντὸς ἔτι νύκτωρ κατὰ λόχους καὶ τάξεις ὑπὸ τοῖς ἡγεμόσι διεξωδευκότος καὶ περὶ θύρας ὄντος οὐ τῶν ἄνω βασιλείων ἀλλὰ πλησίον τοῦ τῆς Ἴσιδος ἱεροῦ, ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἀνεπαύοντο τῆς νυκτὸς ἐκείνης οἱ αὐτοκράτορες...*" ("The military, while night still reigned, had all marched out in companies and divisions, under their commanders, and been drawn up, not round the doors of the upper palace, but near the temple of Isis; for there the emperors reposed that night" – trans. by H. ST. J. Thackeray)[127].

[121] D. C. Hist. rom. 47,15,4. According to Sarolta A. Takács "the plan was never carried out" – Takács 1995, p. 69.
[122] Roullet 1972, p. 23.
[123] Roullet 1972, p. 23.
[124] Bricault & Gasparini 2018, pp. 135-136.
[125] Bricault & Gasparini 2018, p. 134.
[126] Bricault & Gasparini 2018, p. 135.
[127] J. BJ. 7, 123.

Suetonius' account of how Domitian, dressed as a priest of Isis, fled from the Capitoline Hill when it was besieged by Vitellius (Suet. Dom, 1)[128] is inseparable from the political history of the Roman state.

Although Suetonius is rather dismissive of the cult of Isis in telling this story, perhaps influenced by the strong importance Domitian attached to the goddess, this account cannot be regarded as incontrovertible. However, Domitian's public manifestations to the cult of Isis have always been emphasized. In accordance with the *Damnatio Memoriae* declared against Domitian after his assassination, the manifestations of the cult of Isis were obscured, neither Nerva nor Trajan showing any interest in the cult[129].

Under the Antonine dynasty, the situation changed. Hadrian (AD 117–138) is known as the first emperor to have Egyptian religion as part of his household although we don't see much of Hadrian's interest in supporting Egyptian cults until his famous journey to Egypt[130]. In Egypt, Hadrian was introduced to the cult of the god Serapis, which "*tendait ainsi a devenir non seulement dieu supreme, mais dieu unique, reunissant en lui les vertus et la substance de tous les autres*"[131]. The Serapeion in Alexandria at that time was probably frequented not only by pagans, but also by Jews and Christians, who all together made up the Roman world, where religious pluralism was still tolerated[132].

A brief digression is necessary here. When we contrast the so-called monotheistic traditions of Judaism and Christianity on the one hand and the polytheistic traditions of the pagans on the other – we must view these beliefs as complex systems. As shown in the collection of articles "Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity" (2001) edited by P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede, already in the pagan

[128] "*ac mane Isiaci celatus habitu interque sacrificulos variae* (variant reading – vanae) *superstitionis*" ("disguised in the garb of a follower of Isis and mingling with the priests of that fickle superstition" – trans. by J. C. Rolfe).
Similar story was preserved about aedile M. Volusius' escape from Rome in 43 BC by Valerius Maximus (Val. Max. 7.3.8), see Takács 1995, p. 68.

[129] Grimm 1997, p. 129.

[130] Beaujeu 1955, p. 220; p. 228.

[131] Beaujeu 1955, p. 233.

[132] Capponi 2010, pp. 126–127.

systems of the Ancient Near East, where each god had its own sphere of duties and power, it was possible to resolve conflicts between different deities by choosing one god supreme over the others, leaving the others in a compromise position where their power remained simultaneously inviolable[133]. In the Classical and Hellenistic periods, various authors used the words *οι θεοί*, *ὁ θεός*, *τὸ θεῖον* (the gods, the god and the deity) without distinction, as if the gods were many and one could imagine them acting as one unanimous body[134]. The various philosophical schools that existed in the Roman Empire, i.e. Platonists, Peripatetics and Stoics believed in one unique god. "Pagan" philosophical thought of Late Antiquity presupposed belief in a single deity, but there were many divine beings around this deity, which created difficulties in separating the supreme from the subsidiary, difficulties which the so-called pagans easily avoided[135]. Christian thought also failed at the outset to make a clear distinction between the divine nature of God and the angels that surround him[136]. In this sense, the position held by Serapis, often syncretized, for example, with Zeus, posed no difficulties for pagans, Jews and Christians of Alexandria alike.

The cult of the supreme god Serapis who granted believers eternal life made it a close fit for Hadrian, whose previous religious policy had also been to seek such a supernatural power[137]. While supporting the aforementioned pluralism, he did not make any impressive changes in the position of Egyptian cults as one of the religions of the Empire. Note that the introduction of Egyptian subjects on imperial coinage was the only public act to popularise Egyptian gods that occurred in Rome during his reign, no legislative acts have been published[138]. Hadrian's sympathy for Egyptian cults was vividly shown only in Egypt, where on minted coins Serapis presented a Globe to the emperor [139] or shaking hands with him[140]. But this policy was not simply

[133] West 2001, pp. 24–25.
[134] West 2001, pp. 38–39.
[135] Frede 2001, pp. 57–58.
[136] Frede 2001, pp. 58–60.
[137] Galimberti 2010, pp. 119–120 and n. 34.
[138] Beaujeu 1955, pp. 238–239. Same opinion of F. Altheim for Hadrian's period: "*Nur auf den Medaillons herrschten Isis und Kybele vor*" – Altheim 1956, S. 112.
[139] Giudice 2011, S. 33.
[140] Capponi 2010, p. 124.

a continuation of emperor Vespasian's activities in Alexandria, which centered on giving the emperor divine functions[141].

Hadrian's personal sympathy for the Egyptian gods developed in a much more private setting. This could be seen in Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, where a large pool of water symbolised the beauty of the Nile and Tiber rivers, and statues of a sphinx and a she-wolf with Romulus and Remus stood on the edge of the pool[142]. The Antinoeion of Hadrian's villa, reminiscent of the Serapeum on *Campus Martius* in Rome, was not just a temple to the new god Antinous-Osiris, but also a tomb[143]. Together with the Egyptian statues adorning the grounds (Fig. 8)[144], everything in the villa gives the impression of the personal character of the emperor's interest in Egypt and its religion[145].

Emperor Hadrian was not the only adherent of Egyptian cults in the capital. On the territory of the later built thermae of Caracalla are the remains of a villa of the 2nd century AD, with frescoes depicting Isis, Anubis and Harpocrates (Fig. 9). The noble owners of this villa spared no expense in building a room dedicated to numerous deities, including Egyptian. Ordinary Romans had a similar personal interest in Egypt long before Hadrian. This can be seen, for example, in the large number of magical intaglios depicting Isis with a child (Isis Lactans). Such amulets were popular throughout the Mediterranean from the 1st to the 4th century AD[146]. In 4th century AD a coin's type representing Isis with a child on her knees was also produced[147]. Here Isis, as patroness of mothers and childbirth, was responsible for important social functions in the view of the faithful and is in no way associated with a particular social group in the hierarchy of Roman society.

[141] Galimberti 2010, pp. 119–120; Giudice 2011, S. 38.
[142] Adembri 2000, pp. 87–90.
[143] Mari & Sgalambro 2007, p. 92; pp. 100–102.
[144] They were found in the 18th century, and unfortunately it is now impossible to know their exact location – Adembri, 2000, p. 91.
[145] Grimm 1997, p. 130.
[146] Tran Tam Tinh & d'Yvette 1973, *p*. 20.
[147] Alföldi 1937, pp. 18-19 and pl. XIII.

4. The Isis cult in Northern Italy in early imperial period

After having briefly overviewed the position Isis took in the Roman Empire and its capital city, we need to have a look on what was the place of the Egyptian cults in the North Italian region with the advent of the Late Antiquity.

As was marked down by previous scholars who studied the religion(s) of Cisalpine Gaul, Isis was far from being goddess of the first level of importance in the first centuries of the Roman Empire. J. C. Murley (1922) and later C. B. Pascal (1964) attempted to regard all the existing cults in Cisalpine Gaul through inscriptions. According to J. C. Murley, Isis was "tenth of all the gods in popularity"[148]. Using Murley's calculations, C. B. Pascal concludes that Egyptian cults in Cisalpine were spread "widely, but sporadically" and were mostly presented in the regions with Greek-Oriental population[149]. Thus, the work made a support to the aforementioned opinions of J. Toutain and R. MacMullen, that the Egyptian cults were first of all supported in the Empire by the inhabitants of the eastern provinces[150].

The view was also supported by the discoveries made in the city of Industria (Monteu da Po, Piedmont)[151]. One of the finds is a stone slab inscribed with the name of *Avilia Amabilis*, who "fulfilled a vow" to the goddess Isis (*CIL* V, 7488 / *RICIS* 513/0102; Fig. 10)[152]. The stone slab covered a small pit filled with the remains of a sacrifice. The inscription was commissioned by members of the *Avilii* merchant family who were followers of the Isis cult. We possess other sources on the connections between this family and the cult. According to a 2nd century BC decree which was left by priests of Isis, the merchant *Ἀυίλιος Μαάρκο[υ] Ῥωμαῖος*, was praised for his contribution to the construction of a theatre near the sanctuary of Isis while on the island of Delos[153]. Later a certain *C. Avillius C. F. Romilius Ligurius Lucanus* was mentioned in the votive dedication as a priest of Isis[154]. These evidences

[148] Murley 1922, p. 102.
[149] Pascal 1964, p. 48.
[150] See above, pp. 20-21.
[151] See on Industria pages
[152] "*Avilia Amabilis v(otum) s(olvit)*"
[153] Cresci Marrone 1993, p. 35.
[154] Cresci Marrone 1993, p. 36.

led to believe of a direct connection between the spread of the Greek merchants through Italy and the establishment of the cult of Isis in the region. F. Fontana, though regarded the prime importance of the sea ports in the spread of the cult in Cisalpine Gaul as indisputable[155], noted the impact of the senatorial aristocracy that accepted the cult in Rome and beyond as underestimated by scholars[156].

An analysis of the social origins of the inscription dedicatees reveals that Isis was venerated not only by Roman magistrates but also by soldiers, merchants, freedmen, and slaves, demonstrating that the cult was not limited to the Roman elites[157]. It makes the question of ethnical and geographical development of the cult unresolved, as it is impossible to regard, was the elites' creation of an inscription or sacred place following already existing beliefs in Isis or it was an introduction of something new for the local pantheon of deities.

In most cases, our knowledge of the cult of Isis, obtained from studying the territory, is limited to just one inscription. A good example here are the remains of a 1st-2nd centuries' inscription (*CIL* V, 6406 / *RICIS* 516/0301) located in the Pavia University courtyard (Fig. 11). The customer of the inscription, *Plotia Vitalis*, was freed by a patron named Lucius. She or her family could arrive in *Ticinum* (Pavia) from everywhere in the Roman Empire. Whether the cult of Isis was established in the city before the inscription was made, we cannot know.

Same problem occurs when we investigate a military inscription. In Acquanegra sul Chiese, near Mantua, was found a 1st century AD inscription of a Roman centurion of the 5th cohort of Praetorian guards, *Marcus Cassius Capulus*, who, being born in Cremona made a sanctuary to Isis (*CIL* V, 4041 / *RICIS* 515/1101; Fig. 12)[158]. Despite the inscription connects the centurion with Cremona, and it was found that the family name *Cassius* is of a Celtic origin[159]. There is no evidence to show

[155] Fontana 2010, p. 67.
[156] Fontana 2010, p. 69.
[157] Murley 1922, p. 76.
[158] Bricault 2005, p. 658.
[159] Don 2018, p, 20.

whether this cult existed in Cremona or Aquanegra, or whether it was brought there from the Praetorian Guard of Rome or any other military unit.

Was the cult of Isis brought to Northern Italy from Rome, seaports, or through the movements of the military units? As early as the 1st century AD we already find inscriptions confirming the presence of the cult of Isis in *Forum Popilii* (Forlimpopoli), *Bononia* (Bologna), *Civitas Camunnorum* (Cividate Camuno, Val Camonica)[160], Industria[161]. At the same time a centre of Isis was established in Verona, which was closely connected with the Roman Senate[162]. F. Fontana wrote about possible connection of the Flavian dynasty to the erection of the sanctuaries of Isis in Verona, Trieste and Aquileia[163]. The dispute over the popular or imperial origin of the cult of Isis in Northern Italy, in our opinion, remains an open question.

Our aim is to trace what was the character of the Romans' affiliation with the Egyptian cult of the goddess Isis through the period from 3rd to 5th centuries AD. For that we would look on the examples from the archaeological findings in Northern Italy.

---

[160] Bricault 2005, pp.636-638 for Bologna and Forlimpopoli; pp. 659-660 for Cividate Camuno. We are not mentioning here the inscriptions with no precise dating established.

[161] Crescia Marrone 1994, p. 43.

[162] Pascal 1964, p. 195.

[163] Fontana 2010, p. 94; pp. 123-124. See also Bricault 2005, p. 654; p. 657 for the two 1st century inscriptions found in Verona, *RICIS* 515/0801 and *RICIS* 515/0811 (*CIL* V, 3416). For Aquileia: Fontana 2017, p. 137.

Chapter II: The Material Turn: An approach to the Study of the cult of Isis in Late Antiquity

With the rise of the Roman Empire, the existing Egyptian cults had undergone a transformation, becoming more complex. Following the vast number of different accounts of the popularity of the cult of Isis in the second century AD, many scholars, as we have partially shown above, point to the continuing growth of the cult during the same period.

1. The Material Turn

In the previous chapter, we examined the cult of Isis in Roman Empire through the common knowledge gathered in literary sources and through the evolution of historical research. Archaeological data have been mentioned only to highlight the vast number of sources that this research field can provide for the study of Egyptian cults in the Roman world. This chapter focuses on the knowledge we can draw from the archaeological material we have today. This chapter follows the approach of the so-called "Material Turn". Michel Foucault, in his work "*Les mots et les choses*" (1966), noted the importance of everyday things in shaping our ideas about people and the past[164]. Based on the idea that every object found during archaeological excavations can be considered as an object of research that allows us to learn more about the past, I. Hodder proposed considering each material object in the same way as we study a literary text[165]. The number of interpretations of an object, like the number of interpretations of a text, is not limited. While maintaining objectivity when considering a material object[166], the Material Turn approach allows, as stated by D. Hicks, to separate the perception of an object in a modern context from how the object was perceived at the time of its creation[167]. Using the "Material Turn" approach, it is necessary to decode what the object was used for at the time of its creation and what place it occupied in the minds of the people who created it. The "Material Turn" has become important in recent works on the history of religions, as

[164] Foucault 1966, p. 380.
[165] Hodder 1998, p. 165.
[166] Criado 1998, p. 203.
[167] Hicks 2010, p. 96.

well as on the history of Ancient Greek and Roman religion[168]. As B. Meyer has shown material objects that form a special world in everyday life, support existing religious credence[169]. Thus, by studying objects related or partially related to the cult of Isis, we can learn more about the community of the people who worshiped her.

The only material sources from the Late Imperial period that we have as evidence for the existence of the cult of Isis, and which are represented in numerous specimens, are engraved gems, statuettes and coins. Unfortunately, such sources are almost impossible to tie to any specific archaeological context, so they cannot provide substantial information about how, where exactly and on what scale the goddess Isis was venerated in Northern Italy. Other sources, such as sacred monuments containing inscriptions mentioning Egyptian cults, are not as numerous in Northern Italy, and there is also the problem of distinguishing between sources referring to Egyptian cults and those referring only to the presence of Egyptians in Roman Italy[170]. Their evidence, however, is valuable for understanding how complex, omnidirectional, and multidimensional the veneration of the goddess Isis was in the last centuries of the Roman Empire.

In this chapter, we present archaeological evidence based on the magic gems, sarcophagi and the bronze objects in Northern Italy and discuss related epigraphical inscriptions that together illustrate the state of the Isis cult in the Late Antique period.

2. Magic gems

H. S. Versnel in his article "Some reflections on the relationship Magic-Religion" (1991) have made the overview of how always important is to make a clear definition of what we regard as magic(al) and what as religion or religious. R. R. Marett have stated - "any distinction between magic and religion is an illusion"[171] and, following H. S. Versnel, without using the broad and imprecise terms we are losing

[168] Belousov 2017, passim; Martin Hernández 2022, p. IX; Derks 2024, pp. 231-232.
[169] Meyer 2012, pp. 24-25.
[170] M. Malaise has made rough estimates of the presence of non-Italians in the evidence of Egyptian cults in Italy. This data may not be the most relevant, but the presence of foreigners honoring the goddess Isis in Italy cannot be ruled out: Malaise 1972a, pp. 71-75.
[171] Versnel 1991, p. 180.

the distinctions that were already made by the Romans between the different practices which today could be considered as magical or religious[172]. J. I. Bremmer argued with H. S. Versnel. Romans were not opposing the Religion and Magic one to another. Both the concepts of Religion and Magic have their origin in the Late Medieval Europe, and the "opposition" of the terms magic and religion is following the traditions of 19th century and has no real value to the study of the Antique societies[173]. We would say, while speaking here and further of "magical" objects connected to Isis, we estimate these objects as related to secret knowledge created and produced in the Roman common beliefs. In this knowledge Isis is the supernatural power to be asked for actions to be done through an existing system of ritual practices.

While the transformation of the Isis cult into a mystery cult occurs in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD[174], the influence of magic intensified, as evidenced by the large number of preserved gems created to protect against disease. Such gems were usually executed in very low quality, characterized by laconic clarity and emphasized expressive images[175]. Among them were a large number of gems depicting Egyptian deities or objects associated with the cult of Isis[176].

This led to the attempts to examine gems in the context of the diffusion of the Isis cult. At Carpi, near Modena, a gem dating from the 3rd century AD was found depicting Hermes-Mercury wearing a crown, which has been interpreted as the Egyptian Uraeus[177] (Carpi, Museo della Città, n. inv.: 249180, Fig. 13). The gem has only an image without inscriptions on one side and an empty reverse. On the image the deity is represented with a caduceus[178] in the right hand and a bird in the left. We know many similar gems with such a Hermes representation, as in the case of Carpi. Several gems are coming from the collections of the Aquileia region, where, instead

[172] Versnel 1991, p. 192.
[173] Bremmer 2002, p. 268; p. 271.
[174] Fontana 2010, p. 78. See also Bremmer 2014, pp. 113-114.
[175] Neverov 1983, C. 128. On the connection of gems and magical papyri: Sanzi & Sfameni 2009, pp. 138-139.
[176] Kákosy 1997, p. 153.
[177] Corti 2006, p. 10; Ortalli & Neri 2007, p. 214, n. 115.
[178] Distinctive feature on the images of Hermes – Sfameni 2015, p. 384.

of a bird in his left hand, Hermes is bearing a sack (Mus. Aquileia, n. inv. 24871; Mus. Aquileia, without inv. number; Mus. Udine, n. inv. 1241/146; Mus. Aquileia, n. inv. 27183)[179]. We are not arguing the date of the gem from Carpi. The exact archaeological context of the finding is unknown to us[180]. It seems strange to us to associate this gem with the cult of Isis. C. Corti seems to be convinced in the connection[181]. Her hypotheses are based on the four animals surrounding the deity: the scorpion, the cock, the torture and the Aries, which are "*elementi tipicamente isiaci*"[182]. W. Deonna persuasively proves the origin of the scorpion and the rooster in the cult of Mercury as North-African (Punic)[183]. The Caduceus arrived in North Africa via Greece from East[184].

Indeed, Hermes became closely associated with Isis, appearing alongside her in the texts of aretalogies and on sarcophagi (see below, pp. 31-34). We know examples where Hermes was also depicted together with Isis on a gem[185]. Hermetists at an unknown moment began to spread the idea of worshiping two Hermeses, a grandfather and a grandson[186]. The first was associated with the god Thoth. Hermes-Thot iconography in gems was recently studied by P. Gołyźniak: Hermes-Thoth is depicted either figuratively, where the two deities, Hermes and Thoth, stand together, or the figure of one of the two gods is depicted, and the inscription or animal is symbolically associated with the second, or one figure with the attributes of both of them[187]. Thus, the gem with Mercury found in Carpi does not as to have a close connection with the cult of Isis. It is worth noting that the gem's light weight and small size allowed it to be transported over long distances. Therefore, the Mercury gem, created/arrived in Aquileia, but found in Carpi in no way proves the existence of the cult of Mercury in this region. From this example, however, we can conclude that,

[179] The four gems were published in *Gemme* 1996, p. 59.
[180] Corti 2006, pp. 15-17.
[181] Ortalli & Neri 2007, p. 214, n. 115.
[182] Ortalli & Neri 2007, p. 214, n. 115.
[183] Deonna 1959, p. 249; p.
[184] Deonna 1959, p. 251.
[185] For example, in the collection of Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, Russia: ГЭ Н. Ж. 1511.
[186] Fowden 1993, p. 29.
[187] Gołyźniak 2020, p. 168.

based on the wishes of those who commissioned the gem, some deities were often depicted with the distinctive features of other deities.

The image of Isis on precious stones was popular. Many gems produced in the 3rd century AD have survived[188]. According to C. Sfameni, gems depicting Isis with the *οὐροβόρος* on her head created magical protection during medical operations related to conception. Isis was revered as one of the deities capable of granting health. It should be noted that invoking Isis in magical rituals did not mean belonging to the cult of Isis or that the owner of the gem had any knowledge of Isis beyond its healing functions[189].

It is generally accepted that most gems featuring Egyptian deities reached Italy and other regions of the Roman Empire from the Near East—primarily the Syria-Palestine region[190]. While it is possible that specific production centers for these "Egyptian" gems existed within the western part of the Roman Empire, this hypothesis requires further confirmation[191].

In conclusion, we must admit that these gems do not provide us with exhaustive information or a comprehensive understanding of what the cult of the goddess Isis was like in Northern Italy between the 3rd and 5th centuries AD. However, the study of gems as material objects allows us to recognize that in the 3rd century AD, the inhabitants of Italy continued to use gems, hoping to receive support in difficult situations from numerous deities, among whom Isis occupied an important place. Subsequently, as ties with the eastern provinces weakened, the trade of gems across the Mediterranean ceased.

---

[188] Arslan 1997, pp. 237-261, especially p. 253; p. 257-261. Summarize on the gems with Isis: Sena Chiesa 1997, pp. 153-157; Most of the magic gems 'types with Isis were published by A. Mastrocinque, who regard them as magic only if they have an inscription, other gems are doubtful: Mastrocinque 2003, pp. 175-177. See also Neverov 1981, C. 31-33; Sfameni 2015, p. 377. n. 2.

[189] Sfameni 2015, p. 403.

[190] Neverov 2000, C. 157-158; Mastrocinque 2003, pp. 72-74; Tassinari 2008, p. 265.

[191] Tassinari 2008, p. 266; n. 67.

3. Sarcophagus of Tetratia Isias in Ravenna

An example of evidence that demonstrates the complexity of Isis veneration during this period is the marble sarcophagus of *Eugamia* and *Tetratia Isias*, daughter and wife of *Sosius Iulianus*, made in the second half of the 3rd century AD[192], and now kept in the National Museum of Ravenna (*Museo Nazionale di Ravenna*, inv. 410, Fig. 14). It was found in 1907 during excavations of the Church of *S. Vittore* in Ravenna, at a depth of two meters, to the left of the ancient entrance to the building[193]. The church was destroyed by bombing of the city of Ravenna in 1944 during World War II, and the sarcophagus was damaged and subsequently restored[194].

A few words on what we know about the *Sosii*. The sarcophagus inscription is not the only reference to this family. A third-century AD sarcophagus in Modena also belongs to the same family (inv. R.C.G.E. 7110; Fig. 15), and the inscription on it (*CIL* XI, 916) mentions a certain *Sosius Ptolemaeus*, who commissioned the work for his mother *Sosia Herennia*[195]. M. Bollini assumed that it was a family closely connected with Egypt[196]. Ptolemy is a Greek name that was popular not only among the Egyptians. The fact that both the son Ptolemy and his mother are mentioned with the *nomen* of *Sosius* indicates that Ptolemy came from a noble family[197]. The Greek *cognomen* of Ptolemy led M. Mongardi to suggest that his father, whose name is unknown, may have been a freedman[198]. Also in Bologna there is a funerary inscription from the second half of the 2nd century AD mentioning a certain *Sosia Isias* (*Palazzo Barbieri, Inv. 19101,* Bologna)[199]. The nickname *Argolicus* of *Sosius*

---

[192] Veymiers 2021, p. 152.

[193] Amaducci 1907, p. 1.

[194] Egger 1951, S. 35.

[195] The son Sosius Ptolemy (dedicated) to his mother Sosia, daughter of Quintus, and to his pupil Sosius Felicianus - Giordani & Strozzi 2005, p. 179.

[196] Bollini 1975, p. 32.

[197] Susini 1967, p. 155; Mongardi 2016, p. 221.

[198] Mongardi 2016, p. 221. C. Malmusi (1830) suggested that the Greek name indicates that the sarcophagus itself came from Greece - Giordani & Strozzi (eds.) 2005, p. 179. H. Gabelmann, however, showed that this assumption cannot be correct because of the Northern Italian typology of the sarcophagus - Gabelmann 1973, S. 217.

[199] "*D(is) M(anibus) / Sosiae / Isiadis / puellae dul / cissim(ae) quae / vixit ann(os) XII / menses VII / dies XV / Q (uintus) Sosius / Argolicus / pater desolatus*". Found in the city of Bologna, on the *via Oberdan.* Susini 1956, pp. 153-156; 1960, p. 97.

Isias' father, *Quintus Sosius Argolicus*, who commissioned the inscription, may also refer to contacts that existed between the family and the city of Argos[200].

R. Turcan, in his 1966 book "*Les Sarcophages Romains à Représentations Dionysiaques*", noted that this is one of the few sarcophagi known to us associated with the cult of Isis, and there are very few of them, which led him to suggest that the cult was more popular among "*les affranchis et les petits gens, qui, precisement, ne pouvaient s'offrir de riches cuves en marbre*"[201]. Indeed, such objects were a manifestation of extreme richness and were the property of exclusively wealthy people in Roman society[202]. However, such an assessment of the cult's popularity would be inaccurate if based only on the number of sarcophagi discovered. As we have already seen above, the cult of Isis existed in the Roman world for a long time and had its periods of rise and decline.

R. Turcan's work on Dionisiac sarcophagi points to the popularity of depicting Dionysus (or Bacchus) triumphs, which were identified by the Romans with their triumphal passage through the demons of Death[203]. Dionysus triumph (or the Indian Triumph of Dionysus) is a popular mythological plot depicting the return of the god Dionysus after spreading the miracle of wine culture to India. This myth is known in many interpretations on sarcophagi, marble panels, and mosaics depicting the god Dionysus feasting surrounded by satyrs, maenads, and exotic animals, which according to J. Boardman "played a very important part in Dionysos' Indian triumph"[204].

The goddess Isis, who played numerous roles as patroness of various groups of people and activities, also controlled the passage to the underworld. In Apuleius' account of the mysteries in which Lucius participates in order to regain his human form, the goddess Isis is mentioned as the one in whose power[205] are "*inferum*

[200] Susini 1956, p. 155.
[201] Turcan 1966, p. 2.
[202] Toynbee 1971, p. 270.
[203] Turcan 1966, p. 628.
[204] Boardman 2014, p. 2.
[205] "*in deae manu posita*" – Apul. Met. 11, 21.

claustra" and "*salutis tutelam*" ("the gates of hell" and "the guarantee of life")[206], which directly indicates the connection of the goddess Isis with the realm of death[207]. P. Pakkanen (following M. Munster) calls Isis even the "conqueror of death - which she never suffered"[208].

An inscription from Bithynia (exact provenance is unknown, Museum of Bursa, inv. 3213), tells of a certain priest of Isis. Thanks to the mystery rites performed by the priest before his death, Charon (*Χάρων*, the one who transports souls), did not get into the river Acheron together with the priest's soul, instead (the priest exclaims): "*μακάρων δ΄ ἔδραμον εἰς λιμένας*" ("in the direction of the harbors of blessed I lunged")[209]. The harbour of the blessed, *μακάρων λῐμήν* is probably the one appearing in Ancient Greek literature, beginning from Hesiod, a mythical land at the edge of the earth, where the heroes live after death, and not in the underworld of Hades, where the rest of humanity goes[210].

4. The inscriptions on the sarcophagus of Ravenna

The sarcophagus at Ravenna is interesting to us primarily because it bears an inscription related to the mysteries of Isis[211]. G. Koch and H. Sichtermann considered the appearance of inscriptions on sarcophagi is a rare phenomenon, mainly because the very shape of sarcophagi does not allow for much writing, the sarcophagus from the very beginning served primarily as decoration[212]. The Ravenna example of a sarcophagus with inscriptions not in one, but in two languages is even rarer[213].

---

[206] Apul. Met. 11, 21.

[207] Griffiths 1975, p. 301; Bremmer 2014, p. 121.

[208] Pakkanen 1996, pp. 92-93.

[209] Full text of the inscription: "*Οὐ δνοφερὰν Ἀχέροντος ἔβαν νεκυοστόλον οἶμον / Μηνικέτης, μακάρων δ΄ ἔδραμον εἰς λιμένας· / δέμνια γὰρ λινόπεπλα θεᾶς ἄρρητα βεβήλοις / Αἰγύπτου τραφεροῖς δώμασιν ἁρμοσάμαν· / τιμήεις δὲ Βροτοῖσι θανών, ξένε, τὰν ἐπίςαμον / φάμαν Ἰσιᾰκῶν μάρτυρ᾽ ἐπεσπασάμαν· / πατρὶ δὲ κῦδος ἔθηκα Μενεσθεϊ, τρισσὰ λελοιπὼς / τέκνα· τὺ δὲ στείχοις τάνδε ὁδὸν ἀβλαβέως.*" – cited after Şahin 1978, pp. 997-998. See also Bremmer 2014, pp. 121-122.

[210] Käppel 1999, S. 725.

[211] The text of the inscription was published many times, for example in Egger 1951; Vidman 1969, 266-268; Bricault 2005, 634-635.

[212] Koch & Sichtermann 1982, S. 25.

[213] Koch & Sichtermann 1982, S. 26.

One of the inscriptions is made in the center of the front of the sarcophagus with four images around it (Fig. 14). The left side of the front depicts a seated woman with a lyre in her hands against a background image of an axe or hoe. T. Birt suggested that it depicts the deceased *Tetratia Isias* playing the lyre on the occasion of her death[214]. On the right side of the front sits another woman, the same as the one on the left (which remains in question[215]), with an open scroll in her hands. Below is an image of the god Hermes with the characteristic *caduceus* in his hands. According to known iconography, this is the classical depiction of the god Hermes himself. Following G. Susini, Hermes is figuring here as Hermes Psychopomp, the one leading the souls to the Underworld[216]. At the top is the inscription: "*haue Eugami dulcissima infa(n)s // cyria chaere Iuliane / Sosiae Iulianae filiae dulcis / simae, quae vix(it) ann(is) IIX m(ensibus) IV d(iebus) XXVII / et Tetratiae Isiadi coiugi / castissimae matri eius / C. Sosius Iulianus vivus p(osuit)*"[217]. Another inscription in Latin adds: "*Par(ca) / coniu[g(em)] / b[o]n[a]m / rapuit / invito / viro"* ("*La Parque a ravi une bonne epouse a son mari contre son gre*" – transl. by L. Bricault)[218].

The third inscription in Latin letters but in Greek is above the two figures (Fig. 16-17). This can be interpreted as a manner of writing adopted by the *Sosii* family. The text of the inscription is written in verse meter. The original text was presented by R. Egger (1951) [219]:

"*...ligyron melos on pote Herme[s / e]ure chelones metron ego de psallus' aeido / pros zofon eaeroenta chelidoni icelon auden. / ala me myr'oloe catechi cae g[a]ia melena / hos men moe lethen pharechi / cae aphilato phonen / ...chronia... / p[hylon] aedidakas aeodima grammata / [p]ho[n]in. / caere ca[l]li[p]hanes aepoe su plero / phoru psych[e]".*

---

[214] Birt 1908, S. 120.
[215] Birt 1908, S. 120; Gabellmann 1973, S. 148-149.
[216] Susini 1978, 1204.
[217] Bricault 2005, p. 635: "*Adieu, fais un bon marriage, si doux bebe! Adieu Iuliana, ma reine! Gaios Sosius Iulianus, de son vivant, a fait edifier ce tombeau pour Sosia Iuliana, sa fille, si douce, que vecut 8 ans, 4 mois et 27 jours, ainsi que pour Tetratia Isias, sa tres virtueuse epouse, mere de celle-ci*".
[218] Bricault 2005, p. 635.
[219] Egger 1951, S. 41.

The first attempt to read and reconstruct the inscriptions was made in 1913 by S. Muratori[220], and R. Egger made a transcription in Greek letters[221]:

"*...*[222]*ω. λιγυρὸν μέλος ὦν ποτε Ἑρμῆ[ς*
ε]ὗρε χελώναις μέτρον. ἐγὼ δὲ ψάλλους' ἀείδω
πρὸς ζόφον ἠερόεντα χελιδόνι εἴκελον αὐδήν.
ἀλ(λ)ά με μῦρ[223] *ὀλοὴ κατέχει καὶ γ[α]ῖα μέλαινα.*
ὡς μέν μοι λήθην παρέχει καὶ ἀφείλατο φωνήν.
.....
.....χρονια.....
φῦλον[224] *ἐδίδαξας ἀοίδιμα γράμματα φω[ν]εῖν.*
χαῖρε κα[λ]λιφανὴς εἴποι σοῦ πληροφόρου ψυχῆ".

Several translations of the inscription have previously been made[225], of which the one by L. Bricault (2005) seems to be the closest:

"*Toi, qui vois le jour, tu chantes un chant suave, de ceux dont Hermes jadis a invente sur sa lyre le metre; mais mois, c'est vers l'obscurite brumeuse qu'au son de ma harpe je module une plainte semblable au cri de l'hirondelle. Oui, la Parque funeste et la noire terre me retiennent. C'est ainsi qu'elle (la terre) m'a apporte l'oubli et qu'elle m'a enleve la voix. […] puisque c'est ton amour qui m'a appris a prononcer les textes a chanter*"[226].

Thus, the carved inscription was commissioned by *Caius Sosius Iulianus*, whose wife, *Tetratia Isias*, is grateful to her husband who taught her *(*"*ἐδίδαξας*") to speak the right words before her death.

Of particular significance is the mention of Hermes. The god Hermes was associated by the Greeks with the Egyptian god Thoth from the time of the Ptolemies in Egypt, and both were linked to the moon, medicine, and the realm of the dead[227].

---

[220] Muratori 1913, pp. 408-409.
[221] Egger 1951, p. 42.
[222] M. Paul Mazon and F. Cumont attempted to reconstruct the missing part of the verse: *"Μὰψ ὑμνεῖν ἔμαθ]ο[ν] λιγυρὸν μέλος, ὦν ποτε Ἑρμῆς*" – Cumont 1942, p. 299.
[223] "*μοῖρ*" according to Muratori 1913, p. 408; Festugier 1963, p. 139.
[224] "*[τ]έχνα ἐδίδαξας ἀοίδιμα γράμματα φω[ν]εῖν*" – Cumont 1942, p. 299.
[225] Muratori 1913, p. 409; Egger 1951, passim; Festugière 1963, passim; Bricault 2005, p. 635.
[226] Bricault, 2005, p. 635.
[227] Festugière 1950, p. 69. Sanzi & Sfameni 2009, p. 150.

It should be noted here that Isis was often mentioned together with Hermes in the so-called *aretalogies*, a special genre of glorification of the deeds of the gods told by themselves[228]. As example is the 2nd-1st centuries BC aretalogy text found in Maroneia: "*Αὕτη μεθ' Ἑρμοῦ γράμμαθ' εὗρεν καὶ τῶν γραμμάτων ἃ μὲν ἱερὰ τοῖς μύσταις, ἃ δὲ δημόσια τοῖς πᾶσιν*"[229] ("She discovered the words with Hermes, and among them, the sacred [words] for the initiations and the public [words] for everyone"). At the end of the sarcophagus' text in Ravenna, we read the words not on behalf of Tetratia Isias, but on behalf of her husband ("*χαῖρε κα[λ]λιφανής εἶποι σοῦ πληροφόρου ψυχῇ*"). If we accept the interpretation by L. Bricault, then with these words the husband wishes his wife health and asks a certain "*κα[λ]λιφανής*" to tell the soul ("*ψυχῇ*") of the *Tetratia Isias* to become calm[230]. If we follow the version of R. Egger and later accepted also by A. J. Festugière, the words "*χαῖρε κα[λ]λιφανής*" are uttered by Isis herself, thus the deceased woman meets the deity[231]. S. C. Heyob correctly remarks that this part of the text is difficult to read and interpret because of the physical condition of the inscription[232].

The word "*κα[λ]λιφανής*" means "one who shines with beauty." R. Egger has suggested that the word may be connected with one of the epithets of Mithras "*καλλίφως*," or with Persephone (Kore), the goddess of spring's bounty and the daughter of Demeter, since her beauty was extolled in the mystery hymns[233]. Persephone was also the wife of the god Hades (Haides) and the queen of the Underworld. Following the logical constructions based on the above, R. Egger was the first to connect the inscription with the goddess Isis[234]. Later studies by P. Pakkanen showed that Egger's assumption has a right to exist: since Hellenistic times, the goddesses Demeter and Isis were often regarded as a single entity and honored together with their daughter Persephone[235]. We have previously noted the common

[228] "a self-revelation" – Bremmer 2014, p. 111.
[229] Grandjean 1975, pp. 17-18.
[230] Bricault 2005, p. 635.
[231] Egger 1951, S. 45; Festugière 1963, p.145.
[232] Heyob 1975, p. 63.
[233] Egger 1951, S. 45.
[234] Egger 1951, S. 46.
[235] Pakkanen 1996, passim.

features of the cult of Isis and the cult of Mithras, so here we can only once again emphasize the similarity of some of their characteristics.

As A. Bencivenni discovered, the two lines "*πρὸς ζόφον ἠερόεντα χελιδόνι εἴκελον αὐδήν / Ἀλλά με Μοῖρ᾽ὀλοὴ κατέχει καὶ γαῖα μέλαινα"* contain quotations from Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey"[236] and therefore the inscription on the sarcophagus reflects the high intellectual level of the *Sosii* family[237]. During the Imperial period, Homeric texts were part of the school curriculum, and bilingualism was not uncommon in the middle of the 3rd century AD. After the division of the Roman Empire into eastern and western provinces the study of Homeric texts and Greek in general begin to decline in the western provinces. Today, Augustine is considered as the last Roman in the western part of the Empire who was still studying Greek, the knowledge of which had finally declined[238]. In the schools of the Eastern Roman Empire meanwhile, the traditional study of the texts of Homer remained the basis for the study of Greek grammar throughout the Middle Ages[239]. R. Egger noted that the vocabulary used in the verses of the Ravenna sarcophagus refers to the Greek language used in the "*hellenistichen Ostens an, dem Septuagintagriechisch, dem Neuen Testament und vor allem den Papyri*"[240].

It should be noted that there is no direct mention of Isis on the sarcophagus (if not regarding as one the *nomen gentilicium* of *Tetratia Isias*), but there are the name and image of Hermes as well, as the use of the word "*κα[λ]λιφανής*". The interpretation of the inscription on the sarcophagus as referring to the goddess Isis was proposed and developed on the basis of the Hermes-Demeter-Isis veneration accepted at the time and the prevalence of variations of the word "*κα[λ]λιφανής*" in the mystery hymns.

---

[236] Bencivenni 2022, p. 118. A. Bencivenni compares the 3rd line with *Od*., 13.241 and 12.240, and the line 4 with Il. 16. 849, where the ending "*γαῖα μέλαινα*" is also connected with *Od*., 19.111; *Il*., 11.699; 15.715; 18.416; 20.494.

[237] Bencivenni 2022, p. 120.

[238] Desmond 2020, p. 435. On Augustine's use of Greek see: Berschin 1988, pp. 51-55.

[239] Kazhdan 1983, p. 60; p. 140. 19th century author Ernest Renan tried radically estimate the disappearance of the Greek language in the West: "*Rome retira ses légions, la Grèce retira sa langue, et le Moyen Âge commenca*" – cited after Berschin 1988, p. 285 n. 18.

[240] Egger 1951, S. 45.

5. The decorations of the sarcophagus of Ravenna

Beautifully decorated stone, marble and lead sarcophagi were made not only to bury the dead, but also to impress the living. Sarcophagi carried a special message that was conveyed through decorations and texts created to be admired by the living[241]. F. Baratte rightly notes the importance of acquiring such a sarcophagus as a public act demonstrating the wealth and power of its owner[242]. The decorations and inscriptions on the sarcophagi allow us to reconstruct both the private and public lives of their owners, including reference to their religious preferences. This makes the supposed references to Isis (even if not direct) in the images on the sarcophagus very significant for our study, for they tell us much about those who commissioned the work.

One side of the sarcophagus depicts a woman with her face partially obscured by a veil, seated in front of an object, now no longer recognizable (Fig. 18). At first it was assumed that the object was a mirror and the full image was a picture of Roman daily life[243], but R. Egger noted that the veil on a woman's face is not suitable for looking in a mirror[244]. The scene needs to be more complex and Egger suggested that the woman has an image of the deity in front of her and that sitting in front of this image is something associated with *Votum*, a ritual of confession that mystics sometimes performed in a sitting posture[245]. The rest of the relief is still visible and discernible. H. Gabelmann followed this idea and, having examined the sarcophagus (R. Egger did not manage to see the sarcophagus himself, he had only photographs published by P. Amaducci), came to the conclusion that a certain silhouette of a herm was still visible above the remains of the relief in its left part[246]. A woman, possibly *Tetratia Isias* herself, looks at an image of the deity. Together with the preserved image of the god Hermes (Fig. 14) and the content of the inscriptions on the

[241] Toynbee 1971, p. 275.
[242] Baratte 2006, pp. 45-46.
[243] Amaducci 1907, p. 2; Muratori 1913, p. 404.
[244] Egger 1951, S. 51.
[245] Egger 1951, S. 51-53.
[246] Gabelmann 1973, S. 151.

sarcophagus referring to Hermes and therefore to Isis, the search for what may have been depicted in front of the woman should hardly be long.

One of the side images of the sarcophagus is unusual compared to others existing in Roman funerary art, depicting a man touching the face of a seated woman(?) (Fig. 19). Note that there is no veil on the seating figure's face in this case. It was long believed that the image represented an eye healing procedure, so the sarcophagus was associated with a doctor's family[247]. One of the few, if not the only relief to compare with the relief we are discussing on the sarcophagus from Ravenna is the so-called "*stele de l'oculiste*" of the 2nd century AD in the Bar-le-Duc museum (*Musee barrois*, Bar-le-Duc, France, inv. 850.20.1., Fig. 20)[248]. R. Egger, however, suggested that this was most likely a ritual anointing of the eyes with ointment, although he believed that the man was holding a scroll[249], whereas, according to F. Benoit, and later H. Gabelmann, the man is holding a pyxis with ointment[250]. We can also suggest that this image can be interpreted as a depiction of the phenomenon of enlightenment, well known from the Christian texts, such as the Apocalypse of St. John (3:18)[251]. In the aforementioned Hellenistic aretalogy from Maroneia, Isis also gives enlightenment to the eyes: "*[κα]ὶ γὰρ τὸ σὸν ἐγκώμιον τῶν ὀμμάτων ἐστὶ κρεῖσσον, [.] ΑΝΟΙΖ ἔβλεψα τὸν ἥλιον τούτοις, καὶ τὸν σὸν βλέπω κόσμον·*"[252](("and as your praise is in fact mightier than [my] eyes, with these wandering [eyes]...i have seen the sun, and i see the world that is yours")· So, after initiation, a human being suddenly realizes and understands the truth, previously hidden behind "a veil".

Let us now discuss our assumption that the image together with the inscription may be related to the phenomenon of sudden enlightenment. The words inscribed above the heads of the two men, written in Latin letters but in Greek: "*MEMPHI*" and "*GLEGORI*", have previously attracted much attention. The first researcher of the

[247] Amaducci 1907, p. 4; Muratori 1913, pp. 404-405; Cumont 1942, p. 298.
[248]. Existing studies have also attempted to consider the depictions of this relief in a ritual context. Benoit 1953, p. 81; Raspiller 2015, p. 152.
[249] Egger 1951, S. 54;
[250] Benoit 1953, p. 77; Gabelmann 1973, S. 151-152; Also, Kahlos 1994, p. 23.
[251] Benoit 1953, p. 80.
[252] Grandjean 1975, p. 17.

sarcophagus, P. Amaducci, put forward three versions: 1) the words are the names of two real people ("*MEMPHI*" - *Memphis* and "*GLEGORI*" - *Gregorios*) 2) names, but with symbolic meanings - "*o come due nomi propri, ma con significazione simbolica*" 3) "*MEMPHI*" is the vocative form of the name *Memphius*, and the word "*GLEGORI*" is the imperative form of the verb *γρηγορέω*[253]("to be fully awake", "to become fully awake"[254]). Perhaps it refers to one who is already awakened and enlightened and performs the mysteries of Isis for his wife.

6. The word Glegori on sarcophagi of Belluno and Modena

If we accept that *Glegori* and *Gregori* are the same word[255], then we must mention two other sarcophagi in which the word *Gregori* occurs. The first is a marble sarcophagus which is preserved in the *Museo Lapidario Estense*, Modena (inv. R.C.G.E. 7085, Fig. 21-22) and, according to this museum, was made in the third quarter of the third century AD[256]. On this sarcophagus, away from the main inscription (*CIL* XI, 863 / *RICIS* 512/0603), is the word "*Gregori*", positioned between two trees and above the head of one of the hunters, who is depicted as the master of the hounds (Fig. 23). This position of the inscription has led some scholars to view "*Gregori*" in the case of this sarcophagus as a personal name or derived from the verb *γρηγορέω*, in both cases in the context of the hunt depicted[257]. Some of the researchers accepted the possibility of the connection between this inscription and the Isis mysteries[258].

The second sarcophagus, the sarcophagus of *Flavius Hostilius*, made of stone, was found during the foundation work for the cloister of the church of St. Stephen in Belluno in 1480 (Fig. 24-25)[259]. According to the first historian of Belluno, Giovanni Bonifaccio, this sarcophagus, was found in 1493[260]. The sarcophagus was made in the

[253] Amaducci 1907, p. 5. Almost the same interpretation of the word in: D'Abruzzo 1990, p. 67.
[254] Liddell & Scott 1968, p. 360.
[255] Amaducci 1907, p. 5.
[256] Giordani & Strozzi (eds.) 2005, p. 161. According to Malaise 1972b, p. 28, between 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.
[257] Cavedoni 1828, p. 139.
[258] Gabelmann 1973, S. 152; Rebecchi 1986, p. 905; p. 913; Giordani & Strozzi (eds.) 2005, p. 162.
[259] Rebecchi 1993, S. 177.
[260] Bonifaccio 1591, p. 17.

middle of the 3rd century AD[261] and the text of its' inscriptions (*CIL* V, 2044 / *RICIS* 515/0401) has been published many times since its discovery[262]. Here the word *Gregori* is written in Greek letters on the front of the sarcophagus: "*Γρηγόρι. Χαῖρε / Ὀρέσι ἀεὶ // μνήμων*". L. Doglioni in 1816 translated it "*Vigila, vale, montium semper memor*"[263], thus using the most common meaning of the word *Ὄρος* as a mountain or hill. This translation allowed him to look at the deceased as a habitant of a mountainous region, that is Belluno and its surroundings[264]. N. Degrassi did the same in 1940[265]. The translation was also adopted by M. D'Abruzzo[266]. G. Rodenwaldt in 1937 suggested that the word *Gregori* here is *signum*, and refers to Flavius Hostilius' wife, who was buried with him, and that the word *Ὀρέσι* again means mountains[267]. R. Egger in 1951 interpreted *Ὀρέσι* as a vocative form of the name *Oresius*[268]. An additional meaning of the word *Ὄρος* should be noted, which can be found in Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott's Dictionary of Ancient Greek. In the Egyptian papyrii *POxy.274.27* (1st cent. AD), *PRyl.153.5* (2nd cent. AD), *PGrenf.2.77.22* (3rd-4th cent. AD) the word *Ὄρος* is translated as 'a place of burial'[269]. Despite the Egyptian context of such a meaning, it may be applicable in our case as well. The meaning "hill" or "mountain" may also refer to how the tomb was originally made for the sarcophagus. Thus, the full inscription can be translated as a call to remember the existence of the burial/memory of the deceased: "You, who see Be in health / eternally on the burial places// [be] mindful". Thus, the word *Γρηγόρι* in the case of the sarcophagus from Belluno carries the meaning "one who sees," one who can see the sarcophagus.

---

[261] Malaise 1972b, p. 13.
[262] Bonifaccio 1591, p. 17; Gruterus 1602, p. CDXX; p. DCCLXXXIX; Doglioni 1723, p. Doglioni 1976, pp. 111-112;
[263] Doglioni 1976, p. 125,
[264] Doglioni 1976, p. 126.
[265] Unfortunately, we do not have the work of N. Degrassi, so we follow a summary compiled by M. D'Abruzzo: D'Abruzzo 1990, p. 67.
[266] D'Abruzzo 1990, p. 67.
[267] Rodenwaldt 1937, S. 134.
[268] Egger 1951, S. 62.
[269] Liddell & Scott 1968, p. 1255.

The same meaning of the word *Γρηγόρι* is likely to be given to a sarcophagus from Modena, where, as already stated, the word was written above the head of one of the hunters. The sarcophagus from Belluno also shows hunting scenes, but the word *Γρηγόρι* is placed on the front where hunting is not depicted (Fig. 25), probably without any connection with the hunting scenes, as we have seen above from the character of the inscription itself. Thus, also in the case of the sarcophagus in Modena, the location of the word *Gregori* has nothing to do with hunting. In both Modena and Belluno, the word may be an address to a possible viewer passing by the sarcophagus.

The hunting images on the sarcophagi from Modena and Belluno are quite typical of aristocratic funerary art of the Empire. Hunting was seen as a way to prepare for war[270]. Many images where the deceased (or the owner of the sarcophagus) sits on a horse and kills a lion or, as in the case of the sarcophagus from Belluno, a boar (Fig. 26), were most likely related to the desire of the nobility not to oppose the emperors by representing military victories and, in other words, potential leadership over the imperial legions[271]. H. Wrede explains that the disappearance of military reliefs from sarcophagi and other places available for public inspection from AD 210-220 was the result of the reluctance of noble Romans to pursue a military career at all[272].

7. Hunting images on the sarcophagi of Belluno and Modena

In the case of the sarcophagus in Belluno, if we follow G. Rodenwaldt, we can also speak of the influence of the so-called Attic sarcophagi, as there were also similar images of hunting[273]. However, some details on the sarcophagi at Modena and Belluno differ from the usual type of hunting depiction. In the case of the sarcophagus from Modena, two men with four dogs are chasing a deer, and next to it two men (probably the same hunters) are carrying a boar, probably in the direction of the kitchen and feasting area (Fig. 22). On the back of the sarcophagus from Belluno,

[270] Cumont 1942, p. 439.
[271] Rebecchi 1993, p. 167.
[272] Wrede 2001, p. 110.
[273] Rodenwaldt 1937, S. 138.

two men are also returning from hunting, carrying a boar, followed by a cavalryman. The man on the horse is probably *C. Flavius Hostilius Sertorius* himself (Fig. 24)[274]. The right side shows a mounted nobleman chasing a wild boar with a spear (Fig. 25). The left side of the sarcophagus depicts a fight between a deer and a human (or anthropomorphic deity) (Fig. 26). According to G. Rodenwaldt, R. Egger and M. D'Abruzzo, this is a portrait of Flavius Hostilius' wife, Domitia Severa, fighting a deer in the guise of the goddess Diana, which is evident in the hairstyle[275]. It should be noted that when the first engravings of the sarcophagus were made in 1816, the figure was unequivocally understood to represent a man (Fig. 25). The description of the sarcophagus in the book for which the engravings were made is just as clear about the man: "*A che vi si scorge in uno de'lati del sepolcro scolpito un uomo, che afferra per le corna un cervo con ambe le mani, e spinto a terra con tutta forza il ritiene?*"[276] The example drawn by M. D'Abruzzo for comparison with the sarcophagus from Belluno[277] does not show the possibility of a connection between the two reliefs. The hairstyle, according to M. D'Abruzzo, is the main indication of the figure's female gender. In any case, one thing we can agree on, the depicted figure contains both a reference to the divine and the human at the same time.

It has long been believed that deer hunting, depicted on the sarcophagus of *Publius Vettius Sabinus* (Fig. 26), was not considered an honorable occupation in classical Rome[278]. Boar hunting, especially with a spear, by contrast, was considered most valuable[279]. At the same time, numerous depictions of nobles and even kings hunting deer in the Near East made it obvious that deer hunting was much more respectable in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire[280]. Deer as an object of hunting took its own, distinctive path through the religious transformations of the

[274] Rodenwaldt 1937, S. 138.
[275] Rodenwaldt 1937, S. 137; Egger 1951, S. 60; D'Abruzzo 1990, p. 68.
[276] Doglioni 1976, p. 110.
[277] D'Abruzzo 1990, p. 83.
[278] Aymard 1951, p. 346; Pastoureau 2004, pp. 66-67.
[279] As boar was closely associated with the mythology that existed, the imperial interest in it is also well known - Anderson 1985, p. 124.
[280] Aymard 1951, p. 355.

Near East in Late Antiquity[281]. This allows us to suggest that the depiction of deer hunting on sarcophagi, represents those noble Romans who came to Italy from the East. Such an assumption should be treated with caution[282], the situation could have been very different[283]. We would certainly agree with J. Aymard's concluding remarks on the depiction of hunting on the sarcophagi: "*signification des scenes de chasse resterait a peu pres entierement imperméable*"[284]. Thus, the symbolic meaning of the hunting images on the sarcophagi from Belluno and Modena, depicting slaughtered deer, remains questionable, but their presence together with the word *Gregori* makes it necessary to pay special attention to them.

Summarizing the brief analysis of the only sarcophagus in Northern Italy, probably belonging to the cult of Isis, it is necessary to highlight an unusual image, interpreted by us as a scene of enlightenment during initiation rites. In the next section we will analyze the inscription on the sarcophagus and compare its content with other epigraphical inscriptions of the same period found in Northern Italy.

8. Comparisons with the evidence from Rome

Let us compare the inscription on the sarcophagus from Ravenna with other evidence of the cult of Isis in Late Antique Italy. Many scholars have already noted the similarity of this inscription to the account of liberation from physical death through initiation, dating from the fourth century AD and associated with the *praefectus praetorio,* senator and priest *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus*. His biography is well known from records in literary sources such as the *Saturnalia* by Macrobius and *Res gestae* by *Ammianus Marcellinus*[285]. Recent studies show that *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus*, as a prominent representative of the pagan aristocracy of Rome

[281] See for example: Skupniewicz 2025, pp. 50-51.

[282] The number of sources mentioning deer hunting itself with negative connotations is small, mostly is cited only Martial, poet of the classical Imperial period. Mart. I, 49, 25-26: "*Leporemque forti callidum rumpes equo, Cervos relinques vilico*".

[283] For example, in Book 8 of the culinary text Apicius, compiled probably in the Late Imperial period, but consisting of recipes from the first century AD onwards (Grocock & Grainger 2006, p. 15; pp. 35-38) the sauce for wild boar is discussed first, which emphasizes its importance. Sauce for the fallow deer comes right after the boar (Apic. 8, 1-2)

[284] Aymard 1951, p. 514.

[285] Amm. 22, 7, 6; 27, 9, 8-9; 28, 1, 24. Full list of non-literature sources in: Cantini 2024, pp. 469-470; Petrova 2021, C. 191.

in the second half of the 4th and early 5th centuries AD[286], is also the protagonist of the poem *"Carmina contra paganos*" which may have been created during the period of pagan reaction led by *Quintus Aurelius Symmachus*[287]. However, it is important to note that the exact historical identity of the protagonist of this poem has not yet been established.

We consider the epigraphy inscriptions *CIL* VI, 1778-1779 (*RICIS* 501/0181-501/0180) where *Praetextatus* is mentioned as *neocorus*[288] (the custodian, one who guard and clean the *naos*, the temple, inferior to the priest[289]). In connection with the mention of Isis in the speech attributed in Macrobius' *Saturnalia* to *Praetextatus*[290], L. Bricault, following L. Vidman, suggests that the term *neocorus* here is the reference of *Praetextatus*' connection to the temple of Isis[291]. In the *Praetextatus*' speech, Isis and the other gods of the mystery cults, were seen as existing aspects of the supreme god, the Sun, the most powerful of all[292]. Thus, the connection of *Praetextatus* with the cults of Isis and Mithras seems unmistakable.

In view of their importance for our study, let us briefly dwell on the epigraphic inscriptions mentioned above. *CIL* VI, 1778 (*RICIS* 501/0181) was found on the Caelian Hill, Rome and *CIL* VI, 1779 (*RICIS* 501/0180) was found in 1750, also in Rome, along *Clivus Capitolinus*, the main road to the Roman Capitol. F. Massa connects the inscriptions 1778 and 1779 with the statues installed in the Roman Forum, i.e., with the public space[293]. *CIL* VI, 1780 (*RICIS* 501/0210) inscription is lost. It was noticed by one of the first epigraphists of the Renaissance, Cyriacus of

---

[286] Alföldi 1937, p. 38.

[287] Cameron 2011; Trout 2016, p. 228; Cantini 2024, p. 470; Vedeshkin 2024, C. 280; 2025, C. 423.

[288] *CIL* VI, 1778 (*RICIS* 501/0181): "*Vettio Agorio Praetextato, v(iro) c(larissimo), // pontifici Vestae, / pontifici Soli(s) / quindecemviro / auguri / tauroboliato / curiali / neocoro / hierofantae....*"; *CIL* VI 1779 (*RICIS* 501/0180): *"[I (A)] D(is) M(anibus) / Vettius Agorius Praetextatus / augur p[o]ntifex Vestae / pontifex Sol[is] quindecemvir / curialis Herc[u]lis sacratus / Libero et Eleusiniis hierophanta / neocorus tauroboliatus...*".

[289] Bricault 2024, p. 154.

[290] Macr. *Sat*. 1, 17, 1; 21, 11-21

[291] Bricault 2005, pp. 552-553; 2014, p. 353. Also: Cantini 2024, p. 473.

[292] Liebeschuetz 1999, p. 186.

[293] Massa 2018, p. 69.

Ancona, in the church of *Santi Dodici Apostoli*, and its origin is difficult to ascertain today[294].

The inscriptions are situated on the four sides of a parallelepiped altar with an extensive text dedicated to *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus* and his wife, *Aconia Paulina*, who lived together for 40 years[295] (Rome, Capitoline Museum, n. inv. MC 208, Fig. 27). In this text (*CIL* VI, 1779 / *RICIS* 501/0180), the funerary poem of *Praetextatus*' wife, *Fabia Aconia Paulina*, her husband performed the initiation to Attis, the Great Mother, Hecate and Demeter, thus, through the mystery, freeing her from physical death ("*puram ac pudicam sorte mortis eximens*"), and she was able to enjoy beatitude[296]. In speaking of mystery, we will follow W. Burkert who proposed a definition of the term "*mysteries*" as "*initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred*"[297]. Note that, according to J. N. Bremmer, this definition does not apply to all types of mysteries in the ancient world, but primarily to the mysteries of Isis and Mithras[298]. Although *Praetextatus* was associated with various cults, the initiations he conducted were only associated with the deities Attis, the Great Mother, Hecate, and Demeter. Isis is not mentioned[299]. The assumption of A. Cameron, connected with this fact, that the cult of Isis in these years ceased to be so important among the nobility[300], seems rather hasty. The religious practice of the *Praetextatus* was a kind of personal syncretism, involving the separate veneration of various cults according to existing traditions[301]. Nothing made one cult more important than the others.

One of the families close to *Praetextatus* was the family *Caecina*[302], which was quite closely related to the cult of Isis, as evidenced by an inscription *CIL* VI, 512

[294] Mangiafesta 2008, p. 107.
[295] Full description in: Ensoli & La Rocca 2000, pp. 507-508.
[296] Festugière 1963, p. 136.
[297] Burkert 1987, p. 11.
[298] Bremmer 2014, p. 138.
[299] Festugière 1963, p. 136.
[300] Cameron 2011, p. 148.
[301] Liebeschuetz 1999, p. 204.
[302] Macr. Sat. 1, 2, 15: "*cum Vettius Praetextatus domi convenire se gestientibus copiam faceret, eo venerunt Aurelius Symmachus et Caecina Albinus, cum aetate tum etiam moribus ac studiis inter se coniunctissimi*"

(*RICIS* 501/0212) and an Isis statuette found in the Villa of San Vincenzino, thought to have belonged to the *Caecinae*[303]. The inscription *CIL* VI, 512 (*RICIS* 501/0212) reads "...*Cecine Lolliane, clar [issi] / me et inlustris femin [e] / deae Isidis sacerdotis filius*". *Caecina Lolliana* was granddaughter of the consul of AD 316 *Antonius Caecinus Sabinus* and wife of *S. Caeonius Rufius Volusianus Lampadius*, prefect of Rome from AD 365-366[304]. Thanks to an inscription related to *Praetextatus* found in a villa near Oratorio, *comune* Capraia e Limite (Fi), we know that these families also lived in the same region, as the nearby wine production center at Empoli was associated with *Caecinae*[305].

In addition, the finds at the villa on the Esquiline Hill, and in particular the statue of Isis, which were also seen as possibly related to the *Praetextatus* itself, prove the continuing interest in the cult of Isis among the Roman nobility in the fourth century[306]. In any case, the inscriptions associated with the *Praetextatus* show that in the fourth century it was still important not only to demonstrate adherence to traditions such as the initiation ritual, but also to emphasize the social status of the one who followed these traditions. A. Cameron's remark on the private contexts of *Praetextatus* inscriptions supports this idea[307]. Even if *Praetextatus* "was not showing the inscriptions to the world"[308], they were important to him as a remembrance and information for possible readers. Surely, the depiction of the ritual in addition to the inscription on the sarcophagus at Ravenna must have further enhanced the impression of the mysteries of Isis, especially for those who could not read.

Finally, returning to the inscriptions on the sarcophagus from Ravenna, which was made about a hundred years earlier than the epigraphical inscription (*CIL* VI, 1779 / *RICIS* 501/0180), we can trace their similarities and differences. Both inscriptions express similar gratitude to the husband for taking the best care of his wife, for the ritual, performed by the husband, promises salvation. It is worth

[303] Cantini 2024, p. 479. On the statuette, see Arslan 1997, p. 486.
[304] Chastagnol 1961, pp. 744-758.
[305] Cantini 2024, p. 479.
[306] Mangiafesta 2008, p. 106; Simón 2016, p. 214.
[307] Cameron 2011, p. 158.
[308] Cameron 2011, p. 158.

emphasizing that *Tetratia Isias*' husband was still alive at the time the images were made, as they were probably made at the same time as the inscriptions. That is, if the husband was performing an initiation ritual, both the image and the inscription served to signify the importance of his role in society. It should also be noted that the inscriptions on the sarcophagus from Ravenna do not contain any indication of the status of the deceased, which also distinguishes this inscription from the case of the *Praetextatus*. Before the edict of Caracalla in 212 A.D., according to J. Scheid, the performance of rituals was an important part of the social life of a person with Roman citizenship[309]. Rituals remained an important part of social life even after the edict, and perhaps the performance of rituals could even emphasize the status of the owner.

9. Bronze heads and the priests of Isis

Near Modena, a small bronze head without hairs was discovered during a recent excavation[310](Fig. 28). The priests of the cult of Isis were often mentioned as having bald heads. Plutarch wrote about them[311], and later Ambrose was terrified as "*Et cum ipsi capita et supercilia sua radant, si quando Isidis suspiciunt sacra*..."[312]. We know of many images depicting the bald priests of Isis, such are the frescoes of the temple of Isis in Pompei (Fig. 29), and the depictions of the Isis processions on the 1st century columns, today preserved in the Capitoline museum (Fig. 30-31). The statuette was regarded as a representation of a priest of Isis. It can be compared with the bronze head found in Pietole (MN), which was probable serving as a supporting handle with devotional and processional meaning (*Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Mantova*, inv. Gen. 11150, Fig 32-33)[313]. S. Maggi suggested that the bronze head from the Mantua Museum collection does not represent a priest of Isis, but an athlete[314]. The uncertainty surrounding the identification of the bronze heads thus

[309] Scheid 2018, p. 27-29.

[310] Corti 2002, pp. 86-87.

[311] This is stated, beginning with Plutarch: Plu. 352. C-D: "*Ἐπεὶ τούς γε πολλοὺς καὶ τὸ κοινότατον τοῦτο καὶ σμικρότατον λέληθεν, ἐφ' ὅτῳ τὰς τρίχας οἱ ἱερεῖς ἀποτίθενται καὶ λινᾶς ἐσθῆτας φοροῦσιν·*" ("It is true that most people are unaware of this very ordinary and minor matter: the reason why the priests remove their hair and wear linen garments" – trans. by F. C. Babbitt).

[312] Ambr. Epist. 58, 3, 254.

[313] Giordani 2016, pp. 48-49.

[314] Maggi 1986, p. 12.

leaves open the question of whether Roman society in Northern Italy perceived the priests of Isis in the third century AD in the same way as it did before Late Antiquity.

10. Non-funerary Inscriptions

We will conclude this chapter by mentioning other evidence of the cult of Isis and its priests in Northern Italy in Late Antiquity, although we have very little information. An inscription from the 3rd century AD of unknown origin survives in Modena (*CIL* XI, 819 / *RICIS* 512/0602; *Museo Lapidario Estense*, Modena, inv. R.C.G.E. 7064, Fig. 34), which tells of a priest who made an offering to Isis, *Marcus Aemilius Phoebus*, either coming from Rome[315] or performing rituals according to Roman tradition: "*sacrorum ab Roma / Isidi donum d(edit) [l(ibens)]*"[316].

Another 3rd century AD inscription was found in Brescia (*CIL* V, 4220 / *RICIS* 515/1202; *Musei civici di storia ed arte*, inv. 2608, Fig. 35), where *Caius Roscius Crescens* recorded that his *votum* to Isis done[317]. Another reference to a man with very similar nomen, praenomen and cognomen, is found in a funerary inscription discovered in North Africa, which mentions *Caius Rossius Crescens*, who was a resident of *Bulla Regia* in the time of emperor *Septimius Severus* (Fig. 36) [318]. Thus, the Brescian inscription can be dated to the beginning of the 3rd century AD. Together with the evidence about the Roscius family (originating in Spain or Northern Italy) collected by S. Roda[319], the Brescian inscription is further evidence for the cult of Isis in Northern Italy of the 3rd century AD.

11. Concluding remarks

On the example of the sarcophagus from Ravenna and other sources, we have seen how existing traditions of Roman religion are influenced by other religious practices and borrow from them, giving rise to something entirely new in terms of religious rituals. We have seen the "Material Turn" as a useful tool to understand the

[315] Rebecchi 1986, p. 914.
[316] Giordani & Strozzi 2005, pp. 137-138.
[317] "*Inside (sic) / sacr(um). / C. Roscius / Crescen[s] / v(otum) s(olvit)*" - Bricault 2005, p. 659.
[318] "*D(is) ☙ M(anibus) ☙ s(acrum) / C(aius) Rossius / Crescens / vixit an(nis) XXXI / h(ic) s(itus) e(st)*" - de Vos Raaijmakers & Maurina 2019, pp. 12-13; p. 342.
[319] Roda 1996, pp. 33-50.

continuity of the interest, and the character of the interest the Romans had in changing their beliefs. It has already been traced the loose of Romans' common use in the third century the epigraphical inscriptions as the public demonstration of private belief that came with their interest in the new practices: a decline in the striving for posthumous fame was paralled by deepening belief in performal immortality[320]. The findings described in this chapter that are related to the Egyptian cults support the idea, after the 3rd century AD we have no inscriptions in Northern Italy on the Egyptian cults and already at this time the related material findings are small in amount. These findings indicate that Egyptian gods remained popular. However, isolated finds do not provide sufficient evidence for the existence of Isis cult centres until a complete, related site is identified[321].

F. Benoit has already shown, that the emergence of the mysteries, and of "*philosophie religieuse*", marked the advent of a new epoch[322] and in the next chapter we will attempt to trace how these changes were reflected in the archeological sites related to the cult of Isis in Northern Italy. The small number of unique material objects associated with the cult of Isis during its decline prevents us from focusing solely on the "Material Turn" approach, ignoring non-material factors, and we will attempt to integrate it with the traditional "Linguistic Turn" through an analysis of reliable literary sources.

[320] Liebeschuetz 1979, p. 232.
[321] Spikermann 2008, S. 119.
[322] Benoit 1953, p. 83.

Chapter III: The Decline of the cult of Isis in the 4th-5th centuries: A view from the Linguistic Turn

In the previous chapter, we discussed various objects with dedicatory inscriptions or images associated with Isis in the daily life of Romans through the 3rd century AD. However, archaeological sources concerning the cult of Isis in the 4th century AD are different. We still see a large number of coins minted with the image of Isis by the emperors until AD 378/379[323], but no epigraphic inscriptions which are particularly associated with the cult of Isis have survived in Northern Italy. The question remains open as to whether Roman devotion to Egyptian deities in 3rd–4th century Northern Italy was systematic and tied to public spaces, or if worship was confined to private dwellings[324].

R. A. Wild (1984) identifies four sacred spaces[325] in Northern Italy directly linked to the cult of Isis in the following cities: Aquileia, Bologna, Industria, and Verona [326]. Our study, however, excludes Aquileia because its status as a major Roman port meant its population was shaped more by Mediterranean-wide trade and migration than by regional Northern Italian trends[327]. For Bologna, any examination is difficult as only two 1st-century AD inscriptions were recovered from the site of the medieval church of Saint Stephen[328]. Similarly, Verona lacks excavated structural evidence to confirm an organized late-antique cult presence [329]. Consequently, we focus on Industria, which offers both a preserved sacred structure

[323] Alföldi 1937, p. 30. According to L. Bricault, the end for the imperial mint of the coins with Isis is the 394 AD (battle of the River *Frigidius*) – Bricault 2019, p. 280.

[324] S. Briaud made right suggestion that any religious construction in a non-capital city was result of the agreements between the ruling elites of the settlement – See Briaud 2015, p. XXXIV. Thus, a temple is good evidence of the local population's interest in the cult.

[325] We use the words temple/sacred structure or sanctuary for describing cult place, following the definition of a cult place, offered by T. Derks, and later used in other works (for example: Spikermann 2008): "cult places are spaces intended for the worship of one or more cosmological powers, separate from the profane world, in which the members of the cult community regularly gather in order to perform their personal or collective rituals before a ritual focus" – Derks 1998, p.133.

[326] Wild 1984, pp. 1762-1763; p. 1783; p. 1842.

[327] On the Isis cult in Aquileia see: Wild 1984, p. 1762; Fontana 2010, pp. 101-119; 2017, pp. 137-140.

[328] Susini 1956, p. 156 & n. 22-23; Wild 1984, p. 1763; See also above, pp. 31-32.

[329] Wild 1984, p. 1842; Bolla 1997, p. 358.

and evidence of public rituals, while being situated inland away from maritime influence.

1. The cult of Isis in Industria

In the western part of the city of Industria, a structure built during the reign of emperor Hadrian was discovered (AD 117–138). Count Bernardino Morra (1769-1851), who began excavations at the site in 1808, identified the walls as the remains of a theater or forum[330]. In the 1960s, these walls became associated with the cult of Isis[331], but recent research has identified them as part of the forum for the second time[332]. The similarity of the semicircular portico in the southern part of the building led scholars to compare the central building of Industria (Fig. 37) with the temple of Isis on the *Campus Martius* in Rome[333]. E. Zanda, summing up the results of the excavations, suggests that the structure to which the walls belonged functioned until the mid-4th century AD[334]. The significant number of bronze objects and inscriptions found, although not related to the cult of Isis, also allows us to conclude that the city continued to play a religious and commercial role at least until the end of the reign of emperor Constantine I[335]. Does this mean that the cult of Isis played an important role throughout all this period? Compared to the significant finds attesting to the importance of the cult of Isis for this settlement until the 2nd century AD[336], which corresponds to the establishment of the sacred precinct of Isis in the Forum area, almost no finds related to Isis have been found for the 3rd century AD and only one find of 4th century AD.

There are only two valuable examples that can be associated with Isis. First, a situla, a ceremonial bowl (*Museo di Antichità* in Turin, Inv. 1108, Fig. 39), made in the shape of a human head. With a handle on top, it has been interpreted as a bowl

[330] Zanda 2011, p. 14.
[331] Zanda 2011, p. 181.
[332] Saragoza 2012, p. 332.
[333] Wild 1984, pp. 1783-1785; Zanda 2011, p. 133; Masino 2024, p. 46.
[334] Zanda 1997, p. 357; 2011, p. 181.
[335] Zanda 1997, p. 357; Giorcelli Bersani 2014, pp. 174-175.
[336] For the connection between Industria bronze production and the Egyptian cults: Giorcelli Bersani 2014, p. 174, and the upcoming article of G. Cresci Marrone (2026).

that held incense grains [337] and sistrum for ritual[338]. The bowl is known to have been purchased from a local resident in 1818, but its connection to the social and religious space of Industria is unknown[339].

More promising for the study of the cult of Isis is the bronze head of Zeus-Ammon dating to the beginning of the 3rd century AD (inv. 58694)[340]. Zeus-Ammon is a Greco-Egyptian god who combined the Greek god Zeus and the Egyptian god Serapis[341]. The bronze head served as a decorative element of a tripod or brazier. It was found in 1985 during E. Zanda's excavations [342]. M. Zorat revealed the connections of the local *Lollii* family in Industria with the cult of Zeus-Ammon. One of the inscriptions mentioning the *Lolii*, that was found in the city (2nd century AD) is decorated with an image of Zeus-Ammon[343]. Members of the *Lollii* family were also known for their veneration of Isis in various parts of Italy, such as Rome, Ostia and Brindisi [344]. After the 2nd century AD, no traces of this family in Industria were found. The decorative form of the object from the 2nd-3rd centuries AD does not allow us to establish an exact connection with the cult of Isis in particular[345].

During excavations carried out in the 1980s a bronze plaque depicting a deity identified as the Egyptian god Harpocrates was found in Industria (Inv. 58693 – Fig. 38)[346]. The stylistic elements of the plaque's design, described by E. Zanda, allow us to assess this image as a work of the second half of the 4th century AD and "*permette di ipotizzare una continuità nel culto*" (in the city of Industria)[347].

The bronze plaque was found near a well that was used for sacred purposes until the 4th century, as evidenced by the discovery of coins from the time of

[337] Mercando & Zanda 1998, p. 103
[338] Petitti 2024, p. 28.
[339] Catalogo 2024, p. 65.
[340] Zanda 1993, p. 70.
[341] Zorat 1993, p. 60.
[342] Mercando & Zanda 1998, p. 105.
[343] Zorat 1993, p. 55;
[344] Zorat 1993, p. 55.
[345] Yet in the opinion of G. Cresci Marrone, the head together with other findings shows "*la devozione per i culti isiaci da parte dei soggetti implicati*" – Cresci Marrone 2026.
[346] Mercando & Zanda 1998, p. 99.
[347] Mercando & Zanda 1998, p. 99.

Constantine I and his son Constantius II[348]. This find (the bronze plaque) was seen as evidence of the continued veneration of Egyptian gods in the city of Industria. The interpretation of the image as an Egyptian deity however is not reliable, since only a small number of similar objects are known for comparison. M. Bolla convincingly interprets the image as one of the images of Eros, a god represented in the Greek and later Roman pantheon, who was not of eastern origin[349]. If E. Zanda interpreted the plaque as part of a leather belt decoration, a medallion[350], M. Bolla suggested that it was part of a protective and decorative element of horse harness, and cited late antique examples from Verona and Lagole for comparison[351]. We have already spoken of the *Avilia Amabilis*' inscription in the Chapter I[352], but have not touched upon other finds in the city of Industria and its environs, and the decorative bronze plaque which has a dubious connection with Egyptian religion, is an example of such archaeological finds.

As a result, we have two bronze objects dating back to the beginning of the 3rd century AD and one bronze object from the 4th century AD found in Industria. All three bronze objects, even if they are connected with Egyptian cults, are connected indirectly and, in particular, have no relation to the deities Isis or Serapis, with whom researchers primarily associated the sanctuary of Industria[353]. These finds confirm that the sanctuary at Industria was connected—if it was connected at all in the 3rd–4th centuries AD, and did not become simply a repository of valuable bronze objects in later times—with the worship of various deities.

However, there is no direct evidence of Isis worship in Industria after the 2nd century AD. In her work, F. Saragoza criticized previous researchers, emphasizing that the desire to uncover the cult of Isis in Industria prevailed over the need for a systematic study of the settlement in all its complexity[354]. Avoiding unnecessary

[348] Zanda 2011, p. 182.
[349] Bolla 2008, p. 56; Bolla 2015, p. 72.
[350] Mercando & Zanda 1998, p. 99; Zanda 2011, p. 182.
[351] Bolla 2008, p. 56.
[352] See chapter 1, p. 21.
[353] Carducci 1968, p. 43; Zanda 2011,
[354] Saragoza 2012, p. 332.

criticism, we will only agree that the bronze finds give us very little information about the religious history of the Industria. As M. Bolla summed up the problems associated with bronze finds in Industria, "*impossibile – data l'estensione dell'area – definire il loro rapporto con le strutture monumentali, anche se si è ritenuto che le attività del sito ruotassero tutte attorno al polo centrale, riferito al culto di Iside, tesi però sottoposta a revisione di recente*"[355].

In the case of Industria, the question remains as to what were the reasons for the cessation of the worship of Isis and other Egyptian deities. It is important to note here the nature of other bronze finds that were made in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD and later discovered in Industria. The fall of Industria, as we see from the results of archaeological research carried out earlier by E. Zanda, probably occurred with a fire, and then (or simultaneously with the flames) with the arrival of the Lombards, when the sacred part of the city was again used as a cemetery[356].

We will therefore turn to the literary sources available to us to find out whether the advent of Christianity took place in connection with the end of the cult of Isis in Industria.

2. The letter of Saint Eusebius of Vercelli

Although Christianity was already firmly established in Italy and Gaul in the 3rd century AD, the first evidence of Christians in the territory now called Piedmont dates back only to the 340s [357]. Christians coexist with the pagan and Jewish communities in the cities. It is generally recognized that the leaders of urban communities — the bishops — played a key role in the spread of the new religion. One of them was bishop Eusebius of Vercelli.

According to tradition, Eusebius was the first bishop of Vercelli[358]. Belonging to the anti-Arian party, Eusebius refused to sign the condemnation of bishop Anastasius of Alexandria and two of his supporters and, after the Council of Milan

[355] Bolla 2015, p. 68.
[356] Zanda 1997, p. 357.
[357] Bolgiani 1982, p. 39; Ruggini 1991, p. 235.
[358] Bolgiani 1997, p. 249, n. 74; Meloni 1999, p. 332.

(AD 355), was exiled to Syria along with Lucifer of Cagliari and Dionysius of Milan[359]. He returned to Vercelli around AD 362[360] and continued to be active in church affairs until his death around AD 371[361]. After the Council of Milan (AD 355), while in exile in Scythopolis (Palestine), Eusebius wrote a letter to the Christians of several communities in Northern Italy with which he was associated[362]. The text of the letter begins with a long and formal greeting to the people of the cities. Among these cities we find Industria, the city where the Isis sanctuary was active before.

3. Eusebius of Vercelli and Industria

We no longer have the original manuscripts of bishop Eusebius' letter. Several editions of this letter were published in the Early Modern period, beginning with the first edition published by Mombritius in Vercelli (1478). This edition mentions four cities: modern Vercelli, Novara, Ivrea and Tortona[363]. These four cities are mentioned in most editions of the letter, up until the latest edition in 2021[364]. After Mombritius, there were publications under the direction of the bishop of Vercelli, Giovanni Stefano Ferrero, but while the text in 1602 was identical to that of Mombritius[365], the list of cities was changed in the 1609 edition. The 1609 edition states that Eusebius addressed to: "*Dilectissimis fratribus et satis desideratissimis presbyteris, diaconibus et omni clero, sed et sanctis in fide consistentibus plebibus Vercellen. Novarien. Hipporegien. Augustanis Industrien. et Agaminis ad Palatium, nec non etiam Derton. Eusebio Episcopo in Domino aeternam salute*"[366]. The 1609 edition did not include any additional notes explaining the reasons for the expanded list. F. Bolgiani believes that bishop Ferrero used a manuscript that no longer exists, and that the bishop could not have committed a forgery[367]. In 1766 Jacopo Durandi, who studied law at the

[359] Bolgiani 1997, p. 250; Meloni 1999, p. 344-345.
[360] Meloni 1999, p. 351.
[361] Everett 2006, p. 133.
[362] Flower 2013, p. 243.
[363] Euseb. Verc. epist. 2; Mombritius 1910, p. 461.
[364] Uglione 2021, p. 102.
[365] Ferrerius 1602, p. 30.
[366] Unfortunately, we were not able to get access to the edition of 1609, it is considered as rarity. F. Savio first among the others noticed the differences between the editions– Savio 1898, p. 3.
[367] Bolgiani 1982, pp. 42-43. n. 11.

University of Turin[368], published a dissertation "*Dell'antica condizione del Vercellese e dell' antico borgo di Santhia dissertazione*" examining the sources of ancient literature and epigraphy about the lands around Vercelli. Durandi mentions a manuscript he found in the cathedral of Embrun containing the text of the Letter of Eusebius. Durandi's dissertation again mentions the city of Industria[369].

Eusebius's letter testifies to the existence of a Christian community in Industria at the end of the 4th century AD, although this evidence would be more convincing if we found any archaeological evidence for the existence of such a community in the city. No archaeological evidence of a Christian community in Industria has yet been discovered. E. Zanda also confirms that the existence of a Christian community has not yet been archaeologically confirmed: "*La formazione della comunità cristiana a Industria nel corso del IV secolo, di cui è tràdita memoria dalle fonti scritte, resta non accertabile archeologicamente anche se pare probabile*"[370].

Summarizing the available evidence on the cult of Isis in Industria up to the late antique period, we argue that it is impossible to draw any definitive conclusions due to the insufficient quantity and questionable quality of the available archaeological material, as well as the uncertainty of the only surviving literary text – the letter of Eusebius. The confrontation between Christianity and the cult of Isis in Northern Italy remains poorly understood, as the cult was already in deep decline and had practically disappeared. The claim of confrontation could be dismissed if not for another source that provides additional information on this matter. This is a letter from bishop Vigilius of Trent, written almost contemporaneously, in which the cult of Isis is directly mentioned.

---

[368] Giaccaria 1994, p. 105.

[369] "*Dilectissimis Fratribus & satis desideratissimis Praesbyteris, Diaconibus, & Subdiaconibus, & omni Clero, & Sanctis in fide consistentibus Plebibus Vercellensibus, Novariensibus, Hypporegiensibus, Augustanis, Industriensibus, & Agaminis ad Palatium, necnon etiam Testonensibus...nensibus (Io leggo Taurinensibus) Alben. Asten. Intimilien.....(evvi quivi un intervallo, che dimostra mancarvi un nome, che secondo l'ordine delle Città nominate deve essere Ingaunensibus) Aquen....ensibus (Leggo Ianuensibus) Eusebius Episcopus in Domino aeternam salutem*" - Durandi 1766, p. 37.

[370] Zanda 2011, p. 191.

4. The letter of Saint Vigilius of Trent

Vigilius was bishop of Trent in the late 4th and early 5th centuries. According to one of the existing hagiographic texts that narrates his life, Vigilius is said to have died during the consulate of Stilicho[371]. Stilicho was consul two times, in the years AD 400 and AD 405[372]. The bishop is considered a possible author of a story in the form of two letters about three Christian missionaries who died at the hands of local worshippers of the deities Anubis, Isis, Serapis and Saturn in the Trent region[373].

According to this account, three missionaries, one of whom was a native of Cappadocia or Greece, named Sisinnius (other two with unknown origin and the names Alexander and Martirius)[374], arrived at Trent, where Vigilius had previously been appointed bishop by Ambrose, archbishop of Milan. After attempting to convert the local population to Christianity, the martyrs were killed. Describing the pagans of Anaunia, bishop Vigilius writes the following (bolding is ours):

"*Alexandro vero quid conferre mysterium mortis potuit, qui totum vivus implevit, nisi quod ad gentis vitium nomen adrisit, ut Alexandria putaretur Anaunia? Privatis religiosa portentis, numerosa daemonibus,* ***biformis Anubibus idolis, multiformis semishominibus*** *quod est legis* ***irrisoribus****,* ***plena Isidis amentia, Serapis fuga,*** *blanda postremo inquilinorum criminum mater quin potius noverca, viperarum alumna progenie, subole per venena turgente, quae nescit concipi nisi patris orbitate laetetur, nescit crescere nisi morte nascatur, nescit vivere nisi nesciverit matrem, ut in fidei conversione malae sobolis prolis concepta, iactura Dei Patris capite denegato, perfosso nata alvo matris, ecclesia parta per sanctos mortis originem*"

("But what was the mystery of death able to confer on Alexander, who while living fulfilled the whole [mystery], if not that his name mocked the vice of his people, so that Anaunia should be thought of as Alexandria, superstitious in individual portents, numerous in demons, such as two-formed Anubis, many-shaped half-human idols, that is, deriders of the law; full of the madness of

[371] Pass. Vig. 8, 7. "*Passus est autem beatissimus Vigilius episcopus et martyr VI kalendas Iulii, qui egit episcopatum in urbe Tridentina annis duodecim, Stilicone consule…*" ("the most saint bishop and martyr Vigilius died on the sixth day of Julian Kalends, who headed the bishopric of Trent for 12 years during the time of consul Stilicho…").

[372] Brummer/Meersburg-Bodense 1972, S. 345, n. 35.

[373] See the citation below.

Isis, the flight of Serapis; in short, the indulgent mother of foreign sins, or rather stepmother? [A city] nourished by the young of vipers, through the offspring of a poisoned people, which cannot be conceived, unless it rejoices in the loss of its father, cannot grow, unless it is born from death, cannot live, unless it kills its mother. As a result, in an inversion of the faith the progeny of the evil offspring, conceived by the loss of God the Father, born through rejection of its head, given birth to by the pierced womb of Mother Church, takes its first life from the death of the saints" - trans. by W. Meyer) [375].

The pagans, according to Vigilius' letter to John Chrysostom, first killed the missionaries Sisinnius and Martyrus, while the third, Alexander, was only wounded. While the pagans were trying to persuade him to betray the Christian religion, they were collecting wood to light a fire in front of the idol of Saturn:

"*Itum est post haec in religiosa fastigia, hoc est alia Dei templa post corpora, strata solo culmina, sacratis facta pyra de trabibus in conspectus idoli veteris Saturn tempestate longaeva*"

("The way led after this to the pious summit, that is, the lofty temple of God. Afterwards the bodies were stretched at full length on the ground, and pyres were made from the consecrated beams in the sight of Saturn, ancient idol of a time long passed" - trans. by W. Meyer) [376].

So, we have before us a 4th century AD account of the atrocities of pagans who believed in Saturn, but also in Isis, Anubis and Serapis. The first letter is believed to have been sent to bishop Simplician of Milan, who became head of the Christian church in northern Italy after the death of bishop Ambrose around AD 397. This letter describes the death of the three martyrs without detail, and does not specify who the pagans were who killed them. The only thing we know is that the missionaries were cremated "*busta in idolis susceperunt*" ("burned among the idols")[377]. The second letter, according to manuscript tradition, was written for the bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, who occupied the episcopal see until AD 404[378].

---

[374] The later tradition made Cappadocia the homeland of all the three martyrs of Non Valley. Pass. Vig. 3, 1: "*Sisinnium quondam, Martyrium atque Alexandrum…natione Capadoces*". See Quacquarelli 1986, p. 45.

[375] Vigil. Trid. ad Ioh. 205-213.

[376] Vigil. Trid. ad Ioh. 142-144.

[377] Pizzalato 2002, p. 150. For the term "busta" see the comment. Ibid., p. 182.

5. The authenticity and the existing manuscripts

To date, five surviving manuscripts of bishop Vigilius's letter to John Chrysostom are known. Three of them are in Rome, one in Pistoia and one in Verona. A reconstruction of the order of creation of the manuscripts was proposed by P. Gatti in 2021[379] (Fig. 40). If we follow the proposed order, then the oldest manuscript (12th century), "*P*"[380] in the archive of the Cathedral of Pistoia (ms. C. 134, Fig. 42) was copied in the 15th century (manuscript "U" – Vat. Urb. lat. 504)[381]. Both manuscripts are continuations of an unknown archetypal manuscript containing the original text of Vigilius.

At the same time, we have two manuscripts from Rome of the 15th and 16th centuries (Vat. lat. 1235 and Vat. lat. 5834), the second was copied from the first. Together with the last manuscript, created in 1511 by P. Pellegrini and now in the Capitular Library of Verona, these three manuscripts lead to an unknown copy of the first text, '*y*', which follows the archetypal manuscript '*a*', like manuscripts *P* and *U*.

Our study of the available manuscripts revealed that the narrative of the martyrs' slaughter and the presence of Isis's worshippers is present in all of the aforementioned manuscripts, including, most notably, the earliest available manuscript, manuscript *'P'* from the Pistoia Capitulary composed in 12th century AD[382] (Fig. 41-42)[383]. Furthermore, the influence of Vigilius's second letter on another text, the *Passio Sisinnii* compiled no earlier than the 9th century AD, was established[384]. Thus, this story was not added when the text was published by

---

[378] Brummer/Meersburg-Bodense 1972, S. 346; Van Nuffelen 2013, p. 1.
[379] Gatti 2021, p. 509.
[380] Here and below, we follow the designation given by P. Gatti.
[381] Cagni & Sironi 1984, pp. 213-215; Gatti 2021, p. 509.
[382] Cagni & Sironi 1984, p. 222.
[383] We would like to thank here Dr. Anna Agostini, responsible for the Capitular Archive of Pistoia, for giving to us the access to the manuscript, an online copy of which is not existing yet.
[384] Degl'Innocenti & Gatti 2013, p. 39.

Counter-Reformer editors in the second half of the 17th century. The text was substantially edited at the time of publication[385].

The first of the two letters of Vigilius, addressed to Simplician, bishop of Milan, was composed no later than AD 401, since Simplician died in that year. We admit that the second letter to John Chrysostom could have been written before the letter to Simplician, that is, between AD 397 and AD 401 (since John Chrysostom was appointed bishop in AD 397); the brevity of the letter to Simplician causes difficulties in comparison with the letter written for bishop John. Vigilius's letter to Constantinople took longer to compose. Both letters were likely written before AD 406, as Vigilius died during Stilicho's consulship, thus either in AD 400, either in AD 405. If we accept R. Lizzi's interpretation of Vigilius's two letters as texts addressed to the bishops seated in the two capitals of the Roman Empire[386], then it would be logical to assume that Vigilius first sent the letter to the capital of the Western Roman Empire. A. Quacquarelli considers the letter to John Chrysostom to be a forgery: based on the account of Gennadius of Massilia, he believes that the text of the second letter is not actually a letter to Constantinople, but a "*Libellum*"[387], an official report, which, according to bishop Gennadius, was sent to Simplician along with the "first" letter[388]. R. Lizzi criticized this opinion, rightly adding that Gennadius did not mention John Chrysostom, since he could simply not have known about the letter to Constantinople[389], while G. Brummer/Meersburg-Bodense admit, the both letters have the same style[390].

The author of the second letter knows the territory of Trent and its history well[391]. He knows that the exact distance between Anaunia and the nearest city is 25

[385] Menestò 1985, p. 385.
[386] Lizzi 1989, p. 93; 1990, p. 158.
[387] Gennad. vir. ill. 38: "*Vigilius episcopus scripsit ad quemdam Simplicianum libellum, et epistulam continentem gesta sui temporis apud barbaros martyrum*" ("Vigilius the bishop wrote to one Simplicianus a small book *In praise of martyrs* and an epistle containing the acts of the martyrs in his time among the barbarians" – trans. by E. C. Richardson).
[388] Quacquarelli 1986, p. 40.
[389] Lizzi, 1989, pp. 61-62
[390] Brummer/Meersburg-Bodense 1972, S. 345.
[391] Gatti 2021, p. 499.

stadia[392]. Let us add that the mention of such objects as the "*tintinnabulum*" – a bronze ringing bell – demonstrates the author's good knowledge of Roman paganism[393]. The text of the letter (which recounts events of the early 5th century), despite the relatively late creation of the manuscript itself (12th–16th centuries) appears to date from the Late Antique period. The Late Antique dating of the letter makes its references to Isis and other Egyptian gods invaluable.

6. The Christian texts and the cult of Isis: a confrontation

In the religious literature of Late Antiquity, Egyptian cults encountered two hostile traditions, both of which were associated with monotheistic religions: Judaic and Christian. For many centuries, the dominant attitude of Judaism towards Egyptian beliefs was rather negative[394], which was later adopted by Christian authors. From the rabbinical point of view, "the foreign gods were all the same", they were part of idolatry that was to be avoided[395]. For Philo, a first-century author, even the Nile River was "reward that awaits the wicked"[396]. In his treatise *De Vita Contemplativa*, he ridicules the Egyptians for worshipping animals as deities[397]. By worshipping such deities, they do not recognize the true God[398].

Without the Judaic community of Alexandria, the Christian community there would not have survived, because it was thanks to Alexandrian Jewish community that the New Testament was translated into Greek[399]. Thus Christian thinking as a complex system formed under the strong influence of pre-existing traditions, both

---

[392] Vigil. Trid. ad Ioh. 24-29.

[393] Vigil. Trid. ad Ioh.174-176: "*collo aerei testis tinnitum concavum ligaverunt, quod vulgus tintinnabulum vocant*" ("they tied him up to the neck of the head a concave bell of bronze, that commonly is called tintinnabulum").

[394] A certain writer of the Ptolemaic period Artapanus stands as an exception, see the discussion in Pearce 2007, pp. 276–277 and n. 239.

[395] Bohac 2000, p. 218; p. 220.

[396] Pearce 2007, p. 108.

[397] Ph. Alex. De Vit. 1, 8: "*ἄλογα καὶ οὐχ ἥμερα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ θηρίων τὰ ἀγριώτατα παραγηόχασιν εἰς θεῶν"* ("*The Egyptians have promoted to divine honours irrational animals, not only of the tame sort but also beasts of the utmost savagery",* trans. by F. H. Colson*)*.

[398] Pearce 2007, p. 285; p. 308. However, according to Arthur D. Nock, the effectiveness of Judaic literature as propaganda against the pagans must be questioned: Nock 1933, p. 78.

[399] Nock 1944, p. 27. Probably it was the presence of Septuagint in the Serapeum of Alexandria that made this temple a holy place for Jews and Christians as well, as for the pagans – Capponi, 2010, p. 126.

Judaic and pagan, is not far removed from the aforementioned criticism. The second- and third-century author Tertullian, in his *Apologeticus*, calls the belief in Isis, Serapis, Harpocrates, and Anubis *turpium et otiosarum superstitionum* (*repulsive and idle superstitions*) and praises the Roman consuls for banning these cults in the past, even though the consuls themselves were also pagans[400]. According to Tertullian there were only two kinds of *divinitates*: *vera* and *falsa*, that is, anything that is not part of Christianity, is not true faith[401]. The banning of Roman Consuls was later remembered by Arnobius, who asks rhetorically: "*quid, vos Aegyptiaca numina, quibus Serapis atque Isis est nomen, non post Pisonem et Gabinium consules in numerum vestrorum rettulistis deorum?*"[402]

In the Tosefta, a 2nd century AD Judaic collection of legal texts among other pagan gods, only Isis is presented without a name, since there was no need to present her by name due to the popularity of her cult[403]. Frequent contacts, not only in Egypt, but also in Judea and Palestine[404], between the followers of Isis and representatives of monotheistic religions could not fail to produce results. The idea of the immortality of the soul as well as the aforementioned idea of the superiority of God and the resurrection of Jesus, was not invented by Christianity, but already existed in eastern religions, for example, in Egyptian ones, and influenced Christian thought[405].

A philological commentary on Vigilius' second letter was made by L. F. Pizzolato, who, in the part of the letter, devoted to Egyptian cults discovered a connection between the mention of Anubis and the existing poems. Vigilius is well

---

[400] Tert. Apol. 6, 7: "*Serapidem et Isidem et Arpocratem cum suo cynocephalo Capitolio prohibitos inferri, id est curia deorum pulsos, Piso et Gabinius consules non utique Christiani eversis etiam aris eorum abdicaverunt, turpium et otiosarum superstitionum vitia cohibentes*" ("The consuls Piso and Gabinius, no Christians surely, forbade Serapis, and Isis, and Arpocrates, with their dogheaded friend, admission into the Capitol — in the act casting them out from the assembly of the gods — overthrow their altars, and expelled them from the country, being anxious to prevent the vices of their base and lascivious religion from spreading" – trans. by S. Thelwall).

[401] Ames 2007, p. 460.

[402] Arnob. nat. 2, 73.

[403] The extract of the source is cited after translation given by G. Bohac: Bohac 2000, p. 219: "*One who finds a ring on which is an image of the Sun, an image of the Moon, an image of the Drakon, will take them to the Dead Sea — and also an image of the one who gives to suck and of Sarapis*".

[404] In Judea and Palestine the cults of Isis and Serapis existed as well – Belayche 2007, p. 468.

[405] Tran Tam Tinh 1982, p. 116; Capponi 2010, p. 129.

acquainted with the texts of the poets Virgil, Horace and Ovid. In the mention of Anubis as a "*Derisor*", L. F. Pizzolato sees a possible influence on Vigilius's text of the criticism of Egyptian cults in Juvenal's poetry[406]. As R. Turcan notes, this example from the Antonine era is the last one we have, after which not a single written pagan criticism of Egyptian cults is known in the Empire[407].

Vigilius is also influenced by Christian authors. According to L. F. Pizzolato, three authors exert the greatest influence on Vigilius: Cyprian (a bishop of Carthage), Ambrose of Milan, and Jerome of Stridon[408]. L. F. Pizzolato sees in Vigilius's mention of Alexandria and the demons that inhabit it in the text of the second letter a reference to the text of *Vita Pauli*[409], the author of which was Jerome of Stridon. In Jerome's text, written in the second half of the fourth century, there is a mention of Alexandria, *in quam totius orbis daemonia confluxere*[410].

Thus, the comparison made by Vigilius, where Anaunia is similar to Alexandria, could be interpreted as a general reference to the existing Christian criticism of the pagan cults. This does not negate the presence of political circumstances that determined the formation of Vigilius' text.

7. Isis in the letter and the political circumstances of the text

We can regard both translations of the relics, each accompanied by a letter from bishop Vigilius, as political maneuvers. The translation of the relics to Milan, which included a letter to bishop Simplician, can be understood as a gift of gratitude to bishop Ambrosius, who had previously appointed Vigilius as bishop of Trent[411]. However, the motives for sending the relics to John Chrysostom appear to be more complex. Let us try to reconstruct the historical context of Vigilius' letter to bishop John Chrysostom in order to better understand whether the remark about the

[406] Pizzolato 2002, p. 26; Ivv. 6, 534: "*ergo hic praecipuum summumque meretur honorem, qui grege linigero circumdatus et grege calvo plangentis populi currit derisor Anubis*" (Hence the chief and highest place of honour is awarded to Anubis, who, with his linen-clad and shaven crew, mocks at the weeping of the people as he runs along – transl. by G. G. Ramsay).
[407] Turcan 1967, p. 64.
[408] Pizzolato 2002, p. 56.
[409] Pizzolato 2002, p. 55.
[410] Pizzolato 2002, p. 55.

worshippers of Isis is literary or whether it also had political reasons. This reconstruction is of value only if we accept that the text was written by Vigilius or one of his contemporaries.

The text of Vigilius' letter to John is official. The letter was sent with the relics of the martyrs who died in Anaunia. A "faithful man" named Jacob, "endowed with the title of *comes*" was appointed as the custodian of the letter and the relics. We know about a *dux* Jacob from a poem of Claudian, where he is addressed with the reference to certain Saints from the Alps: "*sic ope sanctorum non barbarus irruat Alpes / sic tibi det vires sancta Susanna suas*"[412]("So the saints from the Alps the invaders repel: So Susanna the chaste lend her forces as well" - trans. by T. R. Glover [413]). The poem was composed between AD 394 and AD 404[414]. D. Woods sees the mention of the saints in the verses of Claudian as the reference to the transportation of the relics of the saints of Anaunia to Constantinople on the wish of Jacobus. If in the poem of Claudian Jacobus is mentioned as *dux*, in the letter of Vigilius he is mentioned as *comes*. In the poem's title meanwhile, Jacobus was registered as *magister equitum*[415]. According to D. Woods, Jacobus could be thus the *dux* of *Raetia Prima* and then became *comes Italiae*[416]. According to R. Lizzi, this allows us to date the letter to John to a period no earlier than AD 402-403[417].

Between AD 397 and AD 405, during much of which John Chrysostom was bishop of Constantinople, the Church in the Eastern Roman Empire experienced a series of internal controversies, one of which was the new phenomenon of Origenism. Without going into details, we will limit ourselves to mentioning the formation of at least two parties in the church, one of which supported John Chrysostom, while the other tried to remove him from office. Among John's political opponents, bishop

---

411 Interpretation by A. Merkt – Merkt 2019, S. 127.

412 Claud. carm. min. 50, 5-6.

413 Cited after Cameron 1970, p. 225.

414 Brummer/Meersburg-Bodense 1972, S. 348.

415 We would note, Jacobus'rank in the title of Claudian's poem could be changed to *magister equitum* during the poem's publication. The author himself, or one of the later copyists could change the title, knowing more about Jacobus' career then we do now. Same would not happen with the title *dux* in the text (which appears twice), as the structure of the poem's lines would be broken.

416 Woods, 1991, p. 572.

Theophilus, who destroyed the Alexandrian Serapeum, played a major role[418]. The destruction of the Serapeum is attested to by authors such as Theodoretus of Cyrus, Rufinus of Aquileia, and Sozomen. Bishop Theophil is not a destroyer, but a liberator of Alexandria from "the error of idolatry"[419].

Vigilius, by mentioning Alexandria and the cults of Anubis, Isis and Serapis in his letter, may have been expressing support for John by indirectly emphasizing that Theophilus, although he had destroyed the temple of Isis, was still not doing a good enough job of resisting the numerous pagans. Vigilius would be apparently familiar with Rufinus's texts[420] and, therefore, with his views on the destruction of paganism in Alexandria; he writes of Alexandria as a stronghold of paganism. R. Lizzi considers Vigilius' words as an allusion to the destruction of Serapeum in Alexandria[421]. At the time of Vigilius's letter, only a few years had passed since the destruction of the Serapeum[422], which did not lead to the cessation of the existence of Egyptian cults, including the cult of Isis in Alexandria[423]. It can be assumed that the comparison of the pagans of Anaunia with the pagans of Alexandria in the letter may be a reference to the destruction of the main temple of Serapis in Egypt. In one of his texts, John Chrysostom criticizes what happened in Alexandria, saying that heresy of paganism still flourishes in Egypt[424].

When John Chrysostom lost his bishopric in AD 403, his deposition and exile drew condemnation from Pope Innocent I in Rome[425]. John, leveraging his established strong ties with Italy[426], wrote a compelling letter to the Pope asking for

---

[417] Lizzi 1989, p. 94.
[418] Baur 1960, p. 5; Liebeschuetz, 1990, pp. 203-207.
[419] Theodoret. HE. 5. 22. Theodoretus was trying to create a theological work first, then a true account. On Theodoretus' bad reliability as a historian – Leppin 2003, p. 233.
[420] Pizzolato 2002, p. 60.
[421] Lizzi 1989, p. 79.
[422] See chapter 1 for more details.
[423] See Cameron 1970, pp. 200-201, p. 206; Bull 2021, pp. 197-198; Pietsch 2023, pp. 1-17. Opposite opinion: Chuvin 2011, p. 74.
[424] Pizzolato 2002, p. 55, n. 268.
[425] Gritti 2021, p. 145.
[426] Brown 1970, p. 61; Liebeschuetz 1990, p. 225.

support[427]. In response, the Pope sends an embassy to Constantinople to emperor Arcadius, but this attempt ends in failure. We have preserved several accounts of the embassy, which was sent with accompanying letters from bishops[428]. We do not know whether Vigilius' letter was among them. By the time the embassy was sent in the beginning of AD 406[429], both bishop Vigilius and bishop Simplician, to whom Vigilius had sent his first letter, have died. Among the letters sent with the embassy, a letter from Cromatius, bishop of Aquileia, is mentioned[430]. The influence of Chromatius's texts on Vigilius's letters was noted by Pizzolato[431]. Gaudentius of Brescia took part in the embassy (see below for the influence of Vigilius's account on his sermons), which was due to his knowledge of Greek[432], for he could have been the main translator of the letters of the Italian bishops from Latin into Greek. Palladius' description of the bishops' embassy allows us to assume that Vigilius' letter could have been written in AD 405 and sent to Constantinople along with the embassy, which included the letters from other bishops. The matter officially was under the supervision of *comes Italiae* Jacobus, who is known to us also as *dux Raetiae* in a poem by Claudian. In AD 405 the northern part of Italy, including Trent was attacked by the Germanic parties of goth *Radagaisus* which were stopped by the army of Stilicho, who was consul that year[433]. Jacobus as the real commander of the local forces[434] possibly was promoted for participating in the war against the Germanic tribes. Unfortunately, this can only be accepted as a hypothesis.

According to P. Brown, it was of little importance to Vigilius who the pagans of Anaunia were; to him, they were no longer Romans but "barbarians", as the bishop referred to them in his letter to Simplician[435]. In Vigilius's two accounts of the same

[427] The letter was preserved by the monk Palladius in the account *Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom* – Pall. Dial. 2, 1.
[428] Pall. Dial. 4; Sozomen. HE. 8. 28.
[429] Van Nuffelen 2013, p. 4, n. 13.
[430] Pall. Dial. 4, 1-9. The bishop of Trent Vigilius was officially subordinating to the bishop of Aquileia – Merkt 2019, S. 127.
[431] Pizzolato 2002, p. 59.
[432] Truzzi 1985, p. 66.
[433] Liebeschuetz 1990, pp. 65-66.
[434] Woods 1991, p. 573.
[435] Brown 1968, pp. 555-556.

event - the death of the martyrs - it is alarming that Isis, Anubis and Serapis are mentioned only in the second letter, the letter to the bishop of Constantinople. Nothing is written about Isis to the bishop of Milan, who is much more familiar with the situation of Christians and pagans in Italy. But if the bishop of Milan had understanding of the pagans' actions, he also needed no detail to understand the boundaries of authority of both the bishopric of Milan and the bishoprics of Brescia, Verona and Trent. Let us turn to what we know about the Egyptian cults in the territories about which bishop Vigilius writes.

8. Worshippers of Isis and Saturn around Trent

Archaeological finds in the Trent region associated with Isis are few and none date later than the 2nd century AD. They consist of two 2nd century inscriptions, one bronze sistrum, one bronze representing the bull Apis, a situla, as well as the bronze figurines of Isis[436]. A. Buonopane, the only one who mentioned Vigilius' letter in the context of studying the cult of Isis, limited himself to regarding the source as one indicating the cult of Isis was alive up to the 4th century AD in the Trent region[437].

All the places that Vigilius and subsequent bishops associated with the three martyrs were located north of Trent, around the small village of Sanzeno, where, according to sources, a church was founded by decision of Vigilius[438]. The Sanzeno Church, the *Basilica Santi Martiri Anauniensi*, was built in the 15th century on the site of a pre-existing church[439], so it is hard to prove, is it the same place where Vigilius ordered to construct the church. For lack of other places, we can only believe that this is it.

One of the common features in both letters of Vigilius is the absence of Christians in Anaunia before the arrival of the martyrs. The first letter read "*primus id*

[436] Buonopane 2000, p. 183.
[437] Buonopane 2000, p. 183.
[438] Vigil. Trid. ad Simplic. 70-71: "*...ut id loci basilica construatur, ubi primum fidei gloriosae testimonium meruerunt*" (that in this place a basilica could be constructed, where earlier they merited a testimony of the glorious faith).
[439] Cagni & Sironi 1984, p. 211.

loci diaconus ecclesiae tabernaculum posuisset"[440], meaning there had been no Christianity before.

Some details about paganism in the area around Trent in Late Antiquity are given in the *Passio Sisinnii*, written long after Vigilius' letter to John Chrysostom. This is the same story about the three martyrs of Anaunia that bishop Vigilius compiled in the 4th century AD. The worshippers of Anubis, Isis, Serapis, and Saturn in this story worship only the god Saturn. The place where the martyrs were tortured and killed is described in this text as a temple with a statue of Saturn[441].

In another text written around the same time as the *Passio Sisinnii*, the *Passio S. Vigilii*, also mentions a statue of Saturn, but here it is mentioned *Post paucem autem tempus*, when the three missionaries had already been buried by Vigilius. The worshippers of Saturn are mentioned as the last pagans whom Vigilius converted to Christianity [442], since the whole territory of Verona, Brescia and Trent had already been Christianized: "*ex Veronensi aliquantos aut Brexiano territorio nec non et Tridentino quos invenerat paganos ad Dominum convertisset*" (some [people] from the territory of Verona or Brescia and also of Trent who appeared to be pagans were to be converted to the God) [443]. We must also add that the worshippers of Saturn did indeed exist in great numbers around Trent and the Valley of Non, where the martyrs were killed. Today it is believed that the Valley of Non was the center of the cult of Saturn. [444]. Among the evidences of the worship of Saturn around Trent, we have at least 5 inscriptions, and in the Valley of Non we have sixth dedications and one marble head of Saturn found in the city of Cles [445]. These finds led to suggestion about the existence of a sanctuary dedicated to this deity[446]. Three more inscriptions were found near the village of Romeno, further suggesting the existence of a

[440] Vigil. Trid. ad Simplic. 49-50.
[441] Degl'Innocenti & Gatti 2013, p. 43.
[442] Pass. Vig. 5, 1: "*Unus ei restiterat locus*" ("a single place resisted to him").
[443] Pass. Vig. 5, 1.
[444] Mastrocinque 1994, p. 98; Buonopane 2000, p. 170.
[445] Mastrocinque 1994, p. 99.
[446] Mastrocinque 1994, p. 99, see the bibliography in n. 13;

sanctuary there[447]. Two of the inscriptions found in Cles and Romeno date back to the 3rd century AD[448], meaning that the cult was active until the Late Antique period. One of the earliest inscriptions found at Cles, dating from the time of the emperor Trajan, AD 103, mentions the "*curatores Saturni*"[449], thus the cult of the god Saturn in the city was not private[450].

The city of Cles, where the sanctuary of Saturn was found, was apparently located near Sanzeno, although a direct route there is not possible, and one must go around Lake Santa Giustina. In the two letters of Vigilius, not a single lake is mentioned in the description of this place. He speaks of 25 stadia (about 5 km) that separate this place from the city and that the place Anaunia can be reached only by one road surrounded by impassable gorges[451]. Today the distance between Cles and Sanzeno is about eight kilometers. Taking into account the possible change of the surrounding landscape over time and a slight inaccuracy of our literary text, we could assume that it is Cles that is mentioned by bishop Vigilius as a city, since it is the closest Roman city to Sanzeno. With the advent of Christianity, the sanctuary of Saturn in Cles was abandoned, and pagans could begin to gather outside it in Sanzeno.

9. Mithraeum in Sanzeno

It is known that Sanzeno was a pagan center in the Late Antique period, although no traces of the cults of Isis or Saturn have been found there. However, a 3rd-century AD inscription and relief associated with the cult of Mithras were discovered in Sanzeno (*Museo provinciale del Castello del Buonconsiglio*, Trent, no inv. n. - Fig. 43)[452]. Later, an inscription of Mithras, dated to a subsequent period

[447] Chisté 1971, p. 78.

[448] Chisté 1971, p. 70; p. 73

[449] Chisté 1971, p. 66: "*[Imp(eratore) Ne]rva /* [*Traia]no / [Caesa]re / [Aug(usto) G]erm(anico) / [Dac(ico), P(ontifice) M(aximo), V], M(anio) La/ [berio Max(imo)] II co(n)s(ulibus), / [magistri] q(ui) p(rimi) f(uerunt) / [aedis cur]atores Satur/[nales…i]nfra scripti: / [……]cinus, L(ucius) Ae/[…] Osiccino / [….]bus Risime/ [rus?.....]ristus Fardi/ [us?.....]us Monianus, / [……]vius, C(aius) Mariu/[s……]mus Probus, C(aius) Au/[……]atino Bedasius*".

[450] Buonopane 2000, p. 187.

[451] Vigil. Trid. ad Ioh. 24-29.

[452] On the inscription see Chisté 1971, p. 57. Text of the inscription: "*[D(eo) S(oli) i(invicto) M(ithrae)..] Ulda Marius / [v(otum) s(olvit)] l(ibens) p(osuit)*";

(3rd–4th centuries AD), was found embedded in the walls of the local cemetery (Fig. 44)[453]. All three findings indicate the existence of a *Mithraeum* (a temple dedicated to Mithras) around Sanzeno, which was likely active until the end of the 4th century AD[454]. O. Ianovitz suggested that the figures on two of these finds, associated with Mithras, represent Saturn, who may have been worshiped alongside Mithras[455]. A. Buonopane agrees with this hypothesis[456].

Let's try to reconstruct the chain of events: the cult of Saturn was active in the city (modern Cles), when the bishop converted the inhabitants to Christianity, the pagans left the city and began to gather around the modern village of Sanzeno, where a Mithraeum still operated. When the martyrs had perished, Vigilius came to Sanzeno, where, seeing not only the statue of Saturn, but also the images of Mithras killing the bull (and other images), he compared Anaunia with Alexandria, as the center of demons, the gods Isis, Anubis and Serapis.

10. Other references to the massacre of the martyrs at Anaunia

A later account of the Anaunia martyrs, by bishop Gaudentius of Brescia, also contains details of their deaths. In one of his sermons, he addressed his audience (Gaudent. Serm. 17. 13):

"*Recepimus etiam sanctos cineres Sisinnii, Martyrii & Alexandri, quos nuper in Anaunia venerandae religionis cultui attentius inhaerentes gens interfecit sacrilege, flammisque adhibitis concremavit, ut holocaustum Deo ipsi fierent, qui Christianos fuos victimas daemoniis ministrare, increpatione justissima vetuissent*" ("We have received also the holy ashes of Sisinnius, Martyrius and Alexander. A sacrilegious clan killed them not long ago in Anaunia as they diligently adhered to the worship of our venerated religion. They then burned them in flames in order that those, who

---

Another dedication to Mithras was found to the south of Cles, near the modern city of Tuenno, also dated 3rd century AD. "*[D(eo) S(oli)] (i)nvicto M(ithrae)*" – Ibid., p. 56.

[453] Chisté 1971, p. 59: "*[D(eo)] Sol(i) in(victo) [M(ithrae)] / sacr(um). C(aius) Cusa Pa[..] / unianus v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) m(erito)"*.

[454] Chisté 1971, p. 59; Also see Buonopane 2000, pp. 184-186.

[455] Ianovitz 1972, p. 83. See also n. 3 for this page. Earlier, in 1906, J. Rendel Harris already had stated, Sanzeno was related both to Saturn and Mithras, but the statement was lacking arguments. See Harris, 1906, p. 85.

[456] Buonopane 2000, p. 171; p. 186.

would have forbidden their Christians by a most just rebuke to offer sacrifices to demons, might themselves be sacrificed as a holocaust to God" – trans. by S. Boehrer) [457].

Gaudentius, as in the *Passio S. Vigilii*, reiterates that the martyrs were burned at the stake, and calls the pagans demons, as in Vigilius's second letter to John Chrysostom. Bishop Maximus of Turin also responded to the events at Anaunia on more than one occasion, for four sermons are known in which he speaks of the murdered missionaries. The difference between the testimonies of these two bishops, Maximus of Turin and Gaudentius of Brescia, and the texts attributed to bishop Vigilius, lies primarily in the account of how the martyrs came to be among the pagans. It remains to stress that although the aforementioned testimonies call for the triumph of Christianity and curse the pagans, there are no direct mentions of Isis in these texts.

11. Concluding remarks: existing communities?

Evidence for the cult of Isis, preserved in Vigilius's letter and other literary sources from Christian authors of the late fourth and early fifth centuries AD, suggests that combating still-existing pagan cults was a prominent topic of discussion, particularly among the bishops who were redefining the power dynamics of the late Roman élite in cities. This indicates that the Christianization of Northern Italy was an ongoing process, and pagan communities, specifically those worshipping Isis, maintained a presence in Roman society. Although the cult of Isis enjoyed widespread support among the nobility of 4th-century Rome, its support in Northern Italy in the 3rd and 4th centuries remains unclear.

[457] Gaudent. Serm. 17, 13.

Conclusion

This work examines the cult of Isis in Northern Italy during its decline, in 3rd-5th centuries AD.

The first chapter provides an overview of the historiographical landscape, regarding the status of the worship of Isis within the Roman Empire. The analysis begins with E. Gibbon, who viewed Egyptian cults as distinct from Roman religion, and continues with F. Cumont, who argued for their widespread popularity among all social strata during the 3rd century AD. It then addresses R. MacMullen's critique of F. Cumont, which utilized epigraphic evidence to highlight significant social divisions among worshippers. Finally, the chapter concludes with two modern interpretations: the first views the cult of Isis as important and inalienable, regionally diverse part of the Roman paganism, that gradually faded away together with the Roman Empire and even outlived it (L. Bricault), while the second interprets it as an ever-evolving system for receiving social benefits through ritualized communication (J. Rüpke). We explored the contacts between Romans and the Egyptian religion and how important was Isis among particular Roman emperors. In Northern Italy the cult of Isis spread through the territory already in the time of the Flavian dynasty and was continuingly existing up to the 3rd century AD.

In the second chapter, by examining different archaeological sources through the "Material Turn" approach, we have seen, that objects of various kind related to Isis continued to broadly circulate in Northern Italy during the 3rd century AD. In our examples, Isis was imaged on the magic gems, bronze figurines of the Isis priests, stone sarcophagi, and the epigraphy inscriptions. However, except probably the initiation inscriptions of the third century sarcophagus from Ravenna, all the objects strikingly do not represent any religious feelings of the Romans towards Isis, in the sense we are used to perceive the emotions of any religion nowadays. A Late Antique object related to Isis usually is either representing the result of a deal (giving-receiving process) between the worshipper and the deity (as seen in the magical gems and the inscriptions from Brescia and Modena), either is scattering among the

Egyptizing decor, showing the good knowledge and interest Romans had for other cultures (as the bronze heads of the Isis priests).

In the third chapter, we examined the site of Industria (Piedmont), as an example of the place where Isis was venerated continuously through the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, if the 3rd and the 4th centuries AD this center was still active as the center of the worship of Isis. We have seen that despite the uninterrupted production of bronzes and the continuous sanctuary's use for religious purposes until the beginning of the 4th century AD (Constantinian coins found in the well, near the temple), we have almost no signs of the cult of Isis. The few objects survived are the 3rd century AD situla and bronze head of Ammon and the 4th century AD bronze plaque of Harpocrates/Eros. These are insufficient indications of the Isis cult's presence in Late Antique Industria. Consequently, we queried whether the rise of Christianity was the primary factor in the cult's disappearance, given that Industria was identified as one of the earliest Christian communities in the letter of bishop Eusebius of Vercelli (composed after 355 AD).

Next, we examined the letter of Saint Eusebius of Vercelli, using the "Linguistic Turn" approach. Existing editions alongside the established absence of any archaeological findings (Zanda, 2011) shows Industria was never meaningfully connected with the advent of Christianity; consequently, the cult of Isis had concluded prior to Eusebius's arrival. We further applied the "Linguistic Turn" approach to analyze the letter of the bishop of Trent Vigilius (composed before AD 405), in which he compares the pagans of Anaunia with the worshipers of Isis, Serapis and Anubis. An investigation of the manuscripts' tradition and the text itself, confirms the comparison was made in the Late Antique period, rather than being a later interpolation. By evaluating the political circumstances of the letter's composition and the contemporary pagan cults in the region of Trent, we conclude that Vigilius's references to Egyptian deities do not reflect active local veneration in Northern Italy; instead, he likely invoked Alexandria — situated far from Italian shores — as their religious center.

The aforementioned considerations makes us think, that 1) Isis was not forgotten in the Northern Italy of the 3rd century AD, however the worship of Isis began to lose its material embodiment, and objects less and less represented anything else except the Romans' respect for existing traditions, in other words we can speak about the *decline* of the cult; 2) The 4th century AD marked the cease of any production for most material objects associated with the cult of Isis, with the exception of easily portable items like coins and gems. 3) The Christian impact on the decline of the cult of Isis was negligible, as the cult effectively vanished from Northern Italy by the time Christianity became dominant. As the only exception Isis remained as a vivid image of the enemy of the Christian faith to be actively combated.

Ultimately, we agree with the assessment made by G. Alföldi (1989), that there was never a definitive "victory" of eastern cults over traditional deities in the western provinces during the Imperial period: "*die Denkmäler der 'orientalischen' Religionen im Westen des römischen Reiches in keiner Phase der Kaiserzeit von einem 'Sieg des Orients' zeugen*"[458]. Nevertheless, Isis persisted within Roman culture until the fall of the Empire. Over time, the Romans reimagined the goddess, shifting her identity from an active, communicative deity into a historical relic — a figure preserved in memory rather than lived experience.

[458] Alföldi 1989, S. 74.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Ambrosius Mediolanensis. 1988. *Epistulae. Vol. 19. Discorsi e Lettere II/I. Lettere (1-35)*. introduzione, traduzione e note di G. Banterle. Milano: Biblioteca Ambrosiana; Roma: Città nuova.

Ammianus Marcellinus. 1975. *Res Gestae*. A cura di A. Selem. Torino: Unione tipografico-editrice Torinese, 2e ed.

Apicius. 2006. *A critical edition with introduction and an English translation of the Latin recipe text Apicius*. Edition, text and commentary by C. Grocock and S. Grainger. Totnes: Prospect.

Appian. 1964. Translated by H. White. Loeb Classical Library: *Appian's Roman History Volume I*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann LTD.

Apuleius of Madauros. 1975. *Metamorphoseon*. *The Isis-Book (Metamorphoseon, Book XI)*. Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary by J. G. Griffiths. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Arnobius. 1875. *Arnobii Adversus nationes libri VII*. Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. 4. Vindobonae: apud C. Geroldi filium.

Cassius Dio. 1917. *Dio's Roman History V. With an English translation by Earnest Cary, on the basis of the version of Herbert Baldwin Foster*. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann LTD; NY.: G. P. Putnam's sons.

Cassius Dio. 1955. *Dio's Roman History VI. With an English translation by Earnest Cary*. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann LTD; Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1955.

Degl'Innocenti, Antonella & Gatti, Paolo (a cura di). 2013. *Le Agiografie di Vigilio, Massenzia, Adelpreto*. Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo.

Donaldson, James & Robertson, Alexander (eds.). 1918. *The Writings of the Fathers down to A. D. 325.* Vol. 3. NY.: Charles Scribner's sons.

Durandi, Jacopo. 1766. *Dell'antica condizione del Vercellese e dell' antico borgo di Santhia dissertazione*, Torino: Stamperia di Giambatista Fontana.

Eusebio di Vercelli. 2021. *Lettere e antiche testimonianze*, a cura di R. Uglione. Corona Patrum Erasmiana, I. Series Patristica. Torino: Loescher Editore.

Ferrerius, Stephanus. 1602. *Sancti Eusebii vercellensis episcopi et martyris eiusque in episcopatu successorum vita et res gestae, a Io. Stephano Ferrerio*....Roma: Apud Eloysium Zannetum.

Gaudentius Brixiae. 1730. *Sancti Gaudentii Brixiae Episcopi Sermones qui exstant. Nunc primum ad fidem MSS. Codd. recogniti, o. emendati. Accesserunt. Ramperti, et Adelmanni. Venerabilium Brixiae Episcoporum Opuscula. Recensuit, ac Notis illustravit Paulus Galeardus. Canonicus Brixianus.* Patavia: Typographia Cominiana.

Gaudentius of Brescia. 1965. Sermons and letters. Translated by S. Boehrer Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America.

Gennadius presbyter Massiliensis. 1892. *Lives of Illustrious Men. Translated, with Introduction and Notes, by E. C. Richardson*, in P. Schaff (ed.) Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume 3, Cosimo Inc, pp. 385–402.

Gennadius presbyter Massiliensis. 1896. *De Viris Illustribus*, in O. Von Gebhardt & A. Harnack (Hgg.) *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur,* XIV, pp. 57-98.

Eunapius Philastratus. 1952. *The Lives of the Sophists. With an English translation by W. C. Wright*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann LTD.

Josephus. 1961. *The Jewish War, Books IV-VII. With an English translation by H. ST. J. Thackeray*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, (Mass.): Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, LTD.

Juvenal. 1928. *Juvenal and Persius. With an English translation by G. G. Ramsay*. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann; NY.: G. P. Putnam's sons.

Macrobius. 1967. *Saturnalia*. A cura di Nino Marinone. Torino: Unione tipografico-editrice Torinese.

Martial. 1930. *Epigrammes*. Tome I (Livres I-VII). Texte etabli et traduit par H. J. Izaac. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Mombritius, Boninus. 1910. *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum. Novam hanc editionem curaverunt duo monachi solesmenses*, T. II, Parisiis: Apud Fontemoing et Socios, Editores.

Palladius. 1985. *Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom. Translated and edited by Robert T. Meyer*. NY.: Newman Press.

Philo of Alexandria. 1985. *Philo. In ten volumes (and two suplementary volumes) IX. With an English translation by F. H. Colson.* Loeb Classical Library Cambridge. (Mass.): Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, LTD.

Vigilius episcopus Tridentinus. 2002. "Epistula ad Simplicianum episcopum Mediolanensem" in Pizzolato, Luigi. F. *Studi su Vigilio di Trento, Studia Patristica Mediolanensia 23*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, pp. 147-151.

Vigilius episcopus Tridentinus. 2002. "Epistula ad Iohannem Chrysostomum" in Pizzolato, Luigi. F. *Studi su Vigilio di Trento, Studia Patristica Mediolanensia 23*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, pp. 152-168.

Plutarch. 1920. *Plutarch's Lives in eleven volumes. Vol. 9: Demetrius and Antony. Pyrrhus and Caius Marius. With an English translation by Bernadotte Perrin.* Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann LTD; Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Plutarch. 1936. *Περι Ισιδος και Οσιριδος* in Plutarch. *Moralia V. With an English translation by F. C. Babbitt*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press.

Rufinus of Aquileia. 1997. *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia. Books 10 & 11. Translated by Philip R. Amidon, SJ.* NY., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Rutilius Namatianus. 1934. “De Reditu suo" in *Minor Latin Poets with introductions and English translations by J. Wight Duff and Arnold M. Duff*. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann LTD; Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Rutilius Namatianus. 1992. *Il Ritorno*. *A cura di Alessandro Fo*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore.

Sozomen. 1846. *Ecclesiastical history: a history of the church in nine books, from A.D. 324 to A.D. 440*. *Translated by Edward Walford*. London: S. Bagster.

St John Chrysostom. 2006. *The Cult of the Saints 31. Selected homilies and letters introduced, translated and annotated by Wendy Mayer*. NY.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

Suetonius. 1979. *Suetonius*. *Vol. I. With an English Translation by J. C. Rolfe.* Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, (Mass.): Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, LTD.

Suetonius. 1959. *Suetonius*. *Vol. II. With an English Translation by J. C. Rolfe.* Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, LTD.; Cambridge, (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Tacitus. 1931. *Histories: Books 4-5. Annals: Books 1-3*. *With an English Translation by Clifford H. Moore & John Jackson*. *Loeb Classical Library.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931.

Tertullian. 1980. *Prosatori di Roma: Tertulliano. Apologetico*. *Testo Latino, Traduzione e Note a cura di Anna Resta Barille*. Bologna: Zanichelli, 1980.

Theodoretus of Cyrus. 1854. *A history of the church from A. D. 322 to the death of Theodore of Mopsuestia, A. D. 427., by Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus: And from A. D. 431 to A. D. 594, by Evagrius, Translated from the Greek, with memoirs of the authors*. Translated by Edward Walford. Bohn’s ecclesiastical library. London: Henry G. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden.

Secondary Sources:

Adembri, Benedetta. 2000. *Hadrian's Villa*, Milan: Electa.

Alfano, Carlo. 2001. "Egyptian influences in Italy" in S. Walker & P. Higgs (eds.) *Cleopatra of Egypt from History to myth*, Princeton, pp. 276–291.

Alföldi, Andreas. 1937. *A Festival of Isis in Rome under the Christian Emperors of the fourth Centurty* (Dissertationes Pannonicae, ii, 7). Budapest: Institute of Numismatics and Archaeology of the Pázmány University.

Alföldi, Géza. 1989. "Die Krise des Imperium Romanum und die Religion Roms", in W. Eck (hrsbg), *Religion und Gesellschaft in der römischen Kaiserzeit: Kolloquium zu Ehren von Friedrich Vittinghoff*, Böhlau, S. 53-102.

Altheim, Franz. 1956. *Römische Religionsgeschichte. II. Der Geschichtliche Ablauf.* Berlin: 1956.

Amaducci, Paolo. 1907. "Il Sarcofago greco-romano rinvenuto presso la chiesa di S. Vittore in Ravenna", *Boll. Arte*, IV, pp.1-9.

Ames, Cecilia. 2007. "Roman Religion in the Vision of Tertullian" in J. Rüpke (ed.) *Companion to Roman Religion*, Oxford, pp. 457– 471.

Anderson, John Kinloch. 1985. *Hunting in the Ancient World*. Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press.

Arslan, Ermanno A. e al. 1997. "Schede" in E. A. Arslan e al. (a cura di) *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano.

Aymard, Jacques. 1951. *Essai sur les chasses Romaines. Des origines a la fin du siecle des Antonins*. Paris: E. de Boccard.

Bagnall, Roger S. (ed.). 2021. *Roman Egypt: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baratte, François. 2006. "Les sarcophages romains: problèmes et certitudes", *Perspective* [En ligne], 1. http://journals.openedition.org/ perspective/4123

Barns. J. W. B. 1978. *Egyptians and Greeks*. Bruxelles: Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth.

Baur, Dom Chrysostomus O. S. B. 1960. *John Chrysostom and his time, Vol. II. Constantinopolis.* Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press.

Belousov, Alexei V. 2017. "The Material Turn" in modern studies of the ancient, medieval and neo-european magic" in *Aristeas. Philologia Classica et Historia Antiqua*, Vol. XV, C. 241-273 (In Russ.).

Belayche, Nicole. 2007. "Les dévotions à Isis et Sérapis dans la Judée-Palestine Romaine" in L. Bricault et al. (eds.) *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World*, Leiden, pp. 448–469.

Bencivenni, Alice. 2022. "Greco nelle iscrizioni a Ravenna" in F. Chausson et al (eds.) *Pratiques du grec dans l'épigraphie de l'Occident: contextes, origines et pratiques culturelles. Actes de la XXIIe Rencontre franco-italienne sur l'épigraphie du monde romain (Autun, 22-24 juin 2017)*, Bordeaux, pp. 107-126.

Benoit, Fernand. 1953. "Ob lumen receptum", *Latomus*, Janvier-Mars 1953, T. 12, Fasc. 1 (Janvier-Mars 1953), pp. 77-84.

Beaujeu, Jean. 1955. *La politique religieuse des Antonins, 96-192*. Paris: Les belles lettres.

Berschin, Walter. Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages. From Jerome to Nicholas of Cusa. Revised and expanded edition. Translated by Jerold. C. Frakes. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press.

Birt, Theodor. 1908. "Nachträgliches zur Buchrole in der kunst", *Jahrbuch des Kaiserlich Deutchen Archäologischen Instituts*, Band XXIII, S. 112-124.

Boardman, John. 2014. *The Triumph of Dionysos: convival processions, from antiquity to the present day*. Oxford: Archaeopress.

Bohac, Gideon. 2000. "Rabbinic Perspectives on Egyptian Religion", *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*, 2. Band, Heft 2, pp. 215–231.

Bolgiani, Franco. 1982. “La penetrazione del cristianesimo in Piemonte”, in *Atti del V Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia cristiana, 22-29 settembre 1979*, Roma, pp. 37-61.

Bolla, Margherita. 1997. “L’Iseo e Serapeo di Verona” in E. A. Arslan (a cura di). *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano, pp. 358-362.

Bolla, Margherita. 2008. “Bronzi figurati romani del Museo Nazionale Atestino”, *Aquileia Nostra*, Anno LXXIX, pp. 33-120.

Bolla, Margherita. 2015. “Bronzi figurati romani da luoghi di culto dell’Italia settentrionale”, *LANX* 20, pp. 49-143

Bollini, Maria. 1975. *Le iscrizioni Greche di Ravenna*. Faenza: Freatelli Lega.

Bonifaccio, Giovanni. 1591. *Historia trivigiana di Giovanni Bonifaccio D. divisa in dodici libri*. Treviso: Domenico Amici.

Bremmer, Jan N. 2002. “Magic and Religion” in Bremmer, Jan N. & Veenstra, Jan R. (eds.) *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, Leuven, pp. 267-272.

Bremmer, Jan N. 2014. *Intiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*. Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter.

Brummer/Meersburg-Bodense, G. 1972. “Wer was Jacobus? Zur Deutung von Claudian C. M. 50’”, *BZ* 65, S. 339–352.

Briaud, Stefanie. 2015. *Le pouvoir impérial romain et les cultes isiaques à Rome (IIIe -IVe siècles)*. Thèse présentée à la Faculté des arts et des sciences en vue de l’obtention du grade de Philosophiae Doctor (Ph. D.) en Histoire (Université de Montréal).

Bricault, Laurent. 2000. “Études isiaques: perspectives” in L. Bricault (ed.). *De Memphis à Rome: Actes du Ier Colloque international sur les études isiaques*, *Poitiers – Futuroscope, 8–10 avril 1999*, Leiden, pp. 189–210.

Bricault, Laurent. 2005. *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques (RICIS)*: 3 vols. Paris: Diffusion De Boccard.

Bricault, Laurent & Veymiers, Richard. 2006. “Isis in Corinth: the numismatic evidence. City, image and religion” in: L. Bricault, et al. (eds.) *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World*. Leiden, pp. 392–414.

Bricault, Laurent. 2014. “Gens isiaca et identité polythéiste à Rome à la fin du IVe s. apr. J.-C.” in L. Bricault & M. J. Versluys (eds.) *Power, Politics, and the Cults of Isis*, Brill, pp. 326—359.

Bricault, Laurent & Gasparini, Valentino. 2018. “I Flavi, Roma e il culto di Isis”, in C. Bonnet & E. Sanzi (a cura di) *Roma, la città degli dèi. La capitale dell’Impero come laboratorio religioso*, Roma, pp. 121–136.

Bricault, Laurent. 2019. *Isis Pelagia: Images, Names and Cults of a Goddess of the Seas*. Leiden; Boston: Brill.

Bricault, Laurent. 2024. “The Sword and the Patera Zeus Helios Great Sarapis” in Corinne Bonnet (ed.), The Names of the Gods in Ancient Mediterranean Religions, Cambridge, pp. 129-156.

Buonopane, Alfredo. 2000. “Società, economia, religione” in E. Buchi (a cura di) *Storia del Trentino. Vol. II, L’età romana*, Il Mulino, pp. 133-239.

Brown, Peter. 1968. “Approaches to the Religious Crisis of the Third Century A.D.,”, *English Historical Review, vol. 83*, no. 328 (July 1968), pp. 542-558.

Brown, Peter. 1970. “The patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West”, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, *21*(1), pp. 56–72.

Brown, Peter. 1971. *The World of Late Antiquity*. London: Thames and Hudson LTD.

Bruneau, Philippe. 1970. *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l’époque hellénistique et à l’époque impériale*. Athènes: École française d'Athènes.

Budichovsky, Marie Christine 1977. La diffusion des cultes isiaques autour de la mer Adriatique, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 61. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Bull, Christian H. 2021. “Prophesying the Demise of Egyptian Religion in Late Antiquity”, *Numen*, Vol. 68, No. 2/3 (2021), pp. 180-203.

Burkert, Walter. 1987. *Ancient Mystery Cults*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press.

Cagni, Giuseppe & Sironi, Enrico. 1984. “Contributo alla tradizione del testo delle lettere di S. Vigilio di Trento”, *Barnabiti Studi*, No. 1 (1984), pp. 209–226.

Cameron, Alan. 1967. “Rutilius Namatianus, St. Augustine, and the Date of the De Reditu”, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 1/2, pp. 31–39.

Cameron, Alan. 1970. *Claudian. Poetry and propaganda at the court of Honorius*. NY.: Oxford University Press.

Cameron, Alan. 2011. *The Last Pagans of Rome*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cantini, Federico. 2024. “Le aristocrazie pagane al tempo di Paolino di Nola: il caso di Vettius Agorius Praetextatus tra storia, epigrafia e archeologia”, *Paolino di Nola e il Mediterraneo. Atti del III Convegno Paoliniano, 10-11, 17-18 maggio 2021*, pp. 469–483.

Capponi, Livia. 2010. “Serapis, Boukoloi and Christians from Hadrian to Marcus Aurelius” in M. Rizzi (ed.) *Hadrian and the Christians*, Berlin; NY, pp. 121–141.

Capponi, Livia. 2023. *Cleopatra*. Bari; Roma: Economica Laterza.

Castelli, Patrizia. 1997. “*Iside Venerata* nel labirinto del sapere tra Medioevo e Rinascimento” in E. A. Arslan (a cura di). *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano, pp. 598–609.

Carducci, Carlo. 1968. *Arte Romana in Piemonte*. Torino: Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino.

Cavedoni, Celestino. 1828. *Dichiarazione degli antichi marmi modenesi con le notizie di Modena al tempo dei romani*. Modena: G. Vincenzi e compagno.

Clark, Elisabeth A. 2004. *History, Theory Text. Historians and the Linguistic Turn*. Cambridge, Massachussets and London: Harvard University Press.

Chastagnol, André. 1961. "La famille de Caecinia Lolliana, grande dame païenne du IVe siècle après J.–C.", *Latomus*, 20, pp. 744–758.

Chisté, Pasquale. 1971. *Epigrafi trentine dell'età romana*. Trento: Società Museo Civico Rovereto.

Chuvin, Pierre. 2011. *Chronique des derniers païens. La disparition du paganisme dans l'Empire romain, du règne de Constantin à celui de Justinien*. 2e tirage de la 3e édition revue et corrigée. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Coarelli, Filippo. 2019. "L'introduzione del culto di Iside a Roma" in *F.* Fontana & E. Murgia (a cura di). *Sacrum Facere. Atti del V Seminario di Archeologia del Sacro. Sacra peregrina. La gestione della pluralità religiosa nel mondo antico*, Trieste, pp. 105–128.

Corti, Carla. 2002. "Una testimonianza del culto di Iside nell'instrumentum della villa romana di via Cristina (Campogalliano, loc. Panzano)" in C. Corti et al. (a cura di) *Pagani e Cristiani. Forme ed attestazioni di religiosita del mondo antico in Emilia*, Vol. 2, Edizioni Aspasia, pp. 81–94.

Corti, Carla. 2006. "Il rinvenimento di un gemma magica a Carpi e la presenza del culto di Iside nella città e nel territorio di *Mutina*" in C. Corti et al. (a cura di) *Pagani e Cristiani. Forme ed attestazioni di religiosita del mondo antico in Emilia*, Vol. 5, Edizioni Aspasia, pp. 9–30.

Cresci Marrone, Giovannella. 1993. "*Gens Avil(l)ia* e commercio dei metalli in valle di Cogne", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Antiquité.* tome 105, n. 1, pp. 33–37.

Cresci Marrone, Giovannella. 1994. "Famiglie isiache ad *Industria*" in: A. Mastrocinque (a cura di) *Culti pagani nell 'Italia settentrionale*, Trento, pp. 41–51.

Cresci Marrone, Giovannella. 2026. "Spigolature isiache cisalpine*". *Polymnia*, in state of publication.

Criado, Felipe. 1998. “The visibility of the archaeological record and the interpretation of social reality” in I. Hodder & al.(eds.) Interpreting Archaeology: Finding meaning in the past, 1998, pp. 194–205.

Cumont, Franz. 1929. *Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*: *conferences faites au college de France*. Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux.

Cumont, Franz. 1942. *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire chez les Romains*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.

D’Abruzzo, Maria. 1990. “Il sarcofago di C. Flavio Ostilio Sertoriano a Belluno” in A. Mastrocinque (a cura di) *Antichità delle Venezie (Studi di Storia e Archeologia sulla protostoria e sull’età romana nell’Italia nord–orientale)*, pp. 61–88.

De Caro, Stefano. 1997. “L’Iseo di Pompei” in E. A. Arslan (a cura di). *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano, pp. 338–343.

Deonna, Waldemar. 1959. “Mercure et le Scorpion (suite et fin)”, *Latomus*, T. 18, Fasc. 2 (Avril–Juin 1959), pp. 249–261.

Derks, Ton. 1998. *Gods, Temples and Ritual Practices. The Transformation of Religious Ideas and Values in Roman Gaul*, Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 2. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Derks, Ton. 2024. “Materialising imperial ideology and religion in the Roman world” in J. Tanner & A. Gardner (eds.) *Materialising the Roman empire*, pp. 231–260.

Desmond, Marylinn. 2020. “Homer and the Latin West in the Middle Ages” in C. O. Pache and al.(eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Homer*, pp. 435–443.

de Vos Raaijmakers, Mariette & Maurina, Barbara. 2019. *Rus Africum IV. La fattoria Bizantina di Aïn Wassel, Africa Proconsularis (Alto Tell, Tunisia)*. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing LTD.

Dijkstra, Jitse H. F. 2008. *Philae and the end of Ancient Egyptian Religion. A Regional Study of Religious Transformation (298–642 CE).* Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 173. Leuven: Peeters.

Dobesch, Gerhard. 2000. “Caesars monarchische Ideologie” in: L’ultimo Cesare. Scritti riforme progetti poteri congiure (Atti del convegno internazionale, Cividale del Friuli, 16–18 settembre 1999), Roma, pp. 89–123.

Doglio, Maria Luisa. 1998. “Intellettuali e cultura letteraria (1562–1630)” in: G. Ricuperati (ed.) Storia di Torino III: Dalla dominazione francese alla ricomposizione dello Stato (1536–1630), Turin, pp. 599–653.

Doglioni, Giovanni Nicolo. 1723. “Joannis Nicolai Doglioni Bellunensis dissertatio de origine et antiquitate civitatis Belluni ejusque variis fatis (sic) maximeque memorabilibus” in *Thesaurus antiq. et historiarum Italiæ*, Tom. IX, part. VIII.

Doglioni, Lucio. 1976. Notizie istoriche e geografiche della città di Belluno e sua Provincia. Ristampa dell’edizione di Belluno, 1816. Bologna: Arnaldo Forni Editore.

Don, Simone. 2018 “*CIL* V 3541: nuova analisi di un documento dall'aspetto insolito”, *Misinta,* 50, pp. 17–20.

Dunand, Françoise. 1979. *Religion Populaire en Egypte Romaine: les terres cuites isiaques du Musee du Caire*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Dunand, Françoise. 2010. “Culte d’Isis ou religion isiaque?” in L. Bricault & M. J. Versluys (eds.) *Isis on the Nile: Egyptian gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Proceedings of the IVth International Conference of Isis Studies, Liege, November 27–29, 2008 Michel Malaise in honorem*, Leiden, pp. 39–55.

Egger, Rudolph. 1951. “Zwei Oberitalienische Mystensarkophage”, *Mitteilungen des Deutchen Archaologischen Instituts*, 4, S. 35–64.

Ensoli, Serena. 1997. “I santuari isiaci a Roma e i contesti non cultuali: religione pubblica, devozioni private e impiego ideologico del culto” in E. A. Arslan (a cura di). *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano, pp. 306–322.

Ensoli, Serena & La Rocca, Eugenio. 2000. *Aurea Roma: dalla città pagana alla città cristiana*. Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider.

Everett, Nickolas. 2006. “Narrating the Life of Eusebius of Vercelli” in R. Balzaretti and E. M. Tyler (eds.), *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West,* Turnhout, pp. 133–165.

Festugière, R. P. 1950. *La rivelation d’Hermes Trismegiste. I. L’Astrologie et les Sciences occultes*. Paris: Librairie Lecoffre. J. Gabalda et C^{ie}, Editeurs.

Festugière, André–Jean. 1963. “Initiée par l'époux”, *Monuments et mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot*, tome 53, pp. 135–146.

Flower, Richard. 2013. *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*. Cambridge, NY., Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City: Cambridge University Press.

Fontana, Federica. 2010. *I culti isiaci nell’Italia settentrionale 1. Verona, Aquileia, Trieste. Con un contributo di Emanuela Murgia, Polymnia, Studi di archeologia*, *I.* Trieste: EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste.

Fontana, Federica. 2017. “Isis and Mater Magna in Aquileia”, *Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 95-1, pp. 131-144.

Foucault, Michel. 1966. *Les mots et les choses*. Mayenne: Editions Gallimard.

Fowden, Garth. 1993. *The Egyptian Hermes. A historical approach to the Late pagan mind.* Princeton: Princeton University press.

Frede, Michael. 2001. “Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity” in Athanassiadi, Polymnia & Frede, Michael (eds.) *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. NY., pp. 41–68.

Gabelmann, Hanns. 1973. *Die Werkstattgruppen der oberitalischen Sarkophage*. Bonn: Rheinland–Verlag GMBH.

Galimberti, Alessandro. 2019. *Caracalla*. Roma: Salerno.

Galimberti, Alessandro. 2010. “The pseudo–Hadrianic Epistle in the Historia Augusta and Hadrian’s religious policy” in M. Rizzi (a cura di) *Hadrian and the Christians*, Berlin; NY., pp. 111–120.

Gatti, Paolo. 2021. “Vigilio di Trento, i martiri della val di Non e due manoscritti della Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona”. *Studi Trentini*, *2021(2)*, pp. 499–509.

Gemme Romane da Aquileia / Provincia di Udine, Landkreis Ludwigsburg; Ministero per i beni culturali, Soprint. archeologica e per i B.A.A.AS. del Friuli–Venezia Giulia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia. 1996. Udine: Società Friulana di archeologia.

Giorcelli Bersani, Silvia. 2014. “Rappresentazioni del divino nella tarda antichità: quali indizi per una storia del sacro in Cisalpina?” in F. Fontana & E. Murgia (a cura di), *Sacrum facere. Atti del II Seminario di Archeologia del Sacro Contaminazioni: forme di contatto, traduzione e mediazione nei sacra del mondo greco e romano*, pp. 163-185.

Giaccaria, Angelo. 1994. *Le Antichità Romane in Piemonte nella cultura storico-geografica del settecento*. Vercelli: Società Studi Storici Cuneo.

Gibbon, Edward. 1887. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire in 4 volumes*. Verbatim Reprint. Vol. 1. London: Frederick Warneand Co.

Giordani, Nicoletta & Strozzi, Giovanna Paolozzi (a cura di). 2005. *Il Museo Lapidario Estense. Catalogo generale*. Venezia: Marsilio.

Giordani, Nicoletta (con contributi di Stephano L’Occaso). 2016. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Mantova. Mantua: una città romana. Mantua:

Giudice, Alberto. 2011. “Adriano e il Serapeo di Alessandria: l'intervento e l'ideologia politica”, *Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft*, Band 14, S. 31–38.

Gołyźniak, Paweł. 2020. “Hermes–Thoth on magical gems and amulets”, *Światowit, LIX,* pp. 161–168.

Grandjean, Yves. 1975. *Une nouvelle arétalogie d'Isis à Maronée*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Gregori, Gian Luca & Nonnis, David. 2016. “Culti Pubblici a Pompei: l’epigrafia del Sacro in età Romana”, *Scienze dell’Antichità, 22*, *Fascicolo 3*, pp. 243–272.

Grimm, Alfred. 1997. “Iside imperiale. Aspetti storico–culturali del culto isiaco al tempo degli imperatori romani” in E. A. Arslan (a cura di). *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano, pp. 120–134.

Grimm, Alfred. 2004. “Johann Joachim Winckelmann e il pantheon egizio” In A. Grimm et al (eds.) *Winckelmann e l'Egitto: la riscoperta dell'arte egizia nel 18. secolo / mostra e catalogo a cura di Alfred Grimm e Gianna A. Mina Zeni: Museo Vela, Ligornetto 6 giugno–14 novembre 2004*. Berna, pp. 161–174.

Gritti, Elena. 2021. “In viaggio verso il sobborgo costantinopolitano di Psamathea: un’indagine prosopografica a partire dal Dialogo di Palladio”, *Occidente / Oriente. Rivista internazionale di studi tardoantichi*, I, pp. 143–154.

Grocock, Christopher & Grainger, Sally. 2006. “Introduction” in *Apicius. A critical edition with introduction and an English translation of the Latin recipe text Apicius*. *Edition, text and commentary by C. Grocock and S. Grainger*, Totnes, pp. 13–123.

Gruterus, Jacobus. 1602. *Inscriptiones Antiquae Totius orbis Romani in corpus absolutißimum redactae*.... Amsterdam: Officina Commeliniana.

Guidotti, Maria Cristina. 1997. “L’Iseo di Fiesole” in E. A. Arslan (a cura di) *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano, p. 368.

Harris, J. Rendel 1906. *The cult of the heavenly twins*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heyob, S. K. 1975. *The cult of Isis among women in the Graeco–Roman World*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Hicks, Dan. 2010. “The material–cultural turn: event and effect” in Beaudry M.C & Hicks D. (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, Oxford, pp. 1–45.

Hodder, Ian. 1998. “Material culture in time” in I. Hodder & al.(eds.) Interpreting Archaeology: Finding meaning in the past, pp. 164–168.

Hohlfelder R. L. 1970. “Pausanias, Collation of Archaeological and Numismatic Evidence”, *Hesperia*, 39, pp. 326–331.

Humbert, Jean–Marcel & al. (eds.). 1994. *Egyptomania: l'Egypte dans l'art occidental: 1730–1930*. Paris: Reunion des musees nationaux.

Ianovitz, Oscar. 1972. *Il culto solare nella X Regio*. Milano: Cisalpino Goliardica.

Kahlos, Maijastina. 1994. "Fabia Aconia Paulina and the Death of Praetextatus – Rhetoric and Ideals in Late Antiquity (*CIL*, VI, 1779)*", *Arctos, Acta Philologica Fennica*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 13–25.

Kákosy, László. 1997. "Riti iniziatici e misteri nel culto isiaco" in E. A. Arslan (a cura di) *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano, pp. 148–150.

Käppel, Lutz 1999: "Makaron Nesoi" in: H. Cancik et al. (Hg.). *Der Neue Pauly*. Enzyklopädie der Antike 7, Stuttgart, Sp. 725.

Kazhdan, Alexander P. 1983. *La produzione intellettuale a Bisanzio. Libri e scrittori in una società colta.* Traduzione di Xenia Muratova e Mario De Nonno. Napoli: Liguori Editore.

Koch, Guntram & Sichtermann, Hellmut. 1982. *Römische Sarkophage, Handbuch der Archäologie im Rahmen des Handbuchs der Altertumswissenschaft*. Munchen: Beck.

Kunz, Heike. 2006. *Sicilia. Religionsgeschichte des römischen Sizilien*, Religion der römischen Provinzen 4, Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Kunze, Max. 2004. "Luoghi di ritrovamento in Italia" in A. Grimm et al (eds.) *Winckelmann e l'Egitto: la riscoperta dell'arte egizia nel 18. secolo / mostra e catalogo a cura di Alfred Grimm e Gianna A. Mina Zeni: Museo Vela, Ligornetto 6 giugno–14 novembre 2004*. Berna, pp. 27–42.

Leppin, Hartmut. 2003. "The Church Historians (I): Socrates, Sozomenus, and Theodoretus" in G. Marasco (ed.) *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity*, pp. 219–254.

Liddell, Henry George & Scott, Robert. 1968. *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Liebeschuetz, Wolf 1979. *Continuity and change in Roman religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; NY: Oxford University Press.

Liebeschuetz, Wolf. 1990. *Barbarians and bishops: Army, church, and state in the age of Arcadius and Chrysostom*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press.

Liebeschuetz, Wolf. 1999. "The Significance of the Speech of Praetextatus" in P. Athanassiadi & M. Frede (eds.) Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity, New York, pp. 185–205.

Lizzi, Rita. 1989. *Vescovi e strutture ecclesiastiche nella città tardoantica (L'Italia Annonaria nel IV–V secolo d. C),* Biblioteca di Athenaeum 9. Como: Edizioni New Press.

Lizzi, Rita. 1990. "Ambrose's Contemporaries and the Christianization of Northern Italy", The Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. 80, pp. 156–173.

Maggi, Stefano. 1986. "Bronzetti del museo di Mantova", Arte lombarda nuova serie, 76–77, n.1–2, pp. 9–30.

Malaise, Michel. 1972a. *Les conditions de penetration et de diffusion des cultes Egyptiens*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Malaise, Michel. 1972b. *L'Inventaire preliminaire des documents des cultes egyptiens decouverts en Italie*, EPRO, 21. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Mandolesi, Alessandro. 2006. *'PiemontEgizio'. Definizione di un sistema per la valorizzazione dei beni culturali d'interesse egittologico in Piemonte.* Torino: Fondazione per l'Arte della Compagnia di San Paolo.

Mangiafesta, Maria. 2008. "I culti orientali e Vettio Agorio Pretestato" in Palma Venetucci, Beatrice (ed.) *Culti Orientali. Tra scavo e collezionismo*, pp. 103–112.

MacMullen, Ramsay. 1981. *Paganism in the Roman Empire.* New Haven; London: Yale university press.

Masino, Filippo. 2024. “Il foro e il tempio” in E. Panero (a cura di) *La scandalosa e la magnifica. 300 anni di ricerche su Industria e sul culto di Iside in Piemonte*, Torino, pp. 45–47.

Mari, Zaccaria & Sgalambro, Sergio. 2007. “The Antinoeion of Hadrian's Villa: Interpretation and Architectural Reconstruction”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 111, No. 1 (Jan., 2007), pp. 83–104.

Martin Hernández, Raquel. 2022. “Preface” in R. Martin Hernández (ed.) *The iconography of magic. Images of power and the power of images in Ancient and late Antique Magic*, Leuven, Paris, Bristol, pp. VII–XV.

Massa, Francesco. 2018. “Vettio Agorio Pretestato: aristocrazia romana, “culti orientali” e cristianesimo”, in C. Bonnet & E. Sanzi (a cura di) *Roma città degli dei. La capitale dell’impero come laboratorio religioso*, Roma, pp. 63–76.

Mastrocinque, A. 1994. “Il culto di Saturno nell'Italia settentrionale romana” in A. Mastrocinque (a cura di) *Culti pagani nell ’Italia settentrionale*, Trento, pp. 97-117.

Mastrocinque, A. (a cura di) 2003. *Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum.* Parte I. Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato. Libreria dello Stato.

Meyer, Birgit. 2012. *Mediation and the Genesis of Presence. Towards a Material Approach to Religion*. Utrecht: Labor Grafimedia BV.

Meloni, Pietro 1999. “Eusebio di Vercelli. Natione sardus vescovo, confessore, Monaco” in A. Mastino (a cura di) *La Sardegna paleocristiana tra Eusebio e Gregorio Magno (Atti del Convegno Nazionale di studi, Cagliari 10-12 ottobre 1996)*, Cagliari, pp. 331-355.

Menestò, Enrico. 1985. “Le lettere di S. Vigilio”, *Atti dell’Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati A*, *25*, pp. 383–388.

Mercando, Liliana & Zanda, Emanuela. 1998. *Bronzi da Industria*. Roma: Edizioni de Luca.

Merkt, Andreas. 2019. “Metropolen und Reliquien. Zur symbolischen Kommunikation und Distinktion spätantiker Bischöfe” in C. Hornung, A.Merkt und A. Weckwerth (Hg.) *Bischöfe zwischen Autarkie und Kollegialität,* Basel, pp. 92–128.

Murley, Joseph Clyde. 1922. *The Cults of Cisalpine Gaul as Seen in the inscriptions. A Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Literature in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Department of Latin.* Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company.

Mongardi, Manuela. 2016. “Rapporti familiari a *Mutina* e nel suo agro tra III e V secolo d. C.: considerazioni alla luce della documentazione epigrafica” in V. Neri & B. Girotti (eds.) *La famiglia tardoantica. Società, diritto, religione*, Milano, pp. 209–223.

Moormann, Eric. M. 2016. “Il Tempio di Iside a Pompei e La Sua Scoperta” in F. Poole (ed.) *Il Nilo a Pompei. Visioni d'Egitto nel mondo romano*, Torino; Modena, pp. 105–121.

Muratori, Santi. 1913. “Le epigrafi greche del sarcofago di C. Sosio Giuliano a Ravenna”, *Fel. Rav*, X, pp. 404–413.

Neverov, Oleg. 1981. “Magicheskie amulety imperatorskoj epohi (issledovanie fenomena i opyt klassifikacii” (“The magic amulets of the imperial period”) in B. Sapunov (izd.) *Iskusstvo i religiya*, Gosudarstvennyj Ermitazh, C. 23–42 (in Russ.).

Neverov, Oleg. 1983. *Gemmy antichnogo mira* (“The gems of the antique world”). M.: Nauka (in Russ.).

Neverov, Oleg. 2000. “Egipetskaya tematika v magicheskih amuletah vremeni Rimskoj imperii” (“Egyptian themes in the magical amulets of Roman Empire period”), *VDI*, 4, C. 154–158 (in Russ.).

Nock, Arthur D. 1933. *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nock, Arthur D. 1944. “Later Egyptian Piety” in J. D. Cooney (ed.) *Coptic Egypt: Papers Read at a Symposium Held under the Joint Auspices of New York University and the Brooklyn Museum, February 15,1941*. NY., pp. 21–31.

Ortalli, Jacopo & Neri, Diana (a cura di) 2007. *Immagini Divine. Devozioni e divinita nella vita quotidiana dei Romani, testimonianze archeologiche dall’Emilia Romagna*, Quaderni di Archeologia dell’Emilia Romagna 18. Borgo S. Lorenzo (FI): Edizioni All’insegna del Giglio.

Pakkanen, P. 1996. *Interpreting Early Hellenistic Religion*. Helsinki: Finnish Institute at Athens.

Panero, Elisa (a cura di). 2024. “Catalogo delle opere in mostra” in E. Panero (a cura di) *La scandalosa e la magnifica. 300 anni di ricerche su Industria e sul culto di Iside in Piemonte*, Torino, pp. 55–75.

Pascal, Cecil Bennett 1964. *The cults of Cisalpine Gaul*. Bruxelles–Berchem: Latomus.

Pastoureau, Michel. 2004. *Une histoire symbolique du Moyen Âge occidental*. Paris: Editions de Seuil.

Pearce, Sarah J. K. 2007. *The Land of the Body. Studies in Philo’s Representation of Egypt*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Petitti, Patrizia. 2024. “Culti isiaci e culti tradizionali: Industria, città sacra agli dei” in E. Panero (a cura di) *La scandalosa e la magnifica. 300 anni di ricerche su Industria e sul culto di Iside in Piemonte*, Torino, pp. 23–35.

Petrova, Maya. 2021. “K probleme rekonstrukcii sobytij iz chastnoj i sociokul'turnoj zhizni Pretekstata (po epigraficheskim istochnikam)” (To the problem of reconstruction Praetextatus’ activities from his private and sociocultural life (by epigraphic sources)), *ΣΧΟΛΗ*, 15, 1, С. 191–213 (In Russ.).

Pietsch, Thomas. 2023. “St Cyril of Alexandria and the Mysteries of Isis in De Adoratione”, The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 74(4), pp. 1–17.

Pizzolato, Luigi F. 2002. *Studi su Vigilio di Trento*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero.

Podvin, Jean-Louis. 2014. “Le tropisme isiaque des Sévères: une acmé reconsidérée?” in L. Bricault & M. J. Versluys (eds.) *Power, Politics, and the Cults of Isis*, Brill, pp. 300—325.

Quacquarelli, Antonio. (1986). *Reazione pagana e transformazione della cultura (fine IV secolo d.C)*. Bari: Edipuglia.

Raspiller, Antoine. 2015. “La stèle de l’oculiste du Musée barrois et le logo de la Société francophone d’histoire de l’ophtalmologie” in Journal français d’ophtalmologie 38, pp. 146—153.

Rebecchi, Fernando. 1986. “Appunti per una storia di Modena nel tardo–impero: monumenti e contesto sociale” in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*. *Antiquité*, tome 98, n°2. pp. 881–930.

Rebecchi, Fernando. 1993. “Scene di caccia nei sarcofagi romani della Cisalpina. Appunti sul realismo simbolico nell’arte funeraria romana”, in Koch, Guntram (hrsg.), *Grabeskunst der romischen Kaiserzeit*, S. 167–185.

Rehm, Ulrich. 2019. *Klassische Mythologie im Mittelalter: Antikenrezeption in der bildenden Kunst*. Vienna: Böhlau.

Roda, Sergio. 1996. “Cisalpini in Lusitania: grandi famiglie senatorie norditaliche nell’alto impero romano” in E. Gabba e al. (a cura di), *Italia sul Baetis. Studi di storia romana in memoria di Fernando Gascó*, pp. 30–50.

Rodenwaldt, Gerhard. 1937. “Ein Attischer Nachklang in den Alpen”, *Ephemeries Archaiologike*, I, S. 134–139.

Ruggini, Lellia. 1991. “La cristianizzazione nelle città dell'Italia settentrionale (IV-VI secolo)” in *Die Stadt in Oberitalien und in den nordwestlichen Provinzen des Römischen Reiches*, herausgegeben von W. Eck und H. Galsterer, pp. 235-250.

Rüger, Christoph B. 1991. “Pagane Religiosität in den Städten der Nordwestprovinzen des römischen Kaiserreiches” in: W. Eck & H. Galsterer (hrsg.)

Die Stadt in Oberitalien und in den Nordwestlichen Provinzen des Römischen Reiches. Deutsch–Italienisches Kolloquium im Italienischen Kulturinstitut Köln, Mainz am Rhein, S. 227–234.

Rüpke, Jorg. 2016. *On Roman Religion. Lived Religion and the Individual in Ancient Rome.* Ithaka & London: Cornell University Press.

Rüpke, Jorg. 2018. "Theorising Religion for the Individual*" in V. Gasparini & R. Veymiers (eds.), *Individuals and Materials in the Greco-Roman Cults of Isis (SET)*, Brill, pp. 61-73.

Santangelo, Federico. 2022. *La religione dei Romani*. Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli.

Sanzi, Ennio & Sfameni, Carla. 2009. *Magia e culti orientali: Per la storia religiosa della Tarda Antichità*. Cosenza: Edizioni Lionello Giordano.

Sauer, Nikoline. 2021. "The Forum of Caesar: A Historiographical Review" in T. A. Hass & R. Raja (eds.) *Caesar's Past and Posterity's Caesar*, Turnhout, pp. 213–241.

Savio, Fedele. 1898. *Gli antichi vescovi d'Italia dalle origini al 1300 descritti per regioni*. *Il Piemonte*, Torino: Fratelli Bocca.

Scheid, John. 2018. *La Religion Romaine en Perspective*. Paris: College de France.

Scheid, John. 2019. "La gestion de la pluralité religieuse dans le monde romain" in *Sacrum Facere. Atti del V Seminario di Archeologia del Sacro. Sacra peregrina. La gestione della pluralità religiosa nel mondo antico,* Trieste, pp. 1–6.

Shaer, Andrea. 2022. *Isis und Verena: zwei heilige Frauen an Badens Heilquellen.* https://blog.nationalmuseum.ch/2022/07/isis–und–verena–zwei–heilige–frauen–an–badens–heilquellen/

Simón, Francisco Marco. 2016. "Vetio Agorio Pretextato y el fervor universalista de la religión tradicional" in Remesal José (ed.) *Autorretratos : la creación de la imagen personal en la Antigüedad*, Barcelona, pp. 213–226.

Skupniewicz, Patryk. 2025. “The New Interpretation of the Scene of “Šābuhr Killing Deer” on the Sasanian Silver Plate from the British Museum”, *The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies*, January 2025, VOL. 5, No. 8, pp. 35–58.

Smith D. E. 1977. “The Egyptian Cults at Corinth”, *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 70, No. 3/4 (Jul. – Oct., 1977), pp. 201–231.

Spikermann, Wolfgang. 2003. *Germania Superior*. *Religionsgeschichte des römischen Germanien I,* Religion der römischen Provinzen 2. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Spikermann, Wolfgang. 2008. *Germania Inferior*. *Religionsgeschichte des römischen Germanien II*, Religion der römischen Provinzen 3. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Susini, Giancarlo. 1956. “Vergilia Erotium e Sosia Isias: due stele romane inedite del Museo civico di Bologna”, *Strenna Storica Bolognese*, pp. 147–156.

Susini, Giancarlo & Pincelli, Rosanna. 1960. *Il Lapidario*. Bologna: Soc. tip. Mareggiani.

Susini, Giancarlo. 1978. “*I culti orientali nella Transpadana*” in *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren*, Vol. 3, pp. 1199–1216.

Swetnam-Burland, Molly. 2015. *Egypt in Italy: Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Şahin, Sencer. 1978. “Griechische Epigramme aus dem sudlichen Propontisgebiet” in *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren*, Vol. 3, pp. 997–1003.

Takács, Sarolta A. 1995. *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*. Leiden, NY., Köln: E. J. Brill.

Tassinari, Gabriella. 2008. “La produzione glittica a Roma: la questione delle officine nel mondo romano in epoca imperiale”, *Rivista di Studi Liguri*, LXXIV, pp. 251-317.

Toynbee, Jocelyn Mary. 1971. *Death and burial in the Roman World*. London & Southhampton: Thames and Hudson.

Tommasi, Chiara Ombretta. 2020. “Aspetti e problemi del paganesimo in Rutilio Namaziano” in E. Wolff (ed.) *Rutilius Namatianus, aristocrate païen en voyage et poète.* Scripta antiqua, 131, Bordeaux, pp. 145–163.

Tran Tam Tinh, Vincent. 1964. *Le culte D’Isis a Pompei.* Paris: Editions E. De Boccard.

Tran Tam Tinh, Vincent. 1972. *Le culte des divinités orientales en Campanie en dehors de Pompéi, de Stabies et d'Herculanum* (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain, tome 27). Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Tran Tam Tinh, Vincent & d’Yvette, Labrecque. 1973. *Isis lactans: Corpus des monuments gréco–romains d'Isis allaitant Harpocrate*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Tran Tam Tinh, Vincent. 1982. “Serapis and Isis” in B. F. Meyer–E. P. Sanders (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Self–Definition*, *vol. 3. Self–definition in the Graeco–Roman World*, London, pp. 101–117.

Trigger, Bruce. 2006. G. *A History of Archaeological Thought*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Trout, Dennis E. 2016. “Napkin Art: Carmina contra paganos and the difference Satire made in fourth–century Rome” in M. R. Salzman (ed.) *Pagans and christians in late antique Rome: Conflict, Competition, and Coexistence in the Fourth Century*, pp. 213–231.

Truzzi, Carlo. 1985. *Zeno, Gaudenzio e Cromazio. Testi e contenuti della predicazione cristiana per le chiese di Verona, Brescia e Aquileia (360–410 ca.).* Brescia: Paideia Editrice.

Turcan, Robert. 1966. *Les sarcophages romains à représentations dionysiaques. Essai de chronologie et d’histoire religieuse*. Rome: De Boccard.

Turcan, Robert. 1967. *Seneque et les religions orientales*. Bruxelles: Latomus.

Vandorpe, Katelijn. 2012. “Identity” in: C. Riggs (ed.)*, Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, pp. 260–277.

Van Nuffelen, Peter. 2013. “Palladius and the Johannite Schism”, Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 1–19.

Vedeshkin, Michail A. 2025. “K voprosu identifikacii adresata Carmen ad quendam senatorem” (“Towards the identification of the addressee of the Carmen ad Quendam Senatorem”), *Vestnik drevney istorii*, 85/2 (2025), C. 421–437 (In Russ.).

Vedeshkin, Michail A. 2024. “Senatory-verootstupniki: obrashchenie v yazychestvo v Rime IV v. n.e.” (“Apostate senators: Conversion to paganism in fourth–century Rome”), *Indo–European Linguistics and Classical Philology,* XXVIII (1), C. 274–294 (In Russ.).

Veymiers, Richard. 2021. “Les mystères isiaques et leurs expressions figurées. Des exégèses modernes aux allusions antiques” in Belayche, Nicole & Massa, Francesco (eds.) *Mystery Cults in Visual Representation in Graeco–Roman Antiquity*, pp. 123–168.

Versnel, Hendrik S. 1991. “Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic–Religion”, *Numen,* 38.2, pp. 177–197.

Vidman, Ladislaus. 1969. *SIRIS* (*Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapicae*). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter e co.

West, Martinus Litchfield. 2001. “Towards Monotheism” in Athanassiadi, Polymnia & Frede, Michael (eds.) *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. NY., pp. 21–40.

Wild, Robert A. 1984. “The Known Isis-Serapis Sanctuaries of the Roman Period” in W. Haase (hrsg.) *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Teil 2,17,4: Teil 2. Principat: Religion (Heidentum: Römische Götterkulte, orientalische Kulte in der Römischen Welt [Forts.]), pp. 1739-1851.

Wootton, David. 1994. “Narrative Irony and Faith in Gibbon’s Decline and Fall”, *History and Theory*, 33, pp. 77–105.

Woods, David. 1991. “The early career of the Magister Equitum Jacobus”, *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 571–574.

Wrede, Henning. 2001. *Senatorische Sarkophage Roms. Der Beitrag des Senatorenstandes zur römischen Kunst der hohen und späten Kaiserzeit* (Monumenta Artis Romanae, XXIX). Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp Von Zabern.

Zanda, Emanuela. 1993. "Nuovi dati sulla produzione Bronzistica", *Quaderni della Soprintendenza archeologica del Piemonte*, 11, pp. 64–75.

Zanda, Emanuela. 1997. "Il santuario isiaco di Industria" in E. A. Arslan (a cura di). *Iside. Il mito. Il mistero,* Milano, pp. 352–357.

Zanda, Emanuela et al. 2011. *Industria città romana sacra a Iside. Scavi e Ricerche archeologiche 1981–2003*, Torino: Allemandi.

Zorat, Marta. 1993. "La *gens* Lollia ed il culto di Ammone a Industria (nota a *CIL*, V, 7486)", *Quaderni della Soprintendenza archeologica del Piemonte*, 11, pp. 55–63.

Appendixes

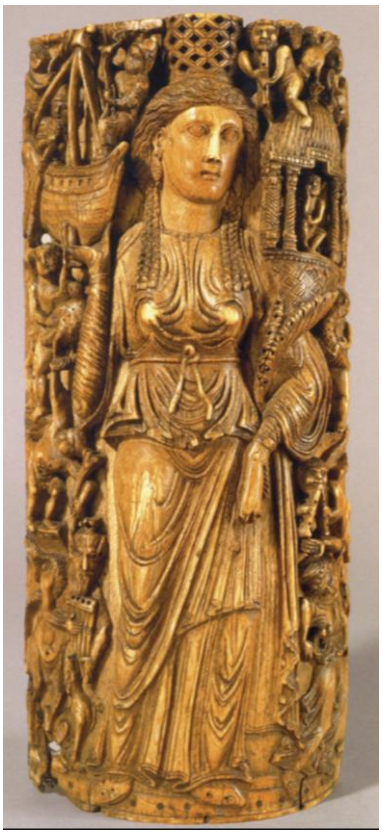


Fig. 1. Isis, ivory plaque, 6th century, probably from Alexandria, Egypt. Part of the Ambo of Henry II, Aachen Cathedral, 1014–1017. From Bricault 2019, p. 282.

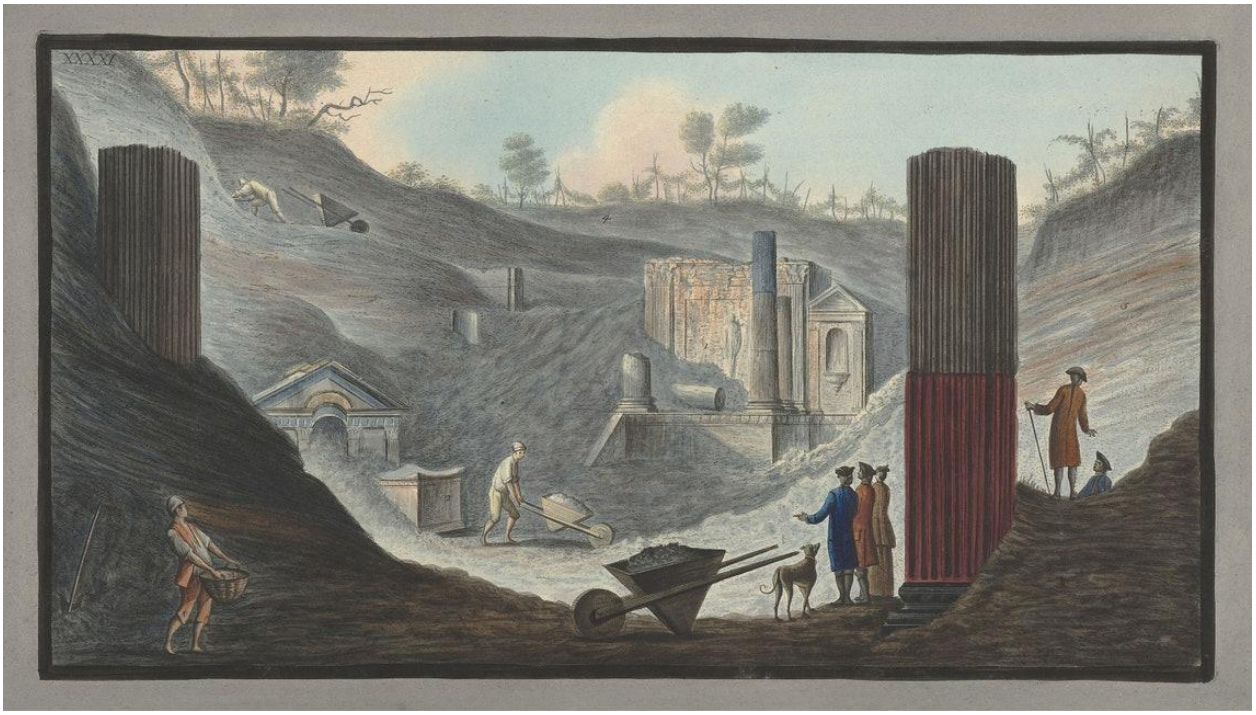


Fig. 2. The excavation of the Isis Temple in Pompei by William Hamilton, London, 1776.

Fig. 3. The Temple of Isis at Pompeii, etched by Francesco Piranesi, 1788.

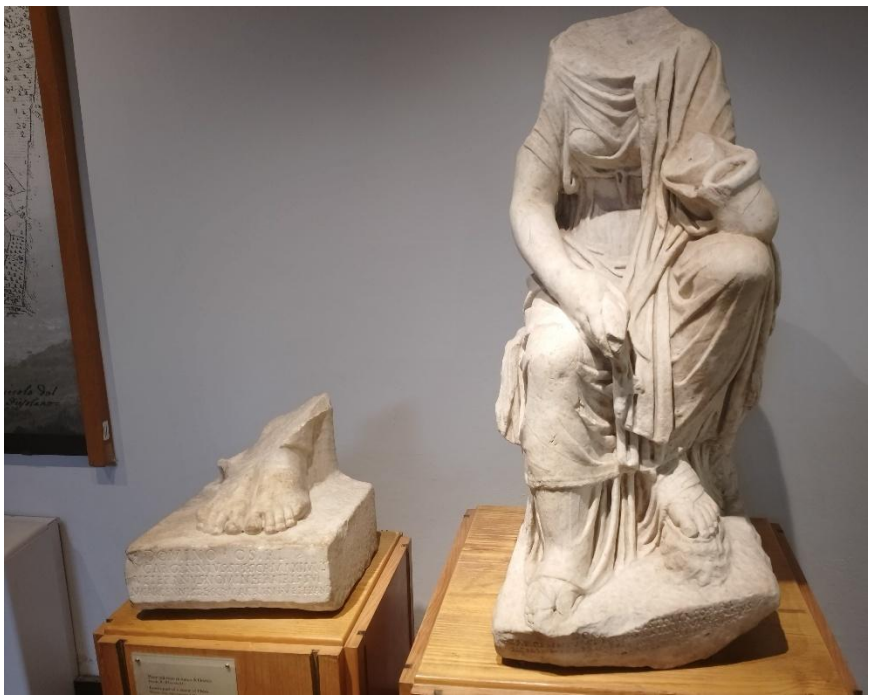


Fig. 4. The statues of Isis and Osiris in Fiesole, with the inscriptions of the army veterans, 2nd-3rd. centuries AD, *Museo Civico Archeologico di Fiesole*, photo by the author, 2025.

Fig. 5. Three coins from Corinth depicting the harbours of Corinth with Poseidon (a, b) and an earlier image (c) of an unknown deity (Isis?). From Hohlfelder 1970, p. 331.

Fig. 6-7. Statue of Drusilla (1) and statue of Ptolemy (2), *Museo Gregoriano Egizio*, Rome. Photos by author, 2024.

Fig. 8. Egyptian statues discovered in the villa of Hadrian in Tivoli, *Museo Gregoriano Egizio*, Rome. Photo by author, 2024.

Fig. 9. Fresco representing Anubis, 2nd century AD, Caracalla Thermes complex, Rome. Photo by author, 2024.

Fig. 10. Votive inscription of *Avilia Amabilis* (*CIL* V, 7488 / *RICIS* 513/0102). From Panero 2024, p. 29.

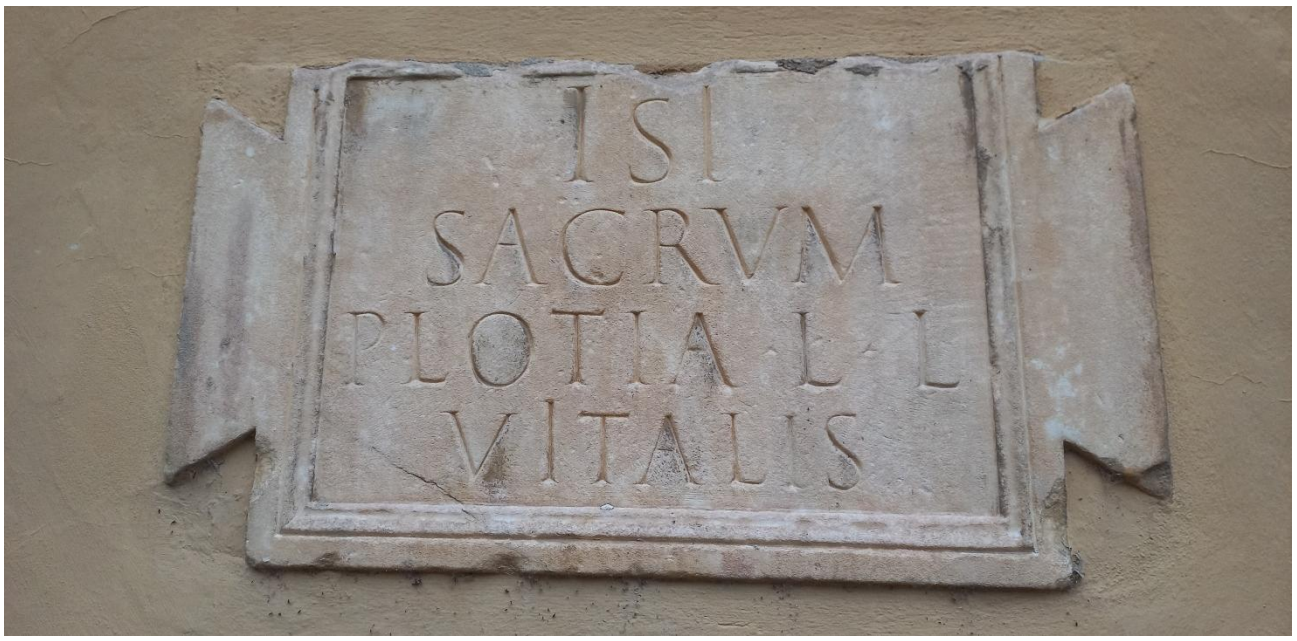


Fig. 11. Votive dedication of the freedwoman *Plotia Vitalis*, 1-2nd centuries AD (*CIL* V, 6406 / *RICIS* 516/0301). Pavia, *Palazzo Centrale* courtyard. Photo by author, 2025.

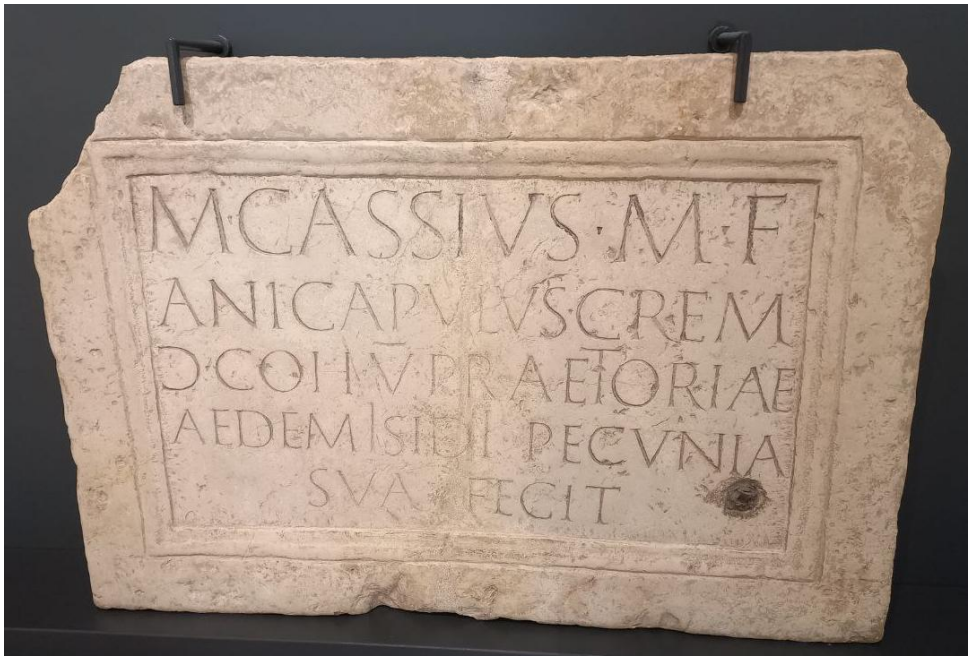


Fig. 12. Inscription on the establishment of sacred place to Isis by centurion of the 5th cohort of the Praetorian Guards Marcus Cassius Capulus, 1st century AD, found in Acquanegra sul Chiese (MN). *Museo Archaeologico Nazionale di Mantova*, inv. GEN. 12146 (*CIL* V, 4041 / *RICIS* 515/1101). Photo by author, 2025.

Fig. 13. Magic gem with an image of Hermes–Thoth. Carpi (MO), loc. San Marino, via Griduzza, nei pressi di Case Nuove (Carpi, Museo della Città, n. inv.: 249180). From Corti 2006, p. 26.

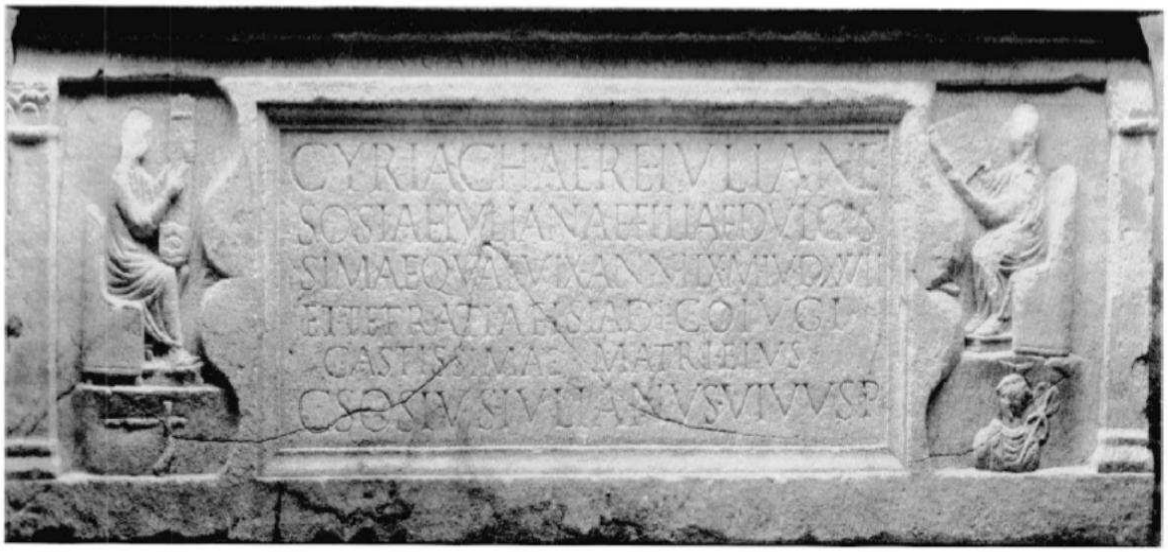


Fig. 14. Sarcophagus of *Sosius Julianus* and *Tetratia Isias*. Frontal side. Ravenna. From Festugière 1963, p. 138.

Fig. 15. Sarcophagus of *Sosia Herennia*. Frontal side. Modena, *Museo Lapidario Estense* (inv. R.C.G.E. 7110). Photo by author, 2024.

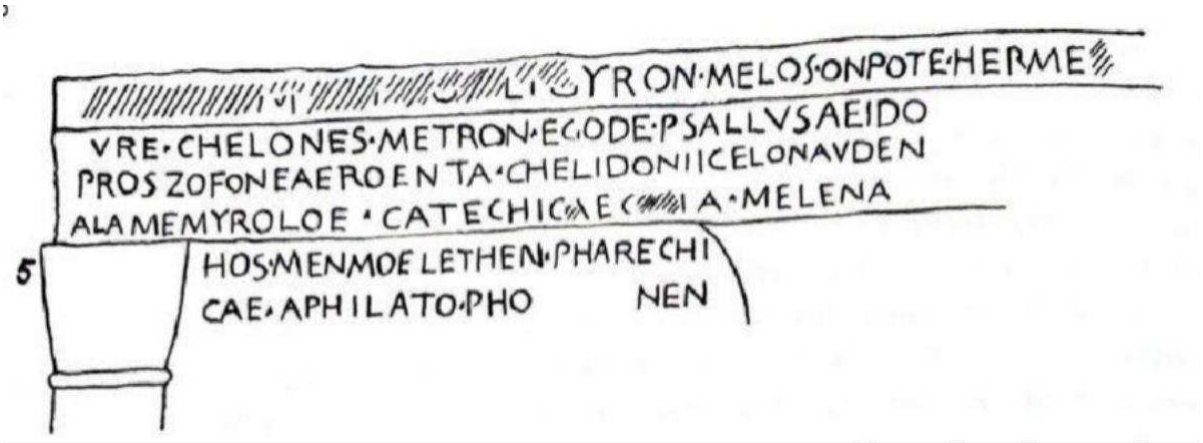


Fig. 16. Drawing upon the inscription in greek of the sarcophagus of *Sosius Julianus* and *Tetratia Isias* (frontal side, left upper part). From Egger 1951, S. 40.

Fig. 17. Drawing upon the inscription in Greek of the sarcophagus of *Sosius Julianus* and *Tetratia Isias* (frontal side, right upper part). From Egger 1951, S. 41.

Fig. 18. Sarcophagus of *Sosius Julianus* and *Tetratia Isias*. Left side. Ravenna, *Museo Nazionale di Ravenna*, inv. 410. From Kornbluchphoto.com

Fig. 19. Sarcophagus of *Sosius Julianus* and *Tetratia Isias*. Right side. Ravenna, *Museo Nazionale di Ravenna*, inv. 410. From Kornbluchphoto.com.

Fig. 20. Stele of the Oculist, 1st quart of the 2nd century AD, Musee barrois, Bar–le–Duc, France, inv. 850.20.1. From webmuseo.com/ws/musee–barrois/

Fig. 21. Sarcophagus of Publius Vettius Sabinus, frontal side. Modena, *Museo Lapidario Estense* (R.C.G.E. 7085; *CIL* XI, 863 / *RICIS* 512/0603). Photo by author, 2024.

Fig. 22. Sarcophagus of Publius Vettius Sabinus, back side. Modena, *Museo Lapidario Lapidario Estense* (R.C.G.E. 7085; *CIL* XI, 863 / *RICIS* 512/0603). Photo by author, 2024.

Fig. 23. Sarcophagus of Publius Vettius Sabinus, back side (detail). Modena, *Museo Estense* (R.C.G.E. 7085; *CIL* XI, 863 / *RICIS* 512/0603). Photo by author, 2024.

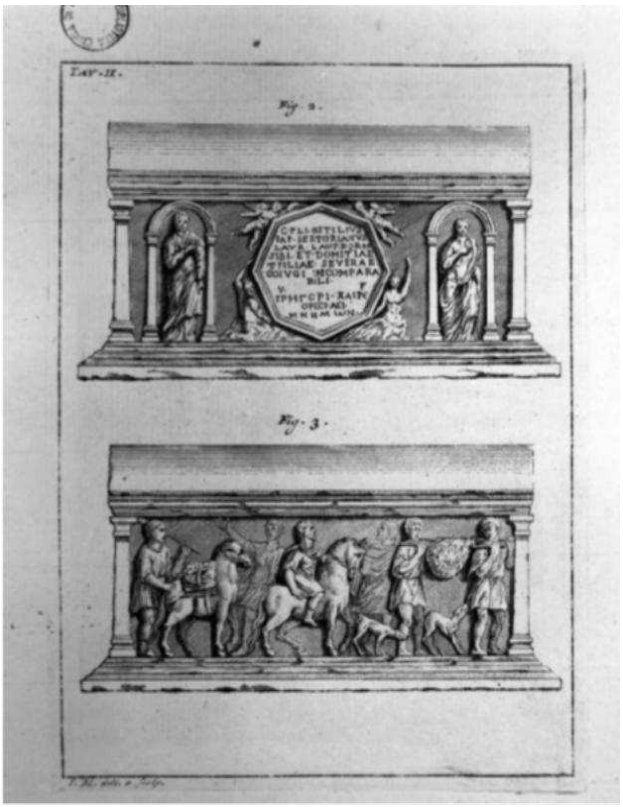


Fig. 24. Francesco Monaco. Sarcophagus of *Flavius Hostilius*. Frontal and back sides. From Doglioni 1976 (Ristampa dell'edizione di Belluno, 1816).

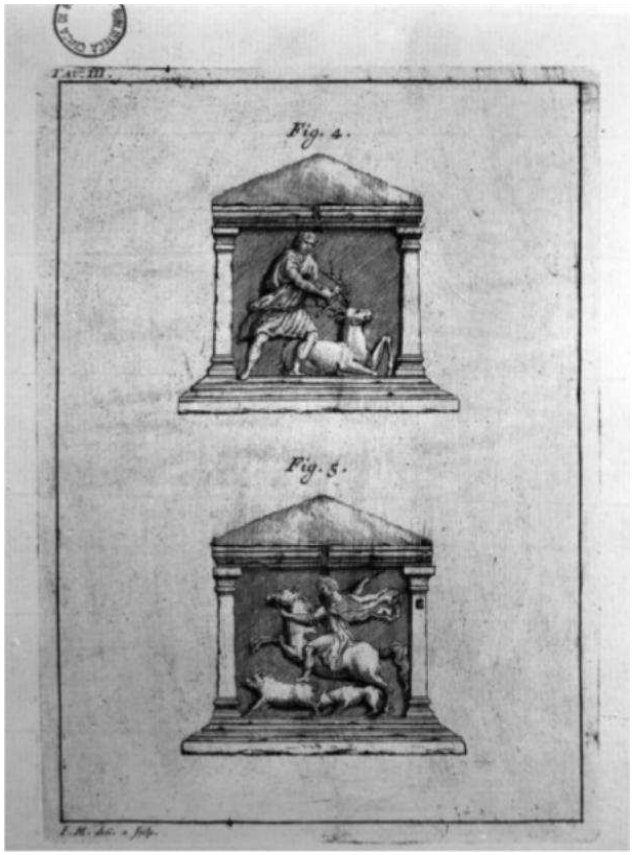


Fig. 25 Francesco Monaco. Sarcophagus of *Flavius Hostilius*. Left and right sides. From Doglioni 1976 (Ristampa dell'edizione di Belluno, 1816.

Fig. 26. The left side of the sarcophagus of Flavius Hostilius. Photo by R. Rodenwaldt, from Rodenwaldt 1937, S. 18.

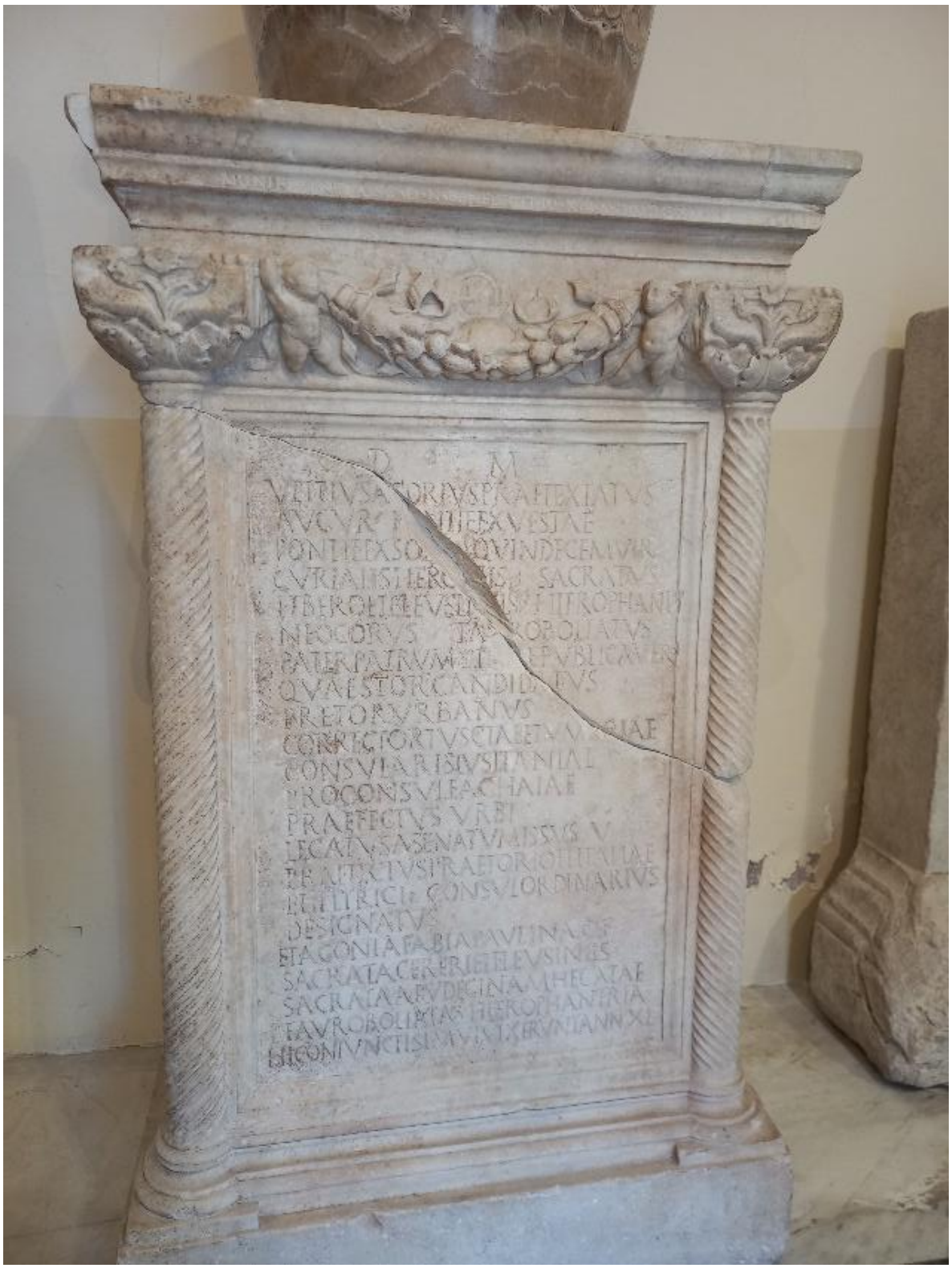


Fig. 27. Base with sepulchral inscription of *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus* and his wife *Aconia Fabia Paulina*, 384–385 AD, Rome, Capitoline Museum, n. inv. MC 208, photo by author, 2025.

Fig. 28. Bronze head of an Isis priest (?). Campogalliano (MO), Centro Culturale. From Corti 2002, p. 94.

Fig. 29. Fresco vignette with a priest. Inv. 8925. Pompei, 1st. cent. AD. From https://www.museoarcheologiconapoli.it/en/portfolio-item/temple-of-isis/

Fig. 30-31. A column with Isis's cult procession, Rome, Capitoline Museum. Photos by author, 2025.

Fig. 32-33. Bronze head of an Isis priest. 1st–2nd centuries AD. Provenance: Pietole (MN), *Museo Archaeologico Nazionale di Mantova*, inv. Gen. 11150. Photos by author, 2025.

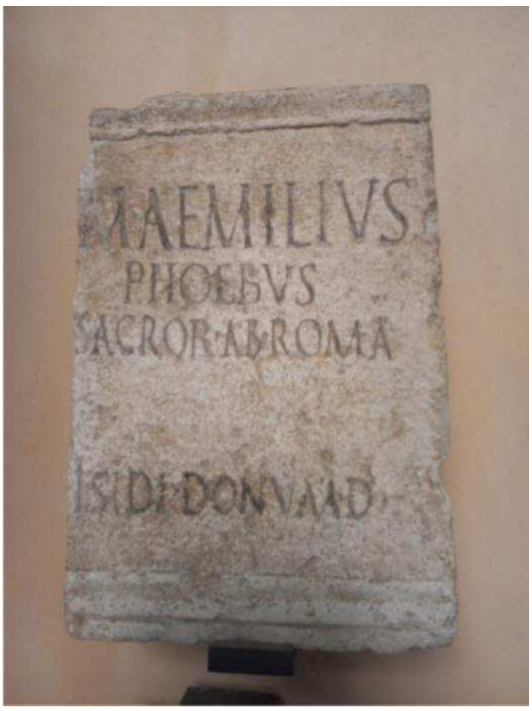


Fig. 34. The inscription of *Marcus Aemilius Phoebus*, the priest of Isis. Modena, *Museo Lapidario Estense* (inv. R.C.G.E. 7064; *CIL* XI, 819 / *RICIS* 512/0602). Photo by author, 2024.

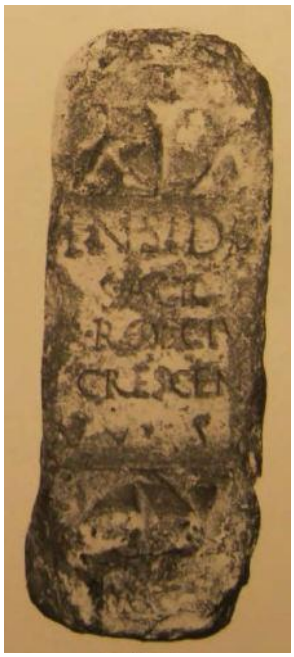


Fig. 35. The inscription of *Caius Roscius Crescens*, who made votum to Isis. Brescia, *Musei civici di storia ed arte* (inv. 2608; *CIL* V, 4220 / *RICIS* 515/1202). From Bricault 2005, Vol. 3. Pl. CX.

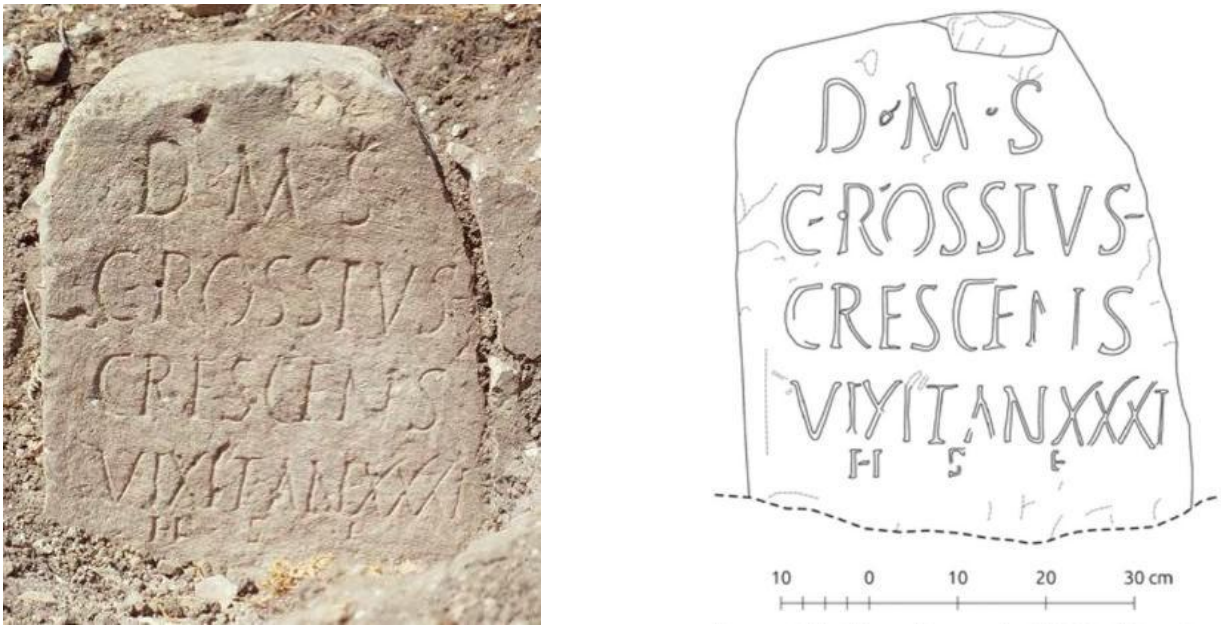


Fig. 36. Funerary cippus of *C(aius) Rossius Crescens*. From de Vos Raaijmakers & Maurina 2019, p. 342.

Fig. 37. Plan of the center of the city of Industria (Monteu da Po). From Panero 2024, p. 45.

Fig. 38. Plaque of bronze with the head of Harpocrates (?), 4th century AD, Industria. *Museo di Antichità*, Turin, Inv. 58393. From Zanda 2011, p. 182.

Fig. 39. Museo di Antichità, Turin, Inv. 1108. Situla, ceremonial bowl, 3rd century AD. Found in Industria. From the Museum' s website: https://museireali.beniculturali.it/catalogo-museo-diantichita/#/dettaglio/1402924_Situla%20configurata%20a%20testa%20umana.

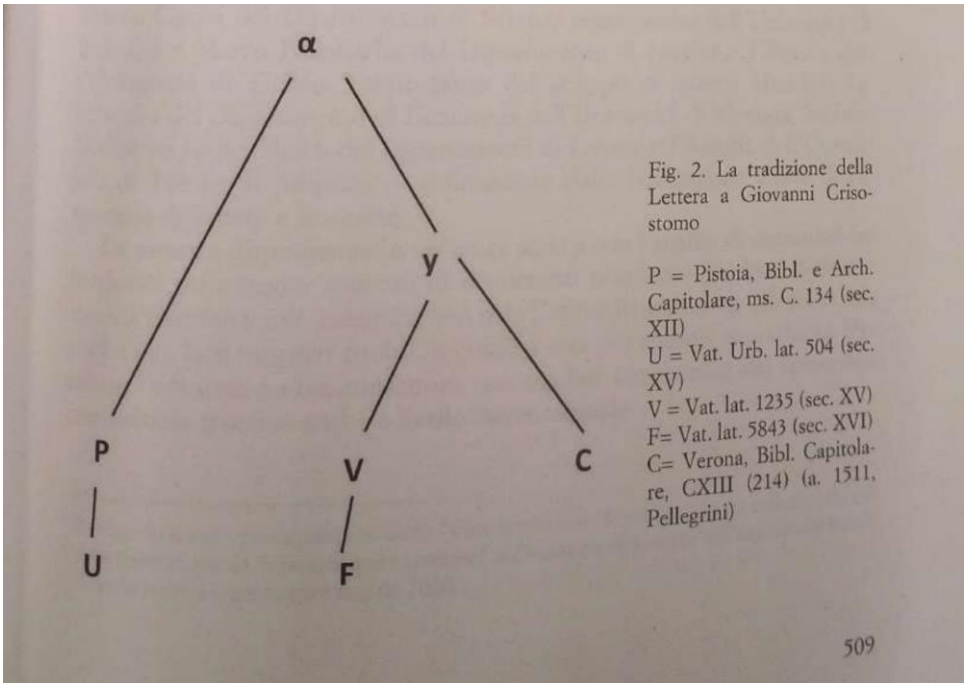
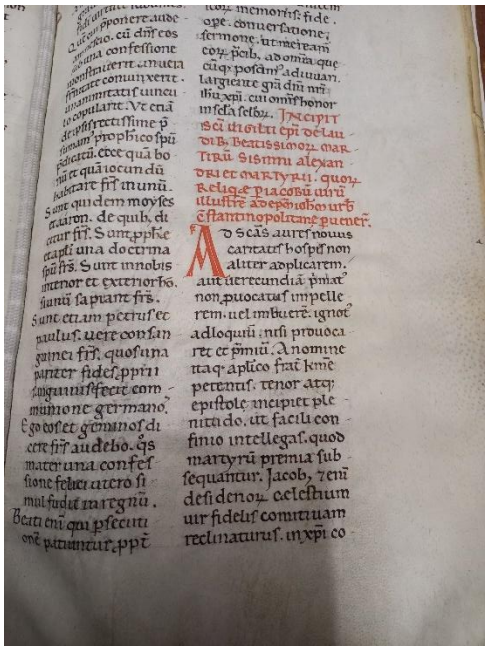


Fig. 40. Stemma of manuscripts containing the Vigillius' letter to John Crysostom. From Gatti 2021, p. 509.



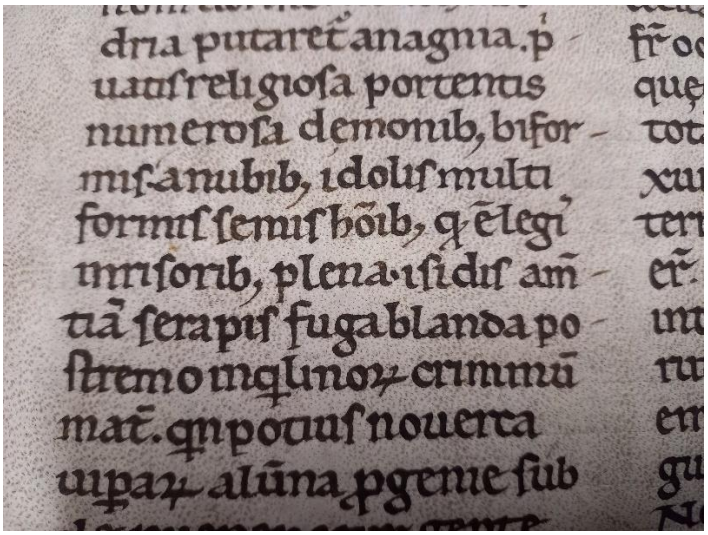
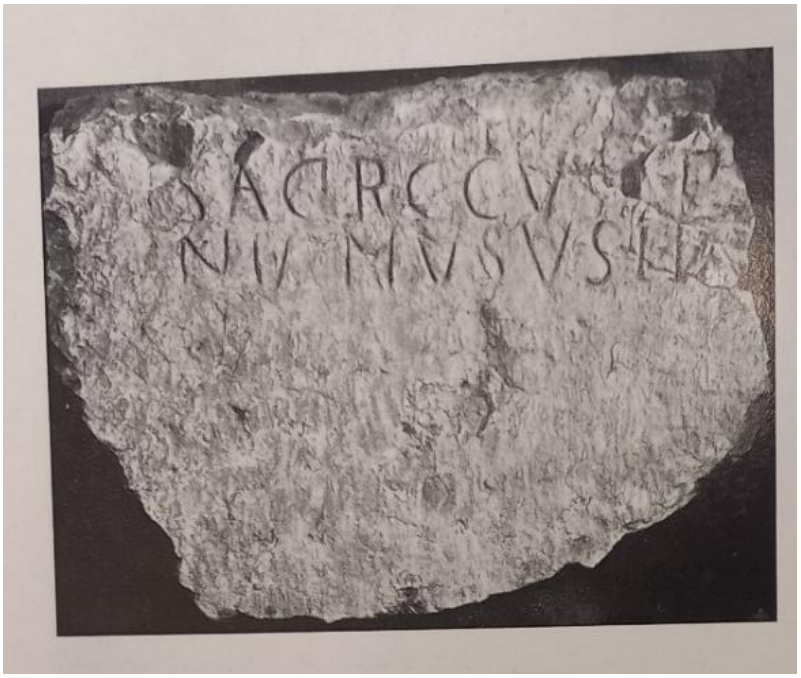


Fig. 41-42. The letter of Vigilius and the mention of the Egyptian deities in the 12th century codex Ms. C. 134 (folios 104r and 108r) in *Archivio Capitolare, Pistoia.* Photos by author, 2025.



The remains of the Mithraeum in Sanzeno. Fig. 43. Relief depicting the god Mithras, 3rd century AD, *Museo provinciale del Castello del Buonconsiglio*, Trent, no inv. n. Photo by author, 2025. Fig. 44. Votive inscription to Mithras, 3rd-4th centuries AD, found in Sanzeno. From Chisté 1971, tav. 20.