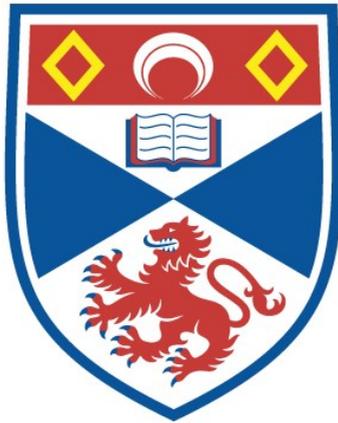


**TERTULLIAN THE AFRICAN THEOLOGIAN :
A SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL READING OF
TERTULLIAN'S IDENTITIES**

David E. Wilhite

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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**THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS
ST MARY'S COLLEGE**

**TERTULLIAN THE AFRICAN THEOLOGIAN:
A SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL READING
OF TERTULLIAN'S IDENTITIES**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF DIVINITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**BY
DAVID E. WILHITE**



**ST ANDREWS, SCOTLAND
28 SEPTEMBER 2005**

ABSTRACT

The following thesis explores the social identities of Tertullian, a Christian from Carthage who lived from approximately 160 to 220. After exploring the implications of calling Tertullian an “African Theologian,” the introduction interacts with the work done on Tertullian in the past, concluding that although he was once read Euro-centrally and assumed to be a Roman, explicitly, and a European, implicitly, scholars in recent decades have deconstructed the biographical information of Tertullian, leaving his African origin as one of the only undisputed aspects of his life. However, while scholars have located Tertullian within the broader movements of the Roman Empire, few have explored the North African milieu in relation to Tertullian’s writings. In order to contribute to this area of scholarship, theories from the discipline of Social Anthropology are accommodated and applied to selections of Tertullian’s writings, thereby exploring Tertullian’s construction of his own identities. The social theories applied, namely, social identity, kinship identity, class identity, ethnic identity and religious identity, are used heuristically to read the sources from Roman Africa in order to inquire as to the various identities constructed by individuals and groups. Within the social context of Roman Africa, this study establishes the categories of Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans and new elites. The third category, new elites, is actually meant to destabilize the other two, denying any “essential” Roman or African identity. Once the context has been framed, the thesis investigates samples from Tertullian’s writings to compare his construction of his own identities and the identities of his rhetorical opponents. In order to interpret Tertullian’s social identities, one chapter compares the identities Tertullian constructs in his works *Apologeticum* and *Ad nationes*. The similarity of these two tracts allows for an inquiry into Tertullian’s “Other” and the “Other” Tertullian constructs for his audiences. The subsequent chapter applies kinship theory in order to compare Tertullian’s ideals with those of Roman kinship and early Christian kinship. Therein, the usual discussion of Tertullian’s view of marriage is readdressed by comparing the kinship identities and ideals forwarded in his works *Ad uxorem* 1 and 2. Closely connected to Tertullian’s kinship identity is that of his class identity, and, while his exact status and class may be elusive in historical terms, one can explore his socio-economic ingroup and outgroup as he portrays them in *De cultu feminarum* 1 and 2. Tertullian’s ethnic identity is discussed in a chapter that interprets his works *De uirginibus uelandis* and *De pallio*, in which it is suggested that Tertullian establishes boundaries between his own ethnic group and that of Roman colonizers. The last form of identity discussed, religious identity, involves a reinterpretation of Tertullian’s use of the New Prophecy. Therein, Tertullian’s religious “Other” is understood to be constructed with not only “psychic” rhetoric, but also with Roman imagery. The overall study finds Tertullian’s identities to be manifold, complex and discursive. Additionally, his writings are understood to reflect antagonism towards Romans, including Christian Romans, and Romanized Africans. While Tertullian accommodates much from (Graeco-)Roman literature, laws and customs, he nevertheless retains a strongly stated non-Roman-ness and an African-ity which have been almost entirely neglected in past studies, and it is this aspect, therefore, which is highlighted in the present thesis.

DECLARATIONS

I, David Wilhite, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date 2/15/06 Signature of candidate,  .

I was admitted as a research student in September 2003 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in May 2004; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2003 and 2005.

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ABBREVIATIONS

General

AA	<i>American Anthropologist</i>
AE	<i>American Ethnologist</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJAH	<i>American Journal of Ancient History</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325</i>
AQ	<i>Anthropological Quarterly</i>
ARA	<i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>
AT	<i>Anthropology Today</i>
BMCR	<i>Bryn Mawr Classical Review</i>
CA	<i>Cultural Anthropology</i>
CAJ	<i>Cambridge Archaeological Journal</i>
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
CJ	<i>Classical Journal</i>
ClAnt	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
ChUP	Chicago: Chicago University Press
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CrA	<i>Critique of Anthropology</i>
CSL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CuA	<i>Current Anthropology</i>
CUP	Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
CW	<i>Classical World</i>
DA	<i>Dialectical Anthropology</i>
ERS	<i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i>
EUP	Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
G&R	<i>Greece & Rome</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUP	Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
JAH	<i>Journal of African History</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAR	<i>Journal of Anthropological Research</i>
JArR	<i>Journal of Archaeological Research</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRAI	<i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	<i>Loeb Classic Library</i>
MUP	Manchester: Manchester University Press
NPF	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OUP	Oxford: Oxford University Press
PCPS	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
PSPF	<i>Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis</i>
PSS	<i>Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum</i>
PUP	Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
SA	<i>Social Anthropology</i>
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>

<i>SCI</i>	<i>Syllecta Classica</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
<i>SUP</i>	Stanford: Stanford University Press
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TUP</i>	Toronto: Toronto University Press
<i>UCP</i>	Berkeley: University of California Press
<i>UMP</i>	Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press
<i>UNCP</i>	Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>WA</i>	<i>World Archaeology</i>
<i>YUP</i>	New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Tertullian's Works

<i>Ad mart.</i>	<i>Ad martyras</i>
<i>Ad nat.</i>	<i>Ad nationes</i>
<i>Ad Scap.</i>	<i>Ad Scapulam</i>
<i>Ad ux.</i>	<i>Ad uxorem</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologeticum</i>
<i>Adu. Iud.</i>	<i>Aduersus Iudaeos</i>
<i>Adu. Marc.</i>	<i>Aduersus Marcionem</i>
<i>Adu. Prax.</i>	<i>Aduersus Praxean</i>
<i>Adu. Val.</i>	<i>Aduersus Valentinianos</i>
<i>De an.</i>	<i>De anima</i>
<i>De bap.</i>	<i>De baptismo</i>
<i>De res. carn.</i>	<i>De resurrectione carnis</i>
<i>De carn. Chris.</i>	<i>De carne Christi</i>
<i>De cor.</i>	<i>De corona militis</i>
<i>De cul. fem.</i>	<i>De cultu feminarum</i>
<i>De exh. cast.</i>	<i>De exhortatione castitatis</i>
<i>De fug.</i>	<i>De fuga in persecutione</i>
<i>De idol.</i>	<i>De idolatria</i>
<i>De mon.</i>	<i>De monogomia</i>
<i>De or.</i>	<i>De oratione</i>
<i>De paen.</i>	<i>De paenitentia</i>
<i>De pal.</i>	<i>De pallio</i>
<i>De pat.</i>	<i>De patientia</i>
<i>De prae. haer.</i>	<i>De praescriptione haereticorum</i>
<i>De pud.</i>	<i>De pudicitia</i>
<i>De spect.</i>	<i>De spectaculis</i>
<i>De uirg. uel.</i>	<i>De uirginibus uelandis</i>

CHAPTER ONE

TERTULLIAN THE AFRICAN THEOLOGIAN

1.1 Introduction – Rereading Tertullian

Any discussion of the life and identities of Tertullian encounters problems regarding a lack of data both from within Tertullian's own works and from secondary witnesses. No ancient source claims that Tertullian was martyred, and therefore, no *Acts* of Tertullian has been written like the many that are extant from martyrs of Tertullian's era.¹ The first Christian *Life* was not written until after the death of Tertullian's theological successor, Cyprian of Carthage in 258, leaving no work that claims to be an eyewitness account of Tertullian's life.² The first *Confessions* of a Christian would not be written until Augustine, and Tertullian only supplies fleeting references to himself in his own tracts. Scholars, therefore, must attempt to piece together scanty autobiographical allusions found in Tertullian's writings, and they must rely on the abbreviated references to Tertullian by a few later authors.

At the end of the nineteenth century, European scholars were asserting an outline of Tertullian's life; Otto Bardenhewer, for example, presents a synopsis:

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus was born, it is usually believed, about the year 160 at Carthage, where his father was serving as a centurion (*centurio proconsularis*) in the service of the proconsul of Africa. He received an excellent academic training and probably entered upon the career of an advocate. There are in the Pandects some excerpts from the writings of a jurist Tertullian (*Quaestionum libri viii, De castrensi peculio*) whom many historians are inclined to identify with our

¹ See Herbert Musurillo, ed. and trans., *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

² See Pontius the Deacon, *Vita Cypriani*. All dates are general reference points; those in question pertaining to this thesis shall be noted.

ecclesiastical writer. About 193, certainly before 197, he became a Christian, was ordained also a priest according to St. Jerome, and began a long literary career in the service of the new faith. About midway in his life (*ca.* 202) he openly joined the sect of the Montanists, and began to attack the Catholic Church with a violence scarcely inferior to that which he had manifested against heathenism. Within the Montanist fold he founded a special sect known as Tertullianists. He is said to have lived to a very advanced age.³

More recently, however, scholars have questioned many of these claims. Gerald Bray expresses the sentiment of most Tertullian scholars of the last twenty-five years when he says, “Tertullian himself never dwelt on autobiographical details, and there is remarkably little which can be deduced with certainty from his writings... In the end all we can really say about Tertullian’s life is that we know virtually nothing about it.”⁴ Is this, however, really all one can say? One aspect of Tertullian’s life widely accepted is the place of his writing being Carthage, and most contemporary scholars agree that *Africa Proconsularis* was his *patria* or homeland.⁵ The following project seeks to explore Tertullian’s life and identities with this locale at the forefront. Before delineating the scholarly trends in Tertullian studies, a framework of theoretical questioning will be suggested.

Over two centuries before Tertullian lived and wrote, the famous Latin poet, Virgil, produced the following lines:

There was an ancient city, the home of Tyrian settlers,
Carthage, over against Italy and the Tiber’s mouths afar,
Rich in wealth and stern in war’s pursuits.

³ *Patrology: The Lives and Works of the Fathers of the Church*, 2nd ed., trans. Thomas J. Shahan, (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1908), 179; an almost identical synopsis can be found in Berthold Altaner, *Patrology*, trans. from the 5th German ed. by Hilda C. Graef, (Nelson, 1960), 166.

⁴ Gerald Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian*, (London: Marshal, Morgan, and Scott, 1979), 8-9. More recently, David Wright, “Tertullian,” in *The Early Christian World* vol. 2, ed. Philip F. Esler, (London: Routledge, 2000), 1027, says we know “disappointingly little.”

⁵ On Carthage, Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian*, (Routledge: London, 2004), 4. On *patria*, see below (1.3.3).

This, 'tis said, Juno loved above all other lands,
 Holding Samos itself less dear.
 Here was her armour, here her chariot;
 That here should be the capital of the nations,
 Should the fates perchance allow it,
 Was even then the goddess' aim and cherished hope.
 Yet in truth she had heard that a race was springing from Trojan blood,
 to overthrow some day the Tyrian towers;
 that from it a people, kings of broad realms and proud in war,
 should come forth for Libya's downfall;
 so rolled the wheels of fate.⁶

What would Virgil's lines mean for an individual like Tertullian writing in the time of "Libya's downfall" (*excidio Libyae*) and existing under the Roman "kings of broad realms" (*late regem*)? From within the walls of a city destroyed and rebuilt by Rome, Tertullian composed a plethora of tracts aimed at a variety of audiences, and his rhetorical skill earned Tertullian a place in history as a primary spokesperson for the Christians in North Africa in the late second to early third centuries. How, then, would an educated thinker of Tertullian's caliber interpret comments like Virgil's which celebrates the Roman colonial presence in Africa? While many ancient historians might ignore such questions, the relatively young field of Postcolonialism as an academic project exists to address the phenomenon of colonial encounter.

Postcolonial critics generally trace their roots to Edward Said's work, *Orientalism*, in which he attacks the "colonial discourse" of the West for

⁶ *Aeneid*, 1.12-22: *Vrbs antique fuit (Tyrii tenuere coloni) / Karthago, Italiam contra Tiberinaque longe / ostia, dives opum studiisque asperrima belli / quam Iuno fertur terris magis omnibus unam / posthabita coluisse Samo / hic illius arma, hic currus fuit, hos regnum dea gentibus esse, / siqua fata sinant, iam tum tenditque foretque. / progeniem sed enim Troiano a sanguine duci / audierat, Tyrias olim quae uerteret arces; / hinc populum late regem belloque superbum / uenturum excidio Libyae: sic uoluere Parcas.* For text and trans. of ancient sources cited, see bibliography.

alienating the non-western “Other.”⁷ In their work, *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin defined Postcolonialism as a “reading practice,” distinct from the hyphenated, temporal adjective, “post-colonial.”⁸ The practice referred to by these authors stems from the call of Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, who asked, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”⁹ In her essay Spivak declares that the subaltern, a Marxist term for a member of the lowest rankings of society, does not have a voice, especially in the context of “postcoloniality,” and she challenges the academic community to attempt to speak on the subaltern’s behalf. Spivak’s utilization of Marxist concepts is just one of many philosophical systems used by postcolonial scholars; other examples include Foucault’s discourse theory, Derrida’s poststructuralism and

⁷ *Orientalism*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); the many “genealogies” of postcolonialism have been attacked “for being themselves value-laden and driven by ethical agendas, such as anti-foundationalism,” by David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson, “Introduction,” *Relocating Postcolonialism*, ed. Goldberg and Quayson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), xii; Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2001), 18, attributes Said for having “created the academic field of postcolonialism”; similarly, see Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, “Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: An Introduction” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1993), 5.

⁸ *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, (London: Routledge, 1989), 193. Postcolonialism began in Literature departments as a form of criticism similar to Feminism; for further discussion, see Young, *Postcolonialism*, 64; for explication on the dialectic of post-colonial and postcolonial, see Leela Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, (EUP, 1998), 3, who argues that the “postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation”; however, Young, *Postcolonialism*, 15, declares this view anachronistic; see discussions by Gregory Castle, “Introduction,” in *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*, ed. Gregory Castle, (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publisher, 2001), xii; and Goldberg and Quayson, “Introduction,” xvi, who present both possibilities. On Post-colonial/Postcolonial, the distinction will be followed throughout; similarly, the non-hyphenated lower case adjective “postcolonial” will often refer to the context of Roman imperial presence in Africa.

⁹ “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C Nelson and L. Grossberg, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), 271-313, reprinted in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1993), 66-111.

Lyotard's postmodernism.¹⁰ The European origin of so many of these theories, however, is problematic for many scholars who promote the postcolonial approach as an attempt to correct Eurocentricity. Despite the complexity and multiplicity of approaches within the field of Postcolonialism, many scholars find the theory useful in attempting to answer the call to re-read history, including ancient history and the era of the Roman Empire which ruled in Tertullian's day.

If Postcolonialism is defined here as a "reading practice," what are the implications for "reading" the historical documents of Roman North Africa? Postcolonial critics have objected to many philosophies of history such as the Hegelian understanding of "progress."¹¹ Therefore, if one heeds Spivak's call to hear the voice of the subaltern, the historian must in a certain sense attempt a fresh approach to the Eurocentric received knowledge of the historical method. Postcolonial critics, moreover, insist that "analysts look at texts as texts rather than as documents providing *evidence* about historical events... suggesting that all knowledge is partial."¹² In other words, a postcolonial approach to history entails reading data through a different set of hermeneutical questions.

¹⁰ While many postcolonial critics like Spivak have relied on Marxist theory, others have rejected it; see discussions in Williams and Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse*, 6; and Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, viii-ix. On Foucault, see Young, *Postcolonialism*, 386, who says Said's usage of "discourse" is only "loosely connected" to Foucault's understanding, which did not reach its completion until his work, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, in 1972. On Derrida, see Ashcroft et al., *The Empire*, 193; cf. Young, *Postcolonialism*, 395, who discusses the postcolonial contexts of Tunisia and Algeria and their influence on Foucault and Derrida, respectively. On postmodernism's relation to Postcolonialism, see Williams and Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse*, 5, who say the two are "by no means disjunct"; however, Castle, *Postcolonial Discourses*, xiv, discusses the many postcolonial critics who challenge the use of postmodern theory.

¹¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 24, and Williams and Chrisman, "Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: An Introduction," 8.

¹² Young, *Postcolonialism*, 389-92, emphasis added; note that Young is criticizing such a view in that it "threatens any notion of history as an objective discipline."

Returning specifically to Tertullian, both the questions raised by Postcolonial critics and the theoretical framework they establish serve as useful tools in interpreting this North African theologian. Could Tertullian have understood himself to be an African under the Roman yoke? While some might reject such questions for being impossible to answer, a re-reading of Tertullian's works reveals a great source for the expression of his views, including the example where he did, in fact, comment on Virgil's passage.

After challenging certain Carthaginian toga wearers who criticized his refusal to wear the Roman garb, Tertullian mocks the "Punic," that is African, audience for forgetting that his *pallium* is Carthaginian, just as previous generations had forgotten that the battering ram (which Rome used to invade the city) originated in Carthage as well, and he cites Virgil's account.¹³ He then concedes, "Draw we now our material from some other source [than Virgil], lest Punicood either blush or else grieve in the midst of Romans."¹⁴ Does Tertullian write with an African self-identity that exists alongside his other identities, such as that of a Christian?

The following project will investigate Tertullian's context (chapter three), locating him within the unique setting of an indigenous Christian community in North Africa (chapter four) and interpreting his writings through the lens of that context (chapters five through nine). The overall concern of this thesis, in terms of Historical Theology, is the need to reread

¹³ The relationship between Punic and African societies will be discussed in chapter three; for now, however, compare the rhetorical usage of "Trojan" by Virgil, typifying Romans, and "Punic" by Tertullian.

¹⁴ *De pal.* 2.1: *Sit nunc aliunde res, ne Poenicum inter Romanos aut erubescat aut doleat.* Although this thesis engages the Latin texts of Tertullian, it does not claim to be a philological project; instead, previous English translations are provided (see bibliography) unless otherwise noted.

Tertullian in the light of issues raised on the historical side by postcolonial critics and on the theological side by African Theologians (chapter one), who themselves write from similar circumstances of colonial experiences. The overriding method employed comes from the discipline of Social Anthropology (chapter two). While this project concerns itself with Tertullian's African identity, in one sense Tertullian is a case study for the usefulness of identity theory in Historical Theology. It is suggested here that such an approach can contribute to the field by introducing a set of questions not commonly asked by historical theologians. The resulting interpretation of Tertullian, therefore, will catalogue him as an African theologian.

1.2 Tertullian and Africa in Historical Theology

One problem with classifying Tertullian as an "African Theologian" is the concept and perception of African Theology.¹⁵ In other words, when one mentions African Theology many, especially many from the West, envision a village south of the equator complete with rituals and customs unknown to the "Christian tradition." In recent decades, however, a theological challenge to much of the so-called "Christian tradition" – or more aptly, European Christian tradition – has come from contextual theologians such as those from Africa.¹⁶ In order for the reader to understand what is meant by African Theology and its import for Tertullian, a presentation will be given of this

¹⁵ Or, even more broadly, African or Pan-African identity; see recent comments by V.Y. Mudimbe, "Race, Identity, Politics and History," *Journal of African History* 41 (2 2000), 291-4; Kwame Anthony Appiah, "African Identities," in *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*, ed. Castle, 222-31; and Young, *Postcolonialism*, 217-8.

¹⁶ "Contextual" is used here reservedly because many so-called "contextual" theologians (liberation theologians, feminist theologians, etc.) adamantly argue that no theology is without context. A premise argued in the following section.

tradition, which even for many contemporary African theologians is normally described in post-colonial/sub-Saharan terms.¹⁷

1.2.1 What constitutes African Theology?

Christian scholars throughout history have recognized various theological “schools.” Patristic theology, for example, has been divided between Greek and Latin theologies; countless other similar reifications constitute the progression of Christian thought throughout the centuries.¹⁸ The advent of indigenous African Theology has added another dimension to the study of Christian tradition and has created yet another voice in the practice of Christian theology. In determining any one “theology” the problem arises as to what distinguishes that specific theology from all other theologies.

Whether it is the Liberation theologies of Gustavo Gutiérrez and James H. Cone, or the feminist theologies of Mary Daley and Rosemary Radford Ruether, two general elements constitute any one theology.¹⁹ The first is the historical context from which a specific theology arose; the Methodist Theology of John Wesley’s followers drew from much different social, political and ecclesiastical sources than the Reform theology of John Calvin’s

¹⁷ In defining African Theology, Gwinyai H. Muzorewa, *The Origins and Development of African Theology*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 1, explains, “This task needs to be done because the church in Africa south of the Sahara is concerned about its self-identity in the postcolonial era.” Other examples include Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, trans. John O’Donohue, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 58; and Robert J. Schreiter, “Foreword” in Bujo, *African Theology*, 1. Two examples of African theologians who give some mention to pre-colonial African Theology are Kwesi A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 1; and Rosini Gibellini, “Introduction,” ed. Gibellini, *Paths of African Theology*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 1.

¹⁸ e.g. Altaner, *Patrology*, vi-vii, who divides the “Western Authors” from “The Authors of the Greek East.”

¹⁹ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (London: SCM, [1971]1988); Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970); Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); Ruether, “The Liberation of Christology from Patriarchy,” *Religion and Intellectual Life* 3 (1985): 116-128.

disciples.²⁰ The second element one considers is the response of the theologian to his or her context as with the examples of Augustine's response to the fall of Rome or Dietrich Bonhoeffer's responses to the Nazi regime.²¹

Within the specific reaction to a specific situation, a new theological expression arises.

Because theologies can be constructed from a specific point in time as well as over entire historical periods, prescribing the context of "a theology" is difficult. An inherent tension exists, as between one slide of film and a complete motion picture or as between a measure of music and an entire arrangement. While authors appropriately write on *the* theology of the Reformers, there also exists *a* theology of Martin Luther in 1517.²² The existence of such a tension, however, in no way detracts from there being "a theology" spanning decades, if not centuries, that results from broad, sweeping movements and historical developments. The field of African Theology exists in such a tension today.²³

²⁰ For Wesleyans, see George Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, vol. 1-2, (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman's and Roberts, 1857-8); J.S. Simon *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, (London: Epworth Press, 1937); and John Kent, *Wesley and Wesleyans: Religion in Eighteenth-century Britain*, (CUP, 2002). On Calvinists, see R.C. Gamble, ed., *Calvinism in France, Netherlands, Scotland, and England* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1992); Gamble, ed., *Calvinism in Switzerland, Germany, and Hungary* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1992); Andrew Pettegree, et al., eds., *Calvinism in Europe: 1540-1620*, (CUP, 1994).

²¹ Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*; Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. Reginald Fuller, rev. Frank Clarke et al., (London: SCM, 1967).

²² cf. Timothy George, *The Theology of the Reformers*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1988); and Kenneth Hagan, *A Theology of Testament in the Young Luther: The Lectures on Hebrews*, (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

²³ Dickson, *Theology*, 2-3, elaborates, "Indeed, it has been suggested that Africa is more likely to produce theologies rather than a theology, given the great variety of religious, social and political realities in this vast continent... While uniformity of expression may not be expected – or indeed be desirable, given the multifaceted nature of the African scene – we would think that there is much in the African situation which could bring about a considerable unity in theological expression."

For the sake of this discussion, African Theology needs describing in terms of its history, aim, methods and parameters. Common assumptions arise when the label “African Theology” is given to a specific work. Typically, the phrase evokes the post-colonial, sub-Saharan world sometimes known as “Black Africa.” African theologians usually present their own history in such post-colonial terms, and therefore, the “beginnings” of African theology as some recount it will be outlined below. Following a chronological presentation of African theological genesis, a survey of the overall direction and discussion of African theology, as stated by African theologians, will be presented.

1.2.2 The “Beginnings” of African Theology

Although Christianity has existed in Africa since the earliest centuries of the Common Era and has survived in the forms of the Coptic (including the Ethiopian) churches, the narrative of the beginnings of African theology is set against the background of the European colonialism of recent centuries. Many indigenous Africans oppressed by European colonizers saw the “White man’s” religion as an integral part of the colonial power structure.²⁴ Many western missionaries sought to convert the “heathen,” a process which included the conversion of language, dress and customs. As churches spread throughout the continent and as more and more Africans became a part of the imported Christian religion, the hierarchical structure of the clergy continued to reflect

²⁴ For the relationship between African theology and Pan-Africanism, see Muzorewa, *The Origins*, 3 and 46ff.

the colonial rather than the indigenous demographic. In reaction to the colonialism of both political and ecclesial settings, indigenous African Christians began to call for a critical review of their religion.

One of the first Africans who can be called an African theologian, according to Benezet Bujo, is Vincent Mulago.²⁵ Born in what was then the Belgian Congo, Mulago became a Roman Catholic priest trained at the Urban University in Rome. He published two works in 1955 and 1956 that used African terminology and concepts to interpret liturgical practices.²⁶ Other similar works followed by Africans who called for various reinterpretations and even adaptations of traditional theological concepts.²⁷ One of the most influential of these was a paper published by several African priests in the Roman Catholic Church entitled, *Les prêtres noirs s'interrogent*.²⁸ Robert J. Schreiter explains, "In that volume a group of young African theologians raised questions about how theology was being done in Africa and whether or not things could be different – both theologizing in a more genuinely African way and dealing with topics important to Africans."²⁹ Specific questions about the traditional, that is European, understanding of theological concepts asked by these scholars preceded the fundamental question of theological approach that soon followed.

In 1960 the *Revue du Clergé Africain* published a report of the proceedings of a seminar held at the University of Lovanium in Kinshasa that

²⁵ *African Theology*, 58.

²⁶ "L'union vitale Bantu, ou le principe de cohésion de la communauté chez les Bashi, les Banyarwanda et les Barundi," *Annali lateranensi* 20, (1956): 61-263; cited in Bujo, *African Theology*, 58.

²⁷ See Bujo, *African Theology*, 58.

²⁸ Cited in A. Ngindu Mushete, "An Overview of African Theology," in *Paths of African Theology*, ed. Gibellini, 16.

²⁹ Foreword to Benezet Bujo, *African Theology*, 1.

sparked the debate over African theology.³⁰ The discussion centered on the paper given by a student, Tharcisse Tshibangu, entitled, “Vers une théologie de couleur Africaine?” Tshibangu called for an African church, led by African clergy, performing an African liturgy and producing an African theology.

The last aspect of Tshibangu’s argument brought criticism from the dean of the Faculty of Catholic Theology in the University of Lovanium, Alfred Vanneste, in a paper entitled “D’Abord une vraie théologie.” Vanneste argued that the task of theology is to aim for universal truth while the task of translating this truth into a palatable communication with indigenous individuals is left to the pastor and the missionary. Bujo comments on the debate: “Without entering into all the details of the discussion, it seems fair to say that Vanneste’s general position was authoritarian and unduly simplified the history of theology. Theological pluralism is after all perceptible even in the New Testament itself. ...Christianity has not grown up in a kind of culture-free vacuum but has always been in living dialogue with the surrounding culture.”³¹ The African clergy, and many faculty members of Lovanium reacted to Vanneste’s arguments with the same sentiments as Bujo,

³⁰ *Revue du Clergé Africain* 15 (1960), 332-52; cited in Bujo, 59.

³¹ *African Theology*, 62. On “culture,” Josephine Crawley Quinn, “Roman Africa?”, “Romanization”? Digressus Supplement 1 (2003), 9, concludes that “categorization by culture is not the best basis for interpreting [ancient African] society.” For discussion of the problems entailed with the term, see M.A. Aguilar, “Changing Models and the ‘Death’ of Culture: A Diachronic and Positive Critique of Socio-scientific Assumptions,” in *Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach*, ed. Louise J. Lawrence and Aguilar, (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2004), 299-313. For an example, see R.D. Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian*, (OUP, 1971), 128, “...Tertullian was deeply concerned to integrate Christianity and classical culture.” His basis is Tertullian’s extensive use of classical rhetoric. However, as will be shown in chapter two, what is often deemed “cultural content” can flow freely across group boundaries without compromising that boundary; therefore, deeming any exchange or resistance of “culture” as “acculturation” or “counter-cultural,” respectively, could obscure, if not misrepresent, ancient sources.

making Tshibangu the more widely accepted in theological opinion.³²

Typified by this debate, a movement arose among indigenous African Christians to birth their own "Theology." In Africa, theology would not only be unique in its expression, but it would carry out a unique task.

1.2.3 The Aim of African Theology

Given the ethnocentric attitudes and actions of the colonial Christianity from which African theology arose, many African theologians readily set forth their agenda in terms of reaction and response. Speaking to the purpose of African Theology, Gwinyai Muzorewa states, "This task needs to be done because the church in African south of the Sahara is concerned about its self-identity in the postcolonial era."³³ Similarly, Benezet Bujo defines the purpose of African theology in terms of the context from which it arose: "Contemporary African theology arose out of the feeling of black people that they had not been taken sufficiently seriously by white people, including missionaries. African theology is a reaction."³⁴ Many African clergy sensed that the "Theology" handed to them by the white Europeans was somehow insufficient to their African setting.

Christians in Africa have sought a theological system and language that communicates directly to their own social, political, environmental and ancestral milieus. African Christian thinkers proceed with their own approach to theology in order to address those needs. Charles Nyamiti explains, "Rightly understood, African theology comprises various definitions. In its

³² He was later appointed archbishop; see Mushete, "An Overview," 19.

³³ Muzorewa, *The Origins*, 1.

³⁴ Bujo, *African Theology*, 48.

broadest (etymological sense), African theology can be defined as discourse on God (theo-logos) – and on all that is related to Him – in accordance with the mentality and needs of the people in the black continent.”³⁵ The needs of the African Christians reacting to colonialism has provided a central locus in the advent of African Theology. However, as African theology has developed, Christian thinkers have also broadened their understanding of the task of African theology.

The task of creating a genuine African expression of Christianity, as opposed to a mere translation, has become a primary onus of African theology.³⁶ In his introduction to *Paths of African Theology*, Rosino Gibellini explains how African theologians attempt to interact with “a Christianity that will be no longer imported or simply adapted, but authentically African, a Christianity lived and experienced against a horizon of Catholicity and ecumenicity amid the new concrete historical – cultural and social – dimensions of Africa.”³⁷ Aylward Shorter calls this “authentically” African Christian theology a theology of “Inculturation.”³⁸ In his book, Shorter criticizes the established Church for adopting the dichotomized worldview of the ancient Romans – civilized/barbarian – and for the Church’s unwillingness to recognize that every expression of Christianity is a temporal expression.³⁹ Shorter also explains how African Theology, like South American Liberation Theology, understands the purpose of theology to be a concrete historical

³⁵ “Contemporary African Christologies,” in *Paths of African Theology*, 63.

³⁶ For another task of African Theology, the understanding of God in traditional African religions, see Muzorewa, *The Origins*, 78.

³⁷ *Paths of African*, 7.

³⁸ *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988).

³⁹ *Ibid*, 12 and 17.

reflection, not an abstract system of propositions.⁴⁰ Given the purpose of African Theology, African theologians proceed with a contextualized methodology.

1.2.4 The Methods of African Theology – A Postcolonial Critique?

One method that African theologians use to carry out their task is to underscore the Eurocentric approach to theology performed by many in the Christian tradition. Mushete attacks such an approach, claiming, “Universal theology is as mythical as universal philosophy.”⁴¹ Shorter explains the methodology as found among African theologians: “As the centre of ecclesiastical gravity shifts inexorably from the North Atlantic to the Third World, this new, empirical understanding of culture is forcing a revision of Christian theology, Bible reading and Church history.”⁴² Although African scholars use many theories and approaches, the rereading or reinterpreting of traditional Christian themes comprises a central endeavor of many African theologians.

Given the “decentering” terminology of African theology, the question arises as to the relationship between the disciplines of African Theology and Postcolonialism. A useful analogy can be drawn from Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin who explain the complex relationship of postcolonial theories in the academic climate in the United States, a country the authors define as postcolonial:

Whilst the recent American critical models have been profoundly influenced by Europe, with Derridaian and Foucaultian theories being whole-heartedly adopted by

⁴⁰ Shorter, *Toward*, xi; cf. Gutiérrez, *A Theology*, 11.

⁴¹ “An Overview,” 19.

⁴² *Toward*, xi.

American critics, the Americans are now beginning to recognize that their own post-coloniality had already provided the ground for similarly subversive views of language and culture. Rather than the postmodernists and poststructuralists being seen as decentring forces, undermining the categories of a universal authority, they are beginning to be viewed as confirmations of the essentially subversive nature of much American literature throughout its development: subversive, that is, of the authority of the European centre and its forms and expectations.⁴³

The example of literary criticism in the United States provides a possible analogy for explaining the relationship of African Theology to Postcolonialism, both stemming from the common groundswell of dissatisfaction of Eurocentric claims to “universal” knowledge and truth.⁴⁴

1.2.5 The Parameters of African Theology

Although one approach of African Theology reinterprets Christian tradition, including Christian history, one area of tension for African Theology is the development of the post-colonial expression of Christianity within the entire spatio-temporal reality of Africa. More specifically, a question that needs to be addressed is, “What is post-colonial/sub-Saharan African theology’s relationship with pre-colonial/pan-African Christianity?” Or, in other words, one could ask: “What has Alexandria to do with Johannesburg?”⁴⁵ Because African theology largely developed out of the colonial experience, the initial focus for many African theologians needed to be limited. Nevertheless, the question of the limits and boundaries of African theology has always been present within African theological discussions.

⁴³ *The Empire*, 163.

⁴⁴ See Young, *Postcolonialism*, 64, for the “refusal of totalizing forms”; also, Castle, *Postcolonial Discourses*, xv.

⁴⁵ cf. Tertullian, *De praes. haer.* 7, “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” [*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?*]

A few examples of African theologians who have addressed the parameters of African Theology will help clarify the spatio-temporal tension that exists. Kwesi A. Dickson reports on a discussion spawned by a paper he presented at the 1973 meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. A European priest objected to the claim that Africa needed a unique theology, arguing that such a course of action threatened the unity of the ecumenical Church. Dickson explains,

If he had not been so agitated, he might have noticed and commented upon the fact that the Africans in the study group were not by any means unanimous regarding the shape which Christianity in Africa should take. An Ethiopian participant, for example, was somewhat irritated by the talk of Christianity taking account of African culture: had not the Coptic church already done that? Indeed, in my judgement the explosive situation in the discussion arose, not so much from what the African participants thought of European Christianity as from what the African Christians, coming as they did from a variety of Christian traditions, considered to be the way forward for the Church in Africa.⁴⁶

Although Dickson argues that “there is much in the African situation which could bring about a considerable unity in theological expression,” he recognized the suggestion that Africa “is more likely to produce theologies rather than a theology, given the great variety of religio-cultural, social and political realities in this vast continent.”⁴⁷ The Coptic/Ethiopian tradition has kept Christianity vital in certain parts of the African continent, and Dickson acknowledges that there is room in African Theology for multiple voices.

An example that provides insight into the temporal tension within African Theology is a statement made by Gwinyai Muzorewa. In discussing both the importation and the importance of the Bible in Africa, he reflects on

⁴⁶ Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 2-3.

the chronology of African Christianity, “Most African theologians see the presence of Christianity in Africa in three stages: the infant Jesus as a refugee in Egypt; Christianity in Africa under the Portuguese prowess of the fifteenth to the seventeenth century; and, finally the dramatic nineteenth-century awakening.”⁴⁸ Because of the specific aim of Muzorewa’s argument, his oversight of the Ethiopian, the Coptic, and even patristic churches need not be criticized here. The statement highlights, however, the lack of attention given to these traditions by contemporary African theologians.

Although African theologians, working within the specific aims of their field, focus on the post-colonial expression of Christianity out of necessity, they do not intentionally forsake previous traditions of Christian communities on the African continent. Rosino Gibellini begins the work he edited on African Theology by highlighting the history of Christianity in Africa, including the era of the Church fathers.⁴⁹ Some African theologians have even called outright for an inclusion of early Christian history in African theology. One example is Bujo when he says, “Our guide in the construction of theology must be, apart from African tradition, the Bible and the Fathers of the Church. They must be the light which will show up the limitations and the inadequacies of any theological system, however brilliant.”⁵⁰ Bujo represents some African theologians who consciously recognize the wider reality of African Theology.⁵¹ In accordance with Bujo’s plea, it is suggested here that

⁴⁸ *The Origins*, 22

⁴⁹ *Paths of African Theology*, 1ff.

⁵⁰ *African Theology*, 68.

⁵¹ cf. discussions among postcolonial critics, such as Gregory, *Postcolonial Discourses*, xv, regarding the tension between the regional characteristics of postcolonial writers and the “common elements transcending regional difference.”

Tertullian, the first “Latin” Christian writer, can also belong within such a broad understanding of African Theology.⁵²

1.2.6 Is Tertullian an African Theologian?

Tertullian’s contribution as a theologian needs no defense.⁵³ He is, in fact, often called “The Father of Latin Theology,” but one wonders if this widely used title, which traces back even to Jerome, is yet another example of a Eurocentric approach to theology.⁵⁴ Analogously, few – if any – would credit the Apostle Paul with the title, “The Father of Greek Theology,” simply because he was the first Christian thinker to write in Greek. Paul has not received such a distinction because of his own testimony that he was first, *Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων*.⁵⁵ Tertullian, however, offers no such explicit statements of self-identity, a fact that allows the Roman, the European or the

⁵² cf. Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa*, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), who juxtaposes Tertullian and other early Christian writers with post-colonial counterparts, arguing that both elevate the Christian religious identity above even regional ones, and thereby largely ignoring Tertullian’s African-ness in lieu of his “Graeco-Roman culture” (esp. 7 and 107); however, A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya, *On Communitarian Divinity: An African Interpretation of the Trinity*, (New York: Paragon House, 1994), interprets Tertullian’s theology as explicitly “African”; for another approach, René Braun, “Aux origines de la Chrétienté d’Afrique: un Homme de combat, Tertullien,” *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé*, (1965): 189-208, also understood Tertullian as “la Chrétienté africaine” (189), that is, “origine punique... aux Africains berberes” (194), which, for Braun, is evidenced by many negative traits such as “le dédain de l’intellectualité” (203) and even “fougue” and “violence” (208).

⁵³ Jean Daniélou, *The Origins of Early Christianity [Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée]*, vol. 3: “The Origins of Latin Christianity” [“Les origines du christianisme Latin”], trans. David Smith and John Austin Baker, ed. and postscript John Austin Baker, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), 340. However, Dunn, *Tertullian*, 35, clarifies that Tertullian is not a “systematic theologian.”

⁵⁴ For examples of Tertullian’s title see S.L. Greenslade, *Early Latin Theology: Selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome*, (London: SCM Press, 1956), 23; Tony Lane, *Exploring Christian Thought*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1984), 17; and similarly Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*, (CUP, 1997). Jerome, *De uiris illustribus* 53.1: *demum primus post Victorem et Appollonium Latinorum ponitur*.

⁵⁵ Philippians 3:5.

Westerner to read Tertullian as a Roman, a European or a Westerner with relative ease.⁵⁶

Tertullian's influence over western Theology does not negate his original context which had non-western aspects.⁵⁷ Tertullian was from the Province of Africa and was therefore – at least by one taxonomy – an African.⁵⁸ While the temptation to anachronistically compare Tertullian's "African Theology" with more recent sub-Saharan, post-colonial "African theology" could be viewed as precarious, such an approach could prove no more amiss than the traditional approach – conscious or otherwise – of reading Tertullian as a European. Instead, the juxtaposition of a competing branch of theology from the same continent as Tertullian provides a different framework that might better appreciate certain aspects of Tertullian's self-identity and theology.⁵⁹

Should not scholars read Tertullian as neither a European nor an African but simply in light of his own writings? Many from a postcolonial context would declare that this objection – rather, this modernist claim to objectivity – could only be made by a Westerner, because those the "centre" has labeled the "peripheral" know that to read Tertullian "objectively" is

⁵⁶ e.g. Hans von Campenhausen, *Fathers of the Latin Church*, trans. Manfred Hoffmann, (London: A&C Black, 1964), 20, "...Tertullian was a Westerner...."

⁵⁷ For example, the argument of some scholars that Tertullian, who wrote some tracts in Greek, is part of the Second Sophistic movement; see T.D. Barnes, *Tertullian: An Historical and Literary Study*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 211; on the Second Sophistic movement more generally, see Simon Goldhill, ed., *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, (CUP, 2001); and chapter three. See also, Bediako, *Theology*, 117, who criticizes Daniélou's identification of Tertullian as exclusively "Latin" and not "African."

⁵⁸ von Campenhausen, *Fathers*, 5, "Tertullian was an African, i.e. a citizen of Africa, the province colonized by the Romans, which is modern Tunisia."

⁵⁹ Bediako, *Theology*, xii, claimed this would allow one "...to read the Christian Fathers in their contexts with new eyes!" Similarly, Denise Kimber Buell, "Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition," *HTR* 94 (4 2001), 474, argues, "Mainstream theology and historical scholarship on Christianity have much to gain from the challenges and visions offered by voices marginalized by ideology and/or social location."

impossible, and any attempt to do so will likely neglect an appreciation for his African-ness. With this objection in mind, the more pertinent question is “What does it mean to be an ‘African’ during Roman colonization of Africa?” which will be fully explored in chapter three. Before proceeding to this question, however, the past and present understanding of Tertullian in patristic scholarship will be surveyed to compare how modern and contemporary commentators locate and describe his identity.

1.3 Tertullian’s Biography: Past Scholarly Understandings

In order to review the scholarly assertions on Tertullian’s biographical information, it will prove helpful to return to Bardenhewer’s summary – cited in full in this introduction. His synopsis will provide the outline for a discussion of the research into Tertullian’s life: his name, his birth, his father, his education, his occupation (a jurist, which will call into question his relationship to sophistry and philosophy), his conversion, his ordination, and his schism. Since most scholars now agree with Bray’s conclusion that “we know virtually nothing about Tertullian’s life,” the evolution from the general consensus of scholars in Bardenhewer’s time to the accepted axiom of Bray will be presented here, not in a purely chronological form, but thematically.⁶⁰ The scholar who most persuasively contested the life of Tertullian as outlined above, Timothy David Barnes, will be followed closely in the following

⁶⁰ Bray, *Holiness*, 8-9.

paragraphs.⁶¹ The following section will outline and illustrate the debate over Tertullian's life, showing the issues affecting the deconstruction of Tertullian's biography by recent scholars.

1.3.1 Tertullian's Name

In the last line of the treatise *De baptismo*, remains one of the few of Tertullian's direct references to himself: "This only I pray, that as you ask you also have in mind Tertullian, a sinner."⁶² Beyond this humble self-designation as "sinner," Tertullian felt no need to give the complete form of his name as found in Bardenhewer. In the only other time Tertullian offers his name in his writings, he adds his *gentilicium*, by concluding, "May peace and grace from our Lord Jesus Christ redound: as likewise to Septimius Tertullianus, whose this tractate is."⁶³ The Septimii of North Africa were predominantly of humble status in Tertullian's time, with the notable exception of those from Lepcis Magna, including the first Roman emperor of African descent, Septimius Severus [146-211].⁶⁴ Tertullian's full name including his *cognomina* is not found in the records until it appears on several of the medieval manuscripts. Barnes accepts these as reliable on the basis that there is no cause to suspect them, and from them he deduces that Tertullian's family might have "occupied a low position on the social scale," but he later

⁶¹ For bibliography of Tertullian studies up to 1954, see *CCSL* I, xii-xiv; and the website by Roger Pearse, www.tertullian.org; although it is sometimes tenuous to cite webpages in scholarly works, a number of recent scholarly reviews have brought Pearse's work into the mainstream of Tertullian scholarship: *Revue d'Études Augustiniennes* 44 (1998): 339; Ian L.S. Balfour, "Tertullian on and off the Internet," *JECS* 8 (4 2000), 581; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 1; and Pierre Petitmengin, *Revue d'Études Augustiniennes* 50 (2004): 393.

⁶² *tantum oro, ut cum petitis etiam Tertulliani peccatoris memineritis.* cf. *De res. carn.* 59.3, on his adultery.

⁶³ *De uirg. uel.*, 17: *pax et gratia a domino nostro Iesu redundet cum Septimio Tertulliano, cuius hoc opusculum est.*

⁶⁴ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 242.

admits that even this is conjectural and no real conclusion can be reached by Tertullian's name.⁶⁵ The only other information available in the witnesses regarding Tertullian's name comes from the simple appellation, "Tertullian the African," given by Jerome in his translation of the *Chronicon*.⁶⁶ This title, however, is rarely discussed among Tertullian scholars. Since no biographical information can be deduced from Tertullian's name, scholars have focused on other aspects of his life, such as his place of birth.

1.3.2 *Tertullian's Birth*

Many Septimii, the family or clan to which Tertullian belonged, lived in and around Lepcis Magna, one of the larger Punic cities of Tripolitania. Neither Tertullian nor any other ancient witness, however, claimed Lepcis as his place of birth. Jerome, one of the earliest witnesses on Tertullian, claimed that he was from the city of Carthage in *Africa Proconsularis*.⁶⁷ Scholars have no evidence that he was of noble birth or whether or not he had citizenship. Tertullian's writings seem to indicate that he wrote from the provincial capital; however, when it comes to determining his place of birth, Jerome is the only extant witness, and scholars have not always found him reliable, as in the case of Tertullian's father.

1.3.3 *Tertullian's Father*

In the past, scholars such as Bardenhewer accepted Jerome's claim that Tertullian's father was a *centurio proconsularis*. Barnes, however, challenged

⁶⁵ Ibid, 242-3.

⁶⁶ 16.23-4: *Tertullianus Afer*.

⁶⁷ *De uiris illustribus* 53.1: *provinciae Africae, ciuitatis Carthaginensis*.

this assertion, citing that this office did not even exist in the ancient Roman Empire of Tertullian's era.⁶⁸ The explanation for Jerome's claim comes from a passage in Tertullian's *Apologeticum*:

Babes were sacrificed publicly to Saturn in Africa till the proconsulate of Tiberius, who exposed the same priests on the same trees that overshadow the crimes of their temple, on dedicated crosses, as is attested by the soldiery of my father, which performed that very service for that proconsul.⁶⁹

Barnes conjectures that Jerome's text had a variant reading that replaced *patriae nostrae* with *patri nostri*.⁷⁰ Barnes exhausts the evidence for child sacrifice in Africa arguing for the improbability of the Punic practice to have continued so late as to be witnessed by Tertullian's father.⁷¹ Therefore, without Tertullian claiming his father a proconsular centurion (which the variant reading implies), no validation remains for his father to have even been a soldier, much less to have attained the rank of officer.⁷² Without any knowledge of Tertullian's social rank or background being evident, scholars must surmise his status and upbringing from his education.

1.3.4 Tertullian's Education

The fluid style and rhetorical skill of Tertullian is noticeable throughout his writings, and, as one of the first Christians to have written in Latin, he also

⁶⁸ Tertullian, 13-21.

⁶⁹ *Apol.* 9.2: *Infantes penes Africam Saturno immolabantur palam usque ad proconsulatum Tiberii, qui eosdem sacerdotes in eisdem arboribus templi sui obumbratricibus scelerum uotiuus crucibus exposuit, teste militia patriae nostrae, quae id ipsum munus illi proconsuli functa est.*

⁷⁰ As represented in the translation given, wherein Souter notes the *patriae nostrae* in the text, but chooses the *patri nostri* reading. These exact variants are preserved in the Fuldensis manuscript of the *Apologeticum*. Similarly, the *CCSL*, which reads *patri nostri* relying on Jerome. For this textual tradition, see C. Becker, *Tertullian: Apologeticum*, (Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1961), 229ff.; for a general discussion of the manuscripts of Tertullian's works, see the *praefatio* to *CCSL*, vol. 1, ed. Dom Eligius Dekkers, (1954).

⁷¹ However, James B. Rives, "Tertullian on Child Sacrifice," *Museum Helveticum* 51 (1994): 54-63, disputes Barnes' claim.

⁷² See also Bray, *Holiness*, 33, on Jerome's unreliability in this instance.

published several works in Greek, indicating a high level of education.⁷³ Not only was Tertullian trained in the Greek language, but he was also schooled in the Greek classics. Jean Daniélou asserts, “Certainly, it was Greek Christian thought, both orthodox and heterodox, which was Tertullian’s primary antecedent.”⁷⁴ Tertullian, without necessarily declaring his own schooling, lists both the Roman and the Greek classical authors taught in the schools of Carthage and Africa.⁷⁵ Because of his breadth of knowledge of Roman and Greek history and thought, and because of his abilities as a communicator, it should be assumed that Tertullian received a high standard of education.⁷⁶

1.3.5 Tertullian’s Occupation

One of the most controversial aspects of Tertullian’s life is the claim that he was a jurist, a claim which dates back to Eusebius, who stated that Tertullian was “a man well versed in the laws of the Romans, and in other respects of high repute, and one of those especially distinguished in Rome.”⁷⁷ Adolf von Harnack in his attempts to trace the development of dogma from the New Testament found that Tertullian did not insert Platonist ideas into his Christianity like the many Eastern Fathers. Instead, Harnack found in Tertullian a reliance on Roman legalism, which to Harnack was supported by Eusebius’ witness.⁷⁸ Agreeing with Harnack, A. Beck argued that the Christian Tertullian of Carthage was Tertullianus the Roman jurist who wrote

⁷³ See *De bapt.* 15; *De cor.* 6; *De uirg. uel.* 1.

⁷⁴ *The Origins*, xiii, and 272.

⁷⁵ *Ad nat.* 2.7, 13; *Apol.* 12, 14, 50; *De praes. haer.* 39; *De an.* 20, 42; *De res. carn.* 1.

⁷⁶ Dunn, *Tertullian*, 5, an “elite” education.

⁷⁷ HE 2.2.4: ταῦτα Τερτυλλιανός τοὺς Ῥωμαίων νόμους ἠκριβωκώς, ἀνήρ τε τε ἄλλα ἐνδοξος καὶ τῶν μάλιστα ἐπὶ Ῥώμης λαμπρῶν.

⁷⁸ *Die Chronologie der Altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius II*, (Leipzig, 1904), 256ff; as reviewed by Bray, *Holiness*.

at least one legal reference book, *De castrensis peculio*, and some eight books of *questiones*.⁷⁹

The conclusions of Harnack and Beck became the consensus among scholars until Barnes challenged the logic of the argument.⁸⁰ According to Barnes, the mere coincidences of names and time periods do not merit the conclusion that the two Tertulliani were the same person.⁸¹ Moreover, Eusebius uses Tertullian on a point of law mentioned in the *Apologeticum* and so he exaggerates Tertullian's expertise to make him more credible.⁸² Even without his arguments for the improbability of Tertullian the Christian having been a *iurisconsultus*, Barnes laid bare the lack of evidence for such a claim which is why scholars are in general agreement with Barnes on this point.⁸³

Barnes' conclusion had a wide impact on the scholarly understanding of Tertullian, both in his life and in his writings. Because Tertullian was assumed to have been the Roman jurist, debate ranged over when he lived in Rome. J. Quasten summarized the pre-Barnes majority view that Tertullian did live in Rome, but he provides no conjecture as to the dates.⁸⁴ Without the claim that Tertullian of Carthage was the Roman jurist, recent scholarship has largely ignored the question.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ *Römisches Recht bei Tertullian und Cyprian*, (Aalen, 1930); referencing the *Digesta* and the *Codex Iustinianus*, cited in Barnes, *Tertullian*, 22.

⁸⁰ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 22ff.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 24.

⁸² *Ibid*, 26.

⁸³ For a more recent review of the arguments, see David I. Rankin, "Was Tertullian a Jurist?" *SP* 31 (1997): 335-342; and Wright, "Tertullian," 1032-3, explaining the benefits of "the move away from reading Tertullian in the categories of Roman law."

⁸⁴ *Patrology* II, (1963), 246.

⁸⁵ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 244-5, preempted the use of *uidemus Romae* in *De cul. fem.* 1.7.2 as evidence, arguing that this could be a device like is often found in Virgil; ref. *Georgica* 1.472. Although he admits the statement could be "rhetorical flourish," Dunn, *Tertullian*, 4, does believe Tertullian went to Rome "at some stage."

Gerald Bray has catalogued the trend of past scholars who followed the conclusions of Harnack and discovered legal terminology in Tertullian.⁸⁶ The Sonderprache School, writing in Holland in the early decades of the twentieth Century, led by Mgr. Schrijnen, forwarded the theory of a special Christian language that adapted secular terms, such as *persona* and *substantia*. Many word studies of Tertullian found legal terminology in his writings and declared his theology formed by the legal context. After Barnes, however, scholars began to reevaluate the presuppositions of these word studies, concluding with different results.⁸⁷

With the option of jurist excluded from Tertullian's education and career, a majority of scholars have returned to the argument of Siegmund Schlossmann.⁸⁸ Because he rejected Harnack's claim that Tertullian was a lawyer, Schlossmann was not widely accepted in his time. Instead of concluding Tertullian was a jurist, Schlossmann interpreted Tertullian as a rhetorician. Two scholars who more recently championed this understanding of Tertullian are R. Sider and Jean-Claude Fredouille, and many now see Tertullian, not as a legal expert, but as a rhetorical genius capable of

⁸⁶ Bray, *Holiness*, 158ff.

⁸⁷ René Braun, *Deus Christianorum: Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien*, rev. ed. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, [1962]1977), rejects Harnack's proposal that Tertullian's usage is juridic. However, Bray, "Legal Concept of Ratio in Tertullian," *VC* 31 (1977), 94-116, says that even though Tertullian was not a jurist, he used the term *ratio* in a legal sense and not in a Stoic sense for the divine Logos. J. Albert Harrill, "The Influence of Roman Contract Law on Early Baptismal Formulae (Tertullian, *Ad Martyras* 3)" *SP* 35 (2001), 275-82, concurs with Bray. Osborn, *Tertullian*, 138, says Tertullian used *persona* in both a legal and a philosophical sense without ever defining the term. Recently, however, Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1997), 23, believes him to be a jurist.

⁸⁸ "Tertullian im Lichte der Jurisprudenz," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 27, (1906): 251-75, 407-30; cited in Bray, *Holiness*, 17.

persuading with a whole range of imagery, including legal imagery.⁸⁹

The title of sophist for Tertullian provides scholars with another frame of reference in which to place him, and most believe Tertullian relied on the Graeco-Roman classics of oratory skill such as taught by Cicero and Quintilian.⁹⁰ More specifically, scholars can now look to the Second Sophistic movement for the context from which Tertullian writes. Geoffrey Dunn explains how scholars like Sider and Barnes “demonstrated that classical rhetoric provided an important tool for Tertullian in crafting his treatises.”⁹¹ With such a training providing the framework for Tertullian’s vocabulary and arguments, scholars could also ask whether Tertullian could be understood as a philosopher.

Because of Tertullian’s enigmatic statements, such as “credible because inept,” scholarly debate has often centered on Tertullian’s stance towards philosophy.⁹² Bray gives a recount of August Neander’s work, which Bray calls the “beginning of modern scholarly work on Tertullian.”⁹³ Neander, along with his tutor, Friedrich Schleiermacher, reacted to Kant seeing Tertullian through the lens of German pietism as the first defender of the Faith against Rationalism (i.e. Gnosticism.) In the last few decades,

⁸⁹ Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian*. (OUP, 1971); Fredouille, *Tertullien et la Conversion de la Culture Antique*, (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1972) 482-5, argues that Tertullian’s training as an orator would have included areas of law, philosophy, etc.; Bray, *Holiness*, 34; but also see Bray’s statement (97), “There can be no doubt that a Roman sense of legalism was fundamental to Tertullian’s way of thinking”; Rankin, *Tertullian*, 342.

⁹⁰ See Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*; Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 481; Barnes, *Tertullian*, (1971), 22-29, 197-206, esp. 196; in the title of chapter 14, Barnes calls Tertullian “The Christian Sophist”; Wright, “Tertullian,” 1031-2. For earlier bibliography, see Mark S. Burrows, “Christianity in the Roman Forum: Tertullian and the Apologetic Use of History,” *VC* 42 (3 1988), 211-2.

⁹¹ Dunn, “Rhetorical Structure in Tertullian’s *Ad Scapulam*,” *VC* 56 (2002): 47.

⁹² *De carn. Chris. 5: credibile est, quia ineptum est.*

⁹³ Bray, *Holiness*, 15ff.

scholars have been more divided in their understanding of Tertullian's appreciation and use of philosophy.

Arguing most vigorously for an understanding of Tertullian as a philosopher is Eric Osborn.⁹⁴ To Osborn, philosophy is an integral aspect of theology, and he therefore denies that Tertullian's "credible because it is inept" is a defense of irrationalism or fideism.⁹⁵ Instead, he claims that this specific statement is an oratory device only applicable to the incarnation, not to all philosophical propositions.⁹⁶ Osborn presents his case for Tertullian's use of philosophy: "[Tertullian] knows his philosophers better than do most Greek fathers. Tertullian does not hide his sympathy for Seneca (*An.* 20.1) nor his genuine regret that all heretics have seasoned their works with Plato (*An.* 23.5). Yet Christian artisans readily find the creator God whom Plato declared to be so difficult of discovery and description (*Ap.* 46.9)."⁹⁷ Tertullian's use of philosophy suggests to Osborn that Tertullian is himself a philosopher.

The objection to this understanding of Tertullian that Osborn must expound on is Tertullian's question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"⁹⁸ Osborn delineates four possible explanations of Tertullian's Athens/Jerusalem quote: (1) Tertullian is under psychological distress, and as a believer he rejected philosophy, but his own training in philosophy and rhetoric could never be discarded. (2) Tertullian was a product of cultural history. Tertullian is proud of his breadth of knowledge of cultural writers and uses them often, but insists that Christianity is over and above all that the

⁹⁴ Osborn, *Tertullian*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 31

⁹⁸ *De praes. haer.* 7.9: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" [*Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?*]

culture can offer. (3) Tertullian is a philosopher who simply believes he has found a better philosophy. (4) Tertullian uses paradox and disjunction to clarify; they are rhetorical devices.⁹⁹ Osborn chooses the last of these possible explanations and proposes that paradox and disjunction are Tertullian's way of "clarifying things" because Tertullian is in fact a Stoic philosopher.¹⁰⁰

Not all scholars accept the understanding of Tertullian as a Stoic, or for that matter any form of a philosopher. Barnes rejected such an idea outright, saying,

Tertullian would have deplored the attempts of Justin, Clement and Origen to reconcile Christianity and pagan philosophy. He explicitly rejected a Stoic, Platonic or dialectical Christianity. But in a wider sense, he had himself reconciled Christianity and classical culture. For he used the benefits of a traditional education and the fruits of his pagan erudition to defend and to propagate what he considered to be the truth.¹⁰¹

More recently, A.J. Vanderjagt has argued that Tertullian rejected philosophy, especially that of Plato, the Stoics, the Aristotelian logicians, and all heretics using them.¹⁰² The opposing understandings of Tertullian continue to divide scholars. Many, however, attempt to find a *via media*, allowing for Stoic and other philosophical concepts to be part of Tertullian's language as has been shown with legal terminology, thereby making them less integral.

1.3.6 Tertullian's Conversion

Like most points of Tertullian's life, scholars know very little from Tertullian's writings about his encounter with Christianity: whether or not he

⁹⁹ Osborn, *Tertullian*, 29-37.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 37; cf. Bray, *Holiness*, 34ff., who also understood Tertullian as borrowing Stoic ideas.

¹⁰¹ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 210.

¹⁰² "Sensual Evidence in Tertullian and Lactantius," *SP* 31 (1997): 364.

was a convert, and, if so, when this came about. Tertullian's rare and brief statements provided past scholars of Bardenhewer's day with enough material to conclude that Tertullian was born of pagan parents and converted to Christianity.¹⁰³ While Barnes did not completely reject the possibility of Tertullian's conversion, he says that the evidence, even within his writings is dubious at best.¹⁰⁴

1.3.8 Tertullian's Schism

Despite the consensus view before his time, Barnes destabilized the notion of Tertullian as a schismatic, alternatively arguing that the North African writer never intended to sever with the Church officially.¹⁰⁵ Tertullian was simply the "first great teacher of unimpeachable doctrinal orthodoxy who dared to enunciate an unpalatable truth: the church is not a conclave of bishops, but the manifestation of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁶ After Barnes, scholars vacillated over the extent to which Tertullian was a "Montanist."¹⁰⁷ Bray

¹⁰³ *Apol.* 18.4; 50.15; *De paen.* 1.1; *Ad Scap.* 5.5; *De res. carn.* 59.3; *De pat.* 1.1. More recently, Dunn, *Tertullian*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 245-6.

¹⁰⁵ See Bray, *Holiness*, 17ff., for the pre-Barnesian consensus.

¹⁰⁶ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 83; ref. *De pud.* 21.17. It should be noted that Barnes nevertheless did conclude that Tertullian was a Montanist in a schismatic sense.

¹⁰⁷ Before Barnes, see H.J. Lawlor, "The Heresy of the Phrygians," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1908): 481-99, reprinted in *Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Schism in Early Christianity*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993). After Barnes, see D. Powell, "Tertullianists and Cataphrygians," *VC* 29 (1975): 33-54; Bray, *Holiness*; L.J. van der Lof, "The Plebs of the Psychici: Are the Psychici of De Monogomia Fellow-Catholics of Tertullian?" in *Eulogia: Mélanges offerts à Antoon A.R. Bastiaensen à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire*, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, A. Hilhorst and C.H. Kneepkens, (Steenbrugis: In Abbatia S. Petri, 1991), 353-63; Daniel L. Hoffman, *The Status of Women and Gnosticism in Irenaeus and Tertullian*, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 5; Rankin, *Tertullian*; William Tabbernee, "To Pardon or not to Pardon? North African Montanism and the Forgiveness of Sins," *SP* 36 (2001), 377; Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy*, (CUP, 1996), 69, and 73, concludes that he "may properly be described as a Montanist..." but not as a schismatic; Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism*. (Macon, GA: Mercer

discusses the way in which Tertullian would have been declared a heretic postmortem and goes so far as to declare, "It is extremely doubtful whether Tertullian ever met a Phrygian Montanist in the flesh; his first contact with them was most probably through their writings."¹⁰⁸ The discussion hinges on whether or not Tertullian formally disassociated with the broader Christian community.¹⁰⁹ Representing the more recent consensus, Dunn claims that the past understanding of Tertullian as a schismatic "does not seem sustainable today."¹¹⁰

1.3.9 *Tertullian, Beyond the "Facts"*

By focusing on various points of Tertullian's life, the above presentation neglects to address a recurring element in the study of Tertullian, namely what many deem to be a strong anti-Roman sentiment in Tertullian's writings.¹¹¹ This sentiment is variously defined and discussed and therefore has remained a nebulous element in scholarly discourse, often evading direct elaboration. Whenever Tertullian's anti-Roman attitude is deliberated, it is usually in one of two categories: the debate over his so-called Montanism and his attacks on Roman paganism.¹¹²

University Press, 1997), 54-5; Wright, "Tertullian," 1028-9; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 6; and Stewart-Sykes, *Tertullian*, 14-5.

¹⁰⁸ Bray, *Tertullian*, 10-11, and 55. Similarly, Osborn, *Tertullian*, 212, understands Tertullian to have had no contact with Montanism from Asia Minor, but an altered "African" form in Carthage.

¹⁰⁹ See discussion in chapter nine.

¹¹⁰ *Tertullian*, 6. As for Tertullian starting his own sect of *Tertullianistae*, as claimed by Bardenhewer who depends on the late witnesses of Augustine (*De haeresibus ad Quoduultdeus* 86) and the anonymous *Praedestinatus* (*Haeresibus* 1.86), most scholars concur with Barnes, *Tertullian*, 259, that the claim deserves "no place in a study of Tertullian." For discussion, see Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 475-6; and Trevett, *Montanism*, 75.

¹¹¹ See chapter eight.

¹¹² e.g. Robert F. Evans, *One and Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought*, (London: SPCK, 1972), 7.

Throughout Christian history, readers of Tertullian have found him antagonistic towards the Roman church. The Donatists claimed Tertullian as their spiritual ancestor in their dispute against the Roman led Catholic church.¹¹³ In reviewing past understandings of Tertullian, Bray lists several occasions where groups who came in opposition with the Roman church found Tertullian an ally because of his anti-Roman sentiment.¹¹⁴ In the fifteenth century, Reformers rediscovered Tertullian's manuscripts for their common polemic against Rome. Later, following the French revolution, many French scholars such as Paul Monceaux returned to the study of the Roman church's claim to Petrine authority and the beginnings of Latin Christianity.¹¹⁵ In cataloguing those who read Tertullian as anti-Roman, Bray suggests that a more widely accepted understanding of Tertullian is one who "fights within the Roman system for the fair treatment of Christians."¹¹⁶ Because more recent scholarship has rejected the claim that Tertullian separated from the Roman Church with the Montanist sect, the problem arises as to how to interpret the anti-Roman attitude so many readers of Tertullian have detected. Was Tertullian simply criticizing the Roman church from within the communion? Perhaps a further explanation is required that addresses the vehemence detected by so many scholars but does not resort to "Montanist teachings" as the cause.

¹¹³ See chapter four.

¹¹⁴ *Holiness*, 11, 21ff., and 37.

¹¹⁵ *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, (Paris, 1901); Monceaux sets Tertullian at the head of the African church with an African personality that tended towards independence and schism; cf. Charles Guignebert, *Tertullien, études sur sentiments à l'égard de l'emprise de la société civile*, (Paris, 1901), argued with Harnack that Tertullian was anti-Roman Catholic; both cited in Bray, *Holiness*, 21-23.

¹¹⁶ Bray, *Holiness*, 37.

More transparent in Tertullian's writings is his apologetic against the paganism of the Roman Empire. Osborn comments, "Most of what he wrote was directed against someone. He took on the Roman establishment, Marcion, Praxeas, indulgent bishops, Hermogenes and Valentinians; indeed he took on the world itself and insisted that things were going to be very different at the end."¹¹⁷ Osborn represents the majority of scholars who accept Tertullian's attack on the "Roman establishment" as a critique against idolatry and an attack on the unjust treatment of Christians. Some scholars, however, acknowledge in Tertullian a broader criticism of Romanism.¹¹⁸ Did Tertullian attack aspects of the Roman Empire? If Tertullian opposed the Roman government, what were his reasons?

The scholarly awareness of Tertullian's anti-Romanism in relation to both the episcopal and the imperial seats raises questions about Tertullian's identities and loyalties. If Tertullian understands himself as being opposed to and outside of the Roman system, then to what system or category does he belong? Because Tertullian evidences a high degree of education and familiarity with Graeco-Roman society, history and customs, scholars often assume that he belongs to the elite class of his time, and that he was implicitly supportive of the overall Roman structure, yet such an understanding of Tertullian does not seem to take sufficient account of his anti-Roman sentiments, nor the colonial presence of Tertullian's period. Given the lack of Tertullian's biographical information agreed upon by scholars, any indication of self-identity evident in Tertullian's writings requires attention. If Tertullian

¹¹⁷ *Tertullian*, xiv.

¹¹⁸ See bibliography in Osborn, *Tertullian*, 84; and E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, (London: SCM Press, 1983), n. 80.

attacks Rome and Romans, then he evidently sees himself as non-Roman. If Tertullian is not Roman, to what category does he belong? One possible answer is that Tertullian wrote with the self-identity of an African.

1.4 Conclusion

The above surveys of Postcolonial criticism, African Theology and Patristic scholarship highlight an unexplored aspect of Tertullian's writings, namely, his "African-ness," which is now open for discussion. The challenges to "reread" history and theology permits Tertullian's context to be revisited and his treatises to be reinterpreted. The importance of context, moreover, for patristic and classical studies demands that the context from which Tertullian wrote be extensively researched in order to better interpret this Church father from the continent of Africa.¹¹⁹ Likewise, in the field of African Theology, the genesis and origins of Christianity on the African continent are just as important for a more complete and holistic picture of the heritage to which African Christians have a claim.

Patristic scholars in the past have largely been constrained by the non-African lens through which they viewed Tertullian. In order to provide a precise set of theories in which to circumnavigate the ethnocentricity of the past and to address the concerns raised in this first chapter, the discussion will now turn to the specific theories and categories of Social Anthropology that will be utilized in this project. With these issues and theories at the forefront, Tertullian's context can then be addressed, namely the context of Roman Africa, followed by an exploration of the North African Christian

¹¹⁹ See Barnes, *Tertullian*, vii, for a plea to focus on context.

communities to which Tertullian belonged. After which, the final chapters will apply the anthropological theories and contextual insights to Tertullian's own writings. Therein, *Tertullianus Afer* will be understood and interpreted as an African theologian.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXTUALIZING TERTULLIAN: IDENTITY THEORIES IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

2.1 Introduction – Tertullian the Tunisian?

In April 2001 a gathering of scholars met in Annaba and Algiers for a conference on Augustine, the Christian saint and “philosopher” from North Africa. The conference, perhaps not so surprisingly, sparked controversy from many sides, not least of which were Algerians who viewed the conference as a westernizing effort by Algeria’s president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who summoned the conference. Karla Pollman has captured the nature of this controversy in her work, *St Augustine the Algerian*, a title “meant as a provocation and not as a description of an historical reality. It is a statement about the possible influence and relevance of an historical figure in a later time, in this case the present.”¹²⁰ The theme of the conference, “Africanité et Universalité,” according to J.J. O’Donnell, encouraged speakers “to address questions of both local identity and the link from local identity to citizenship in a wider world.”¹²¹ Augustine, now an Algerian, illustrates some of the issues and interests involved with representing the past, especially a postcolonial past.

¹²⁰ *St Augustine the Algerian*, (Göttingen: Duehrkohp & Radicke, 2003), 9; originally Pollman’s inaugural lecture at the University of St. Andrews, delivered 24 April 2002.

¹²¹ J.J. O’Donnell has published a helpful account of the conference: “Augustine in Algeria: 2001,” available online at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/algeria/algeriatrip.html> (last retrieved 20 September 2005).

Postcolonialism has awakened scholars from various disciplines to the problems of representations, even representations of the past.¹²² Lynn Meskell speaks to such problems in the field of archaeology: “Presumably archeologists feel their subjects are dead and buried... and that they are not implicated in the representation and struggles of living peoples.”¹²³ Such assumptions, Meskell illustrates, are false; examples abound of communities in the present struggling for “rights” to the past, as in the case of “Augustine the Algerian.”

In light of postcolonial identity politics, can one speak of “Tertullian the Tunisian?”¹²⁴ In order to address the postcolonial history of this African theologian, this present work will turn to the discipline of Social Anthropology.¹²⁵ Social Anthropology provides theories that can aid the work of a historical theologian in “rereading” a postcolonial setting. Although the assimilation of Postcolonial discourse into the discipline of Social Anthropology needs no defense in light of the amount of works produced in this genre by anthropologists, a few words explaining the correlation of the two fields will prove helpful. After doing so, some general comments will be made about Social Anthropology, especially in relation to historical studies.

¹²² Similarly, Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman*, (CUP, 1996), 17, compares this process to Feminism which has been able to “demonstrate that value-neutrality is not only an impossible dream, but it is also a goal that prevents scholars from becoming aware of the political context of their own work and its public responsibility”; ref. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship,” *JBL* 107 (1988): 3-17.

¹²³ “The Intersection of Identity and Politics in Archaeology,” *ARA* 31 (2002), 280.

¹²⁴ For a review and discussion of “identity” in terms of “identity politics,” see Kevin Hetherington, *Expression of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics*, (London: SAGE, 1998).

¹²⁵ The distinction between Social Anthropology (British), and Cultural Anthropology (American), is often transcended in actual practice by anthropologists who read and cite scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, as is done in what follows.

2.1.1 Postcolonial Anthropology

In order to succinctly survey the socio-political context of Tertullian and then in turn to allow the findings of said survey to provide a paradigm for interpreting the African theologian, the following chapters will embark on a postcolonial reading of the sources using theories and methods from the field of Social Anthropology. Since anthropologists often carry out their fieldwork in postcolonial contexts, some scholars have applied various understandings of an encounter. Olivia Harris outlines six “models” found, either explicitly or implicitly, in anthropological studies:

- (1) Mixing or creolization – presupposes fixed points of origin for each “culture”
- (2) Colonisation – assumes the superiority of colonizer over colonized
- (3) Borrowing – allows more agency to the colonized
- (4) Juxtaposition or alternation – permits individuals to inhabit contradictory or irreconcilable “knowledge systems” simultaneously
- (5) Imitation or direct identification – requires rejection of past “knowledge or cultural form” in order to acquire a new “identity”
- (6) Innovation and creativity – attributes priority to “autonomy and independent agency” over contrasting groups or “knowledge systems.”¹²⁶

In this present work, the understanding of encounter will draw more from specific theories within the field of anthropology, all of which have responded and adapted in their application to postcolonial contexts. Before turning to

¹²⁶ “Knowing the Past: The Antinomies of Loss in Highland Bolivia,” in *Counterwork: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, ed. Richard Fardon, (London: Routledge, 1995), 112-3.

those theories, however, a brief analysis of how the postcolonial perspective has been incorporated into Social Anthropology is needed.

Social anthropology as a discipline aligns neatly with a postcolonial reading of history in two ways: (1) because anthropology has, in recent decades, been eagerly introspective, a large consensus of anthropologists has regarded postcolonial criticism; and (2) many anthropological theorists readily assimilate, and sometimes even promote, postcolonial perspectives.

Although postcolonial critics have in the past attacked Social Anthropology as an active enabler and participant of the colonial process – a fact rarely denied by anthropologists, many anthropologists have accepted the postcolonial challenge and proactively amalgamated postcolonial theory as a corrective into their own discipline to the point it could be considered mainstream.¹²⁷ Social Anthropology has largely been a self-critical discipline, recognizing the need to analyze both the observed and the observer, a principle known as “reflexivity.”¹²⁸ Therefore, when critics as far back as Said began to criticize anthropologists, many scholars responded with an introspection that resulted in the conjoining of postcolonial theory to their own work.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ T.H. Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 2nd ed., (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 15; cf. the earlier analysis of T. Asad, “Introduction,” *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, ed. T. Asad, (London: Ithaca, 1973), 9-19. For a dissenting voice, however, see Vassos Argyrou, *Anthropology and the Will to Meaning: A Postcolonial Critique*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002), who argues that even postcolonial anthropology has a self-centered humanistic agenda and the anthropological project is forever doomed to failure.

¹²⁸ Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, (CUP, 2000), 164. See Takeyuki Tsuda, “Ethnicity and the Anthropologist: Negotiating Identities in the Field,” *AQ* 71 (3 1998): 107-24, for a discussion of how the ethnographer’s ethnic identity impacts the interaction with informants, and for a good survey of reflexivity and the discussions of the anthropologist as objective observer of subjects versus an active subject in the ethnographic interaction. For a comparison with the “reflexive sociology” of Bourdieu, see Simon J. Charlesworth, *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*, (CUP, 2000).

¹²⁹ Barnard, *History*, 167, who also cites anthropologists, like Asad, who “anticipated” Said’s critique.

Many anthropologists readily align themselves with the aims and principles of postcolonial theory, finding a like-mindedness inherent between the two fields. The confrontation of the two disciplines was inevitable in that Postcolonialism arose as a critique of the West's portrayal of the "Other," a blow for Social Anthropology because "anthropology's historical concern has been largely with non-western peoples."¹³⁰ Alan Barnard traces the conjoining between the two disciplines back to the influence of E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Clifford Geertz.¹³¹ The influence, as Barnard sees it, began with "Evans-Pritchard in his rejection of the idea of anthropology as a science, in favour of an interpretive approach which placed anthropology firmly within the humanities."¹³² Barnard also says Evans-Pritchard allowed for the historian's diachronic approach over the traditionally synchronic approach of anthropology.¹³³ Geertz expounded on the understanding of anthropology as an interpretive endeavor shifting the methodology from a linguistic understanding of "translating" a "grammar" (i.e. a "culture"), to a more complex "writing" of a "thick description" of a society and its values and practices.¹³⁴ Commenting on the reflexivity prompted by postcolonial critiques, Geertz asks and answers,

¹³⁰ Richard Fardon, "Introduction: Counterworks," in *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, ed. Fardon, (London: Routledge, 1995), 1. For a classic example, see A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, (New York: Free Press, 1952), 2-3, who defined anthropology as a "branch of sociology" which studies "primitive societies."

¹³¹ *History*, 158-164.

¹³² *Ibid*, 158; ref. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Essays in Social Anthropology*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1962), 13-28, who contends for anthropology as part of the "humanities" instead of "science"; and Evans-Pritchard, *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in Social Anthropology*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), esp. 33-5.

¹³³ *History and Theory*, 162.

¹³⁴ "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30. For a recent criticism of Geertz, see Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologist's Account*, (HUP, 1999).

What, after all, is one to make of savages? ... For the anthropologist, whose profession it is to study other cultures, the puzzle is always with him. His personal relationship to his object of study is, perhaps more than for any other scientist, inevitably problematic. Know what he thinks a savage is and you have the key to his work. You know what he thinks he himself is and, knowing what he thinks he himself is you know in general what sort of thing he is going to say about whatever tribe he happens to be studying. All ethnography is part philosophy, and a good deal of the rest is confession.¹³⁵

Because of the ideas forwarded by these two anthropological theorists, Barnard says, "Interpretivism and postmodernism fit into anthropology in a very straightforward way...."¹³⁶ In recent years, therefore, anthropologists align themselves squarely within the critical framework of a postcolonial reading – or "writing" – of history.¹³⁷

2.1.2 *Social Anthropology – Past, Purpose and Method*

Although some anthropologists trace their disciplinary descent back to Herodotus as the founder of the discipline, Eriksen claims that Tertullian's fellow Tunisian, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the author of the *Muqaddima* ("Introduction to History"), is a more credible methodological progenitor because Khaldun introduced "theory" into the discipline of observation.¹³⁸ Most genealogies of anthropology, however, begin with European colonial expansion and the resulting need for "the classification of the 'peoples' of the

¹³⁵ *The Interpretation*, 345-6. "Ethnography" is traditionally defined as the anthropologist's fieldwork, or the observing of "facts"; see, however, Geertz, "Thick Description," 6.

¹³⁶ *History*, 175. For bibliography on the "invention of tradition," see Charles L. Briggs, "The Politics of Discursive Authority in Research on the 'Invention of Tradition,'" *CA* 11 (4 1996): 435-69. For this debate in relation to identity, see the case studies in Jonathan Friedman, "The Past in the Future: History and the Politics of Identity," *AA* 94 (4 1992): 837-59.

¹³⁷ i.e. Geertz' "writing a thick description" of ethnographic interpretation; see more on Geertz below in section 2.2.5 on religion.

¹³⁸ *Small Places*, 10; cf. Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 3 vols., trans. Franz Rosenthal; ed. N.J. Dawood, (London : Routledge, 1978).

world, the attribution of specificity to bounded populations.”¹³⁹ While the entire history with all of the ranging debates need not – and could not – be recounted here, the following sections of this chapter will trace much of the disciplines past by reviewing the differing approaches to specific theories. One debate from early anthropological discourse that will prove to be a beneficial starting point is the relativist/universalist dispute first underscored by Franz Boas.

Boas understood much early fieldwork to be misguided in that it too often attempted to “fit” information into a universal theory of humanity, and so his emphasis on ethnography and data collection for its own sake became known as the particularist approach.¹⁴⁰ Varying reactions arose after Boas including the approach known as “structuralism” – the school of thought that replaced functionalism in anthropology – championed by Claude Levi-Strauss, which sought to form a universal theory of the human mind that under-girded the structures of all societies.¹⁴¹ Later, Edmund Leach claimed that a strict Boasian approach without the counterbalance of a “generalization” amounted to little more than anthropological “butterfly collecting.”¹⁴²

In current debates universalists and particularists remain at odds in their respective hope or skepticism regarding a meta-theory that can incorporate all variations in specific contexts and societies. Eriksen summarizes,

To what extent do all humans, cultures or societies have something in common, and to what extent is each of them unique? Since we employ comparative concepts – that is

¹³⁹ Friedman, “The Past,” 846.

¹⁴⁰ Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 17-8.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴² *Rethinking Anthropology*, rev. ed., (London : Athlone Press, [1961]1997), 2.

supposedly culturally neutral terms like kinship system, gender role, system of inheritance, etc. – it is implicitly acknowledged that all or nearly all societies have several features in common. However, many anthropologists challenge this view and claim the uniqueness of each culture or society.¹⁴³

While some of the “many” challenges will be discussed further below, it should be noted how problematized any universalist stance – often characterized as “the phenomenological approach” – has become. F.C. Wallace eloquently lamented such a problematic: “It is always hazardous to set forth in search of the headwaters of human institutions. The unwary scholar is all too apt to find himself soon mired in a noisome bog of speculations, unable to extricate himself with dignity and subject to stoning by his more prudent colleagues on the bank.”¹⁴⁴ Although any universalist stance is argued by particularists to be unacceptable, many anthropologists argue that a phenomenological approach should nevertheless serve as a methodological ideal.

For present purposes, the method of balancing fieldwork with theory provides the primary benefit in understanding and accommodating Social Anthropology. As Ioan M. Lewis insists, “I maintain that a continuous dialogue between theory and empirically observed data is the essential basis of a vigorous, substantive social anthropology.”¹⁴⁵ Ethnography – “empirically observ[ing] data” – allows any forwarded theory to be tested by other anthropologists. Even an interpretivist like Geertz notes the necessary evil of debated theory: “Anthropology... is a science whose progress is marked less

¹⁴³ *Small Places*, 5-6.

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Morton Klass, *Ordered Universes: Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion*, (Boulder, CO: Oxford : Westview Press, 1995), 8.

¹⁴⁵ *Arguments with Ethnography: Comparative Approaches to History, Politics and Religion*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), xii.

by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other.”¹⁴⁶ Likewise, David Schneider, the self-lauded “culturalist,” speaks of the centrality of debate between theory and fieldwork when he observes, “The aims and methods of anthropology have always been and are always being sharply criticized and generally overhauled.”¹⁴⁷ Whenever scholars forward theories in anthropology, they expect criticism from their peers; many theories can be reformulated and adapted; many are discarded. The cardinal sin, however, for an anthropologist is ethnocentrism.

Any theory claimed to apply “universally” must meet the challenge of scholars who would scrutinize it seeking any indication of ethnocentrism. David Hicks comments, “...the sharp distinction scholars once made between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is no longer part of mainstream thinking, and the use of such terms as *primitive* or *savage* to describe the customs of other people are outdated modes of reference that may give us more insight into the ideological assumptions of our own not-too-distant scholarly ancestors than into the thinking of members of other cultures.”¹⁴⁸ The postcolonial critiques of ethnocentrism often coincide with and correlate to – if not condition, or even cause – the postmodern critique of essentialism.¹⁴⁹ Such critiques, it is argued here, align positively with historical methods, which strive to overcome anachronism.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ “Thick Description,” 29.

¹⁴⁷ *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*, (UMP, 1984), 201.

¹⁴⁸ “Introduction,” in *Ritual and Belief: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Hicks, (Boston: McGraw-Hill College, 1999), viii.

¹⁴⁹ Several discussions of anti-essentialism will be outlined below in relation to specific theories.

¹⁵⁰ For similar argument, cf. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 14-5, where anthropology provides biblical scholars with a “sensitivity” to ethnocentrism as well as anachronism.

2.1.3 *Anthropology and History*

Anthropology and history as academic fields have enjoyed a long and fruitful interdisciplinary relationship. Although many early studies within anthropology inappropriately sought to find the “origins” of humankind by studying the remnant of “primitive” peoples – some of which will be surveyed below, anthropology as a general discipline corrected this appropriating of the past and has now come full circle in that many anthropologists are critiquing the historiography of others. Kevin Yelvington, commenting on the “plethora” of anthropological studies of history, provides a helpful analysis of how anthropologists “construct relevant typologies” for the past.¹⁵¹

Yelvington argues that academic departments of history currently face a “crisis of epistemology” which can only be overcome through the supplementation of an anthropological understanding of history.¹⁵²

Anthropologists, Yelvington suggests, are especially trained to examine “history as representation,” because so many representations of the past involve “political” and “ideological” elements.¹⁵³

Yelvington cites and reiterates the arguments of J. Friedman, who insists that history always involves a “construction” of the past.¹⁵⁴ “‘Objective’ history,” Friedman declares, “...is just as much a social construct as any other history, and it cannot be simply accepted at face value.”¹⁵⁵ A particular element which problematizes any “objective” claims in

¹⁵¹ Kevin A. Yelvington, “History, Memory and Identity: A Programmatic Prolegomenon,” *CrA* 22 (3 2002), 3.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, n.5.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 5-6.

¹⁵⁴ Friedman, “The Past.”

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 854.

historiography is that “history is the discourse of identity” – as seen in the example of Augustine above.¹⁵⁶ The importance of “identity” for any historical study, and in this case for Tertullian, once again highlights why anthropological theories provide the historian with an approach that assists in the safeguarding against anachronism – the historians’ unpardonable sin – and against ethnocentrism – that which must be avoided at all costs by anthropologists. Whether or not Social Anthropology provides the only means of overcoming any “epistemological crisis” for historians, a number of researchers who have amalgamated the fields of History and Social Anthropology benefit from anthropological theory applied to history, especially the history of postcolonial contexts.

Because often in postcolonial contexts “the past is frozen as an eternal validation of the present,” Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn address the need for focusing on identities in an anthropological history.¹⁵⁷ Their argument claims to be especially apt for African examples: “Ethnography and history are nowhere more tightly bound up with identity and ethnicity than in the broad field of colonial and post-colonial African studies.”¹⁵⁸ While these authors speak especially in terms of the events of the last century, in light of the application of postcolonial theory to Roman Imperialism – as will be discussed in chapter three – and in light of the identity politics that accompany studies of ancient individuals such as Augustine, their insights adequately depict the issues accompanying a postcolonial re-reading of Tertullian which

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ “Preface,” in *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*, ed. Fowler and Zeitlyn (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996), xix. Similarly, Bediako, *Theology*, 426-7, suggests that “the question of identity constitutes a ‘hermeneutical key.’”

¹⁵⁸ Fowler and Zeitlyn, “Preface,” xviii.

will rely on anthropological theories of identity. The present discussion, therefore, can now turn to these specific theories to understand how anthropologists have formulated anti-ethnocentric, anti-essentialist and anti-anachronistic ideas about social identity, kinship, class, ethnicity and religion.

2.2 Applied Theories

In order to explore Tertullian's North African context and then in turn to reread some of Tertullian's writings, the following chapters will employ specific theories from Social Anthropology on social identity, kinship, class, ethnicity and religion. These theories will serve as filters for data that scholars often tend to interpret ethnocentrically. By drawing attention away from concerns generally considered more "theological" (e.g. *trinitas*, *persona*, etc.) and by focusing instead on elements that are generally considered more "contextual" or "historical" (e.g. kinship, class, etc.), it is hoped that a fresh set of questions will inform the reading of this North African theologian.

It should be noted that these theories do not serve as ultimate criteria in any sort of unquestionable "proofs" or "evidence." Instead, they provide hermeneutical tools that can explore the few remnants of Tertullian's self-expression found in his writings. Even the theories themselves, although they may appear at first glance as segmented categories that address individuated aspects of societies, are in fact implemented with the understanding that no one theory can adequately address the information without first being destabilized in an attempt to address the interconnectedness of any one of the

categories with other scholarly constructs – including theories absent in the present discussion.¹⁵⁹

The order and presentation of theory and data reflects the concerns with reification that results from a linear approach. To discuss, for example, class theory in anthropology followed immediately with a presentation of sources from North African society, North African Christianity and Tertullian would suggest that “class” or “classes” existed independently, or at least were structurally distinguishable, from kinship, gender, religion or innumerable other identity markers constructed by groups and individuals in ancient Roman Africa. Because of the complexity involved in any social analysis, such a portrayal is misleading; therefore, the remainder of this chapter will survey the theories of social identity, kinship, class, ethnicity and religion before continuing to the following chapters in which said theories are applied.

2.2.1 Social Anthropology and Social Identity

Although early studies in anthropology often focused on aspects of societies that can affect an individual or group identity, rather than speaking of “identity” itself, anthropologists in the past few decades have turned to

¹⁵⁹ The most notable theory absent in this work is gender theory. The omission is regrettable in that much is to be gained by exploring gender in Tertullian’s writings, yet such an exploration does not add much to the discussion of Tertullian as an African. Moreover, the theory has proved so influential that the material deserves an entire monograph, and it is believed that adding another section on gender could not have done justice to the discussion. Because there have already been numerous feminist readings of Tertullian, it is believed that the omission is not entirely detrimental to this thesis. Additionally, because gender theory has proved so influential, the following sections do speak to the way “kinship,” “class,” “ethnicity” and “religion” have been embodied and gendered, and so the omission is not as complete as it might first appear.

“identity” as an analytical category especially useful in postcolonial contexts.¹⁶⁰ While the broader academic discourse understood “identity” in terms of “sameness,” “fixed-ness” or “bounded-ness,” such definitions have become problematic in anthropology.¹⁶¹ Postcolonial encounters involve battles for the rights to represent and define “personhood,” “citizenship,” and “nationality” (especially by representing the past), and, therefore, anthropological theories of identity have arisen which address the ways in which such notions were ideologically and socially constructed.

Identities and identity politics often play a central role in many postcolonial discussions, stemming from a context of colonizer/colonized identities and the “hybridity” of those seen to be in the “third space” or “in-between-ness” created by postcoloniality.¹⁶² The emphasis on the discursive nature of identities relates to the postcolonial critique of identity discourse in that “bounded” fixity or sameness regarding identity is a western conceptualization.¹⁶³ Such a critique forces anthropologists to recognize that “cultural realities are always produced in specific sociohistorical contexts and

¹⁶⁰ Ian Fardon, “The Person, Ethnicity and the Problem of ‘Identity’ in West Africa,” in *African Crossroads*, eds. Fowler and Zeitlyn, 27-8.

¹⁶¹ Zygmunt Bauman, “Identity in the Globalising World,” *SA* 9 (2 2001), 126; and Fardon, “The Person,” 27.

¹⁶² The various binary oppositions, such as colonizer/colonized, centre/periphery, white/black, etc., have been attacked by postcolonial critics for being themselves ethnocentric and derogatory (i.e. the first term implicitly favorable over the latter); see Ashcroft et al, *The Empire Writes Back*, 124-5, 155-6, who credit this attack to Franz Fanon; cf. Goldberg, *Relocating Postcolonialism*, xii. “Hybridity” has been presented favorably by Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994); for a review of Bhabha and his critics, see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 118-21.

¹⁶³ Richard Handler, “Is ‘Identity’ a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?” *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis, (PUP, 1994), 31. Paul Sillitoe, “Beating the Boundaries: Land Tenure and Identity in the Papua New Guinea Highlands,” *JAR* 55 (3 1999): 331-60, illustrates how Wola – New Guinea highlanders – tie land ownership to kinship identity, but the actual plots of land owned can shift dramatically from family to family, making the land that the identity is based on as “fluid” as the identity itself. Also, see Laurence Goldman and Calvin Smith, “Imagining Identities: Mimetic Constructions in Huli Child Fantasy Play,” *JRAI* n.s. 4 (2 1998): 207-34, who call anthropologists to take up the study of “pretense” in relation to the construction of identities.

that it is necessary to account for the processes that generate those contexts in order to account for the... practice of identity....”¹⁶⁴ Lynn Schler argues that by focusing on identities in “particular spaces” or contexts, scholars can “prioritize process and flux over fixity and continuity.”¹⁶⁵ Martijn van Beek cites Michael J. Taussig to support his explanation of the destabilization of “identity” in recent anthropology:

The reference to identity – not necessarily any specific one – has that “familiarity which persuades us that our cultural form is not historical, nor social, not human, but natural – ‘thing-like’ and physical.” This notion of identities, then, as identities are used, appealed to, displayed, signaled, contested, and claimed, is a product of modernity, itself inextricably connected with the rise, spread, and deepening of capitalism and the international states system. ...Identities, then, are metaphors without stable referents, stereotyped images of fluid and multiple practices of social identification.¹⁶⁶

The “anti-essentialist mood of today’s anthropology,” as it is bemoaned by Paul E. Brodwin, has emphasized the socially constructed nature of identity to the extent that some have called for a dismissal of the term from the discipline.¹⁶⁷

Because the term “identity” has been destabilized in theoretical usage, many suggest that it can no longer serve as an analytical category. Stuart Hall captures the matter, arguing that “identity” is “an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be

¹⁶⁴ Friedman, “The Past,” 837.

¹⁶⁵ “Ambiguous Spaces: the Struggle over African Identities and Urban Communities in Colonial Douala, 1914-45,” *JAH* 44 (1 2003), 52; ref David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, (OUP, 1996), 7-8.

¹⁶⁶ “Beyond Identity Fetishism: ‘Communal’ Conflict in Ladakh and the Limits of Autonomy,” *CA* 15 (4 2000), 527; ref. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in Latin America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 3.

¹⁶⁷ “Genetics, Identity and the Anthropology of Essentialism,” *AQ* 75 (2 2002), 323. Handler, “Is ‘Identity’ a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?” suggests the term needs critical reexamination.

thought at all.”¹⁶⁸ The staunchest statement on “identity” to date is that of

Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, who argue,

that the prevailing constructivist stance on identity – the attempt to “soften” the term, to acquit it of the charge of “essentialism” by stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid, and multiple – leaves us without a rationale for talking about “identities” at all and ill-equipped to examine the “hard” dynamics and essentialist claims of contemporary identity politics. ...If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere.¹⁶⁹

Such a conclusion, however, even Brubaker and Cooper acknowledge, is a rare one among social theorists.¹⁷⁰ Instead of deducing from the instability of any one identity that “identity” itself does not exist, most anthropologists recognize how groups and individuals construct and hold multiple identities, the salience of which depends on the context.

Because an individual or a group can hold multiple identities simultaneously (e.g. Scottish, British, European, Methodist, Protestant, Christian, female, black, worker, etc.), anthropologists have developed theories which enable them to interpret the various interplays and interconnections of those identities. Since many discussions address how identity politics of the last century have been “enabled by multiple and hybrid identities,” theorists also recognize the significance of allowing for a multivocality of identities in any context, in order to avoid reifying the ethnographic data in terms of a “single” constricted understanding of *an* identity.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ “Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity?’” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 2.

¹⁶⁹ “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (1 2000), 1.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷¹ Brodwin, “Genetics,” 323. For an example of groups with competing social identities, see the study by Muhammad Amara and Bernard Spolsky, “The Construction of Identity in a Divided Palestinian Village: Sociolinguistic Evidence” in *Language and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Yasir Suleiman, (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996), 81-100.

The way in which an individual's or group's various identities "intertwine," "collide" or "collude" depends upon context.¹⁷² Most identities include aspects such as race/ethnicity, gender and kinship, which Anderson-Levy argues should be studied in view of each other because they are often "especially slippery and difficult to define" on their own.¹⁷³ Drawing from his own ethnographic work in Mauritius, Thomas Hylland Eriksen produces an example of how anthropologists should explore manifold and interconnected identities which include ten categories:

- (1) Ethnic identity
- (2) Class identity
- (3) Gender identity
- (4) Age identity
- (5) Religious identity
- (6) Local identity
- (7) Political identity
- (8) Linguistic identity
- (9) Kinship identity
- (10) Supra-ethnic national identity.¹⁷⁴

Anthropological identity theories have created new approaches to older subjects such as kinship and religion, and have also allowed categories such as class and ethnicity – which are relatively new to anthropology – to be reinvigorated with research. As Bauman maintains, "One may say that 'identity' has become by now a prism through which other topical aspects of contemporary life are spotted, grasped and examined. Established issues of social analysis are being rehashed and refurbished to fit the discourse now

¹⁷² For an example of "intertwine," see Yelvington, *Producing Power: Ethnicity, Gender and Class in a Caribbean Workplace*, (Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 1995), 23; for an example of "collide" and "collude," see Lisa M. Anderson-Levy, "Colliding/Colluding Identities: Race, Class and Gender in Jamaican Family Systems," in *New Directions in Anthropological Kinship*, ed. Linda Stone, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

¹⁷³ "Colliding/Colluding," 181.

¹⁷⁴ "A Non-ethnic State for Africa? A Life-World Approach to the Imagining of Communities," in *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics*, ed. Paris Yeros, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 51-52.

rotating around the 'identity' axis."¹⁷⁵ With so many elements included under the identity rubric, anthropologists turn to the process of identity in order to qualify their discussions.

A common element that emerges in discussions of identity is that of "difference" or "otherness," a factor that helps theorists specify how certain identities are constructed, invoked and enacted in relation to the "outsider," or "Other."¹⁷⁶ Hall notes the broader discourse on otherness taking place in various disciplines, to say, "...identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be constructed."¹⁷⁷ In comparison to other disciplines, however, anthropologists incorporated identity discourse uniquely in that "the social anthropological idea of identity never simply took the 'classical' notion of identity as self-identity for granted," because of the essentialist tendencies inherent in the notion.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Bauman, "Identity," 121.

¹⁷⁶ Monica Minnegal and Peter D. Dwyer, "Rereading Relationships: Changing Constructions of Identity Among Kubo of Papua New Guinea," *Ethnology* 38 (1 1999), 77; and Meskell, "The Intersection," 279-80. For an example in contemporary North Africa, see Wolfgang Kraus, "Contestable Identities: Tribal Structures in the Moroccan High Atlas," *JRAI* n.s. 4 (1 1998): 1-22.

¹⁷⁷ "Introduction," 4.

¹⁷⁸ Martin Sökefeld, "Reconsidering Identity," *Anthropos* 96 (2 2001), 535. It is helpful to note the disciplinary differences between Anthropology, which tends to focus on "group" or "collective" identities, and Sociology, which tends to speak in terms of "roles" or role identity. See Dorothy Holland, William Lachicotte, Jr, Debra Skinner and Carole Cain, *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, (HUP, 1998); F Devine, "Social identities, Class Identity and Political Perspectives," *Sociological Review* 40 (2 1992): 229-52. For various "identity" categories (e.g. ethnicity, gender, etc.) in Social History, see Eileen Boris and Angélique Janssens, "Complicating Categories: An Introduction," *International Review of Social History*, Supplement 44, (1999), 1-13. For a helpful comparison of Identity Theory (i.e. role) in Sociology with Social Identity Theory (i.e. group) in Social Psychology, see Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry and Katherine M. White, "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58 (4 1995): 255-69.

Referencing the work of Frederik Barth, Bauman describes how many theorists define “‘communal’ identities [as] by-products of feverish boundary-drawing.”¹⁷⁹ In other words, identity is constructed in terms of difference or in contrast to the “Other”; whereas, the identification of otherness typically creates a boundary separating outsiders from insiders.¹⁸⁰

The primary way identity will be used in the present work, therefore, will be in terms of social identity, that is, the way in which an individual or group defines itself by insider/outsider distinctions. Moreover, since anthropologists generally delineate various aspects, forms or components of identity, the following sections will review anthropological theories on kinship, class, ethnicity and religion with a view to understand how these categories are incorporated into theories of social identity – namely, kinship identity, class identity, ethnic identity and religious identity.

2.2.2 Kinship Theory and Kinship Identity

Before the 1970s anthropologists often studied kinship in terms of descent and affinity, a pattern set by Lewis Henry Morgan who is often called the father of American anthropology and, more specifically, is considered “a founder of kinship studies.”¹⁸¹ His work, *Systems of Consanguinity and*

¹⁷⁹ “Identity,” 129. More on Barth below in section 2.2.4.

¹⁸⁰ It should be noted that anthropologists generally do not claim this as a universal, but in fact celebrate exceptions to this rule; e.g. Dolors Comas D’Argemir and Joan J. Pujadas, “Living in/on the Frontier: Migration, Identities and Citizenship in Andorra,” *SA* 7 (3 1999): 253-64, speak in terms of “degrees of inclusion and exclusion” in Andorran society; cf. Simon Harrison, “Identity as a Scarce Resource,” *SA* 7 (3 1999): 239-51, who illustrates how boundaries can be defined by similarity more than difference, given accusations of “piracy.”

¹⁸¹ Linda Stone, “Introduction: Theoretical Implications of New Directions in Anthropological Kinship,” in *New Directions*, ed. Stone, 3. Many scholars criticized descent theory, such as J.A. Barnes, “African Models in the New Guinea Highlands,” *Man* (1962): 5-9, who says that “descent” as anthropologists often construct it is not a universal category, but an “African orientation.” cf. Harold Scheffler, “Ancestor Worship in Anthropology: or Observations on Descent and Descent Groups,” *CuA* 7 (1966): 541-58, distinguished between descent groups and descent constructs, i.e. an “ideological” organization.

Affinity of the Human Family, first published in 1871 influenced the way in which many anthropologists would approach kinship.¹⁸² Robert Parkin and Linda Stone explain how descent theory was bound up with evolutionism and functionalism, both of which passed out of academic usage in favor of structuralism, which itself became antiquated amongst anthropologists.¹⁸³

A radical shift in kinship studies came in the works of David M. Schneider who advocated a “cultural” approach to kinship, which entails the ethnographer striving to capture the significance, meaning or symbolism of the insider perspective, commonly known as an “emic” understanding.¹⁸⁴ After his own ethnographic work had been harshly criticized, Schneider concluded that his fieldwork had filtered and misrepresented, what he thought were, “ethnographic facts.”¹⁸⁵ Schneider later argued that all fieldwork involves, at best, the “shadow of translation,” and, at worst, “anthropology has seen many things at one period only to decide later either that they were never there at all

¹⁸² For a review Morgan’s influence, see Richard Feinberg, “Introduction: Schneider’s Cultural Analysis of Kinship and Its Implications for Anthropological Relativism,” *The Cultural Analysis of Kinship: The Legacy of David Schneider*, ed. Feinberg and Martin Ottenheimer, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 1-32.

¹⁸³ “General Introduction,” in *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader*, ed. Parkin and Stone, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), viii-ix; cf. Barnard, *History*, 61ff. On structuralism, see Barnard, *History*, 121ff., ref. Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* [*Les Structures élémentaires de la Parenté*], rev. ed., trans. James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer, ed. Rodney Needham, (Boston: Beacon Press, [1949]1969). Also, see R. Needham, “Remarks on the Analysis of Kinship and Marriage,” in *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage*, ed. Needham, (London: Tavistock Press, 1971). For a more detailed review of earlier kinship studies, see Harold W. Scheffler, “Kinship, Descent, and Alliance,” in *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. John J. Honnigman, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973), 747-794.

¹⁸⁴ On “culture,” see especially his works, *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*, (ChUP, [1968]1980), 1; “What is Kinship all About?” in *Kinship Studies in the Morgan Centennial Year*, ed. P. Reining, (Washington, D.C.: The Anthropological Society of Washington, 1972), 32-63, reprinted in *Kinship and Family*, ed. Parkin and Stone, 257-274, and *A Critique*, 194. For a discussion of Schneider’s background and use of “culture,” see Kuper, *Culture*. On “emic,” see his example of informants’ discussing corpses and ghosts both of which the ethnographer should accept, *American Kinship*, 2-3 and 11.

¹⁸⁵ Schneider’s doctoral dissertation (1949) on the Island of Yap was published in various works from 1953 to 1962; see bibliography and his own review of his critics in Schneider, *Critique*, 5ff.

or that they were not what they were thought to be.”¹⁸⁶ The theoretical framework that Schneider questions is that of biological “facts.”

Calling into question fundamental presuppositions of kinship theory since Morgan, Schneider attacks the “virtual unanimity in defining kinship in terms of human reproduction.”¹⁸⁷ As to why human reproduction holds a “central place” in anthropological studies of kinship, Schneider inquires, “Why not for example, the customs surrounding eating, or a dozen other things universal to human beings and equally vital? The short, quick answer is that kinship has been defined by European social scientists, and European social scientists use their own folk culture as a source of many, if not all, of their ways of formulating and understanding the world about them.”¹⁸⁸ By questioning the biological groundings of kinship theory, Schneider concluded that “kinship” studies are obsolete: “To put it simply, my criticisms [of kinship scholars] is *not* that they used a theory to screen what the native said and to convert it into what they reported. I do the same thing. No one can do anything different. My complaint is that their theory is wrong.”¹⁸⁹ After Schneider’s denial of kinship as an analytical category anthropologists either

¹⁸⁶ *Critique*, 3-4.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 193. On Morgan and others, see Schneider, “What is Kinship All About?”

¹⁸⁸ *Critique*, 193.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4. See his earlier paper, “What is Kinship all about?” 269, where he calls kinship a “non-subject” which “exists in the minds of anthropologists but not in the cultures they study.”

ignore kinship altogether – as Schneider suggests – or develop further his destabilizing of “biological” kinship.¹⁹⁰

One development of kinship studies in anthropology was the way that feminist scholars linked kinship with gender. Although Schneider believes that kinship “phoenix-like, has risen from its ashes,” Louise Lamphere disagrees, arguing that studies of kinship have continued uninterrupted, focusing on “new ways of looking at societies” thanks to feminism and political economic studies.¹⁹¹ She summarizes the new approaches by saying,

Research on kinship has shifted over the exploration of reproduction and sexuality, the analysis of new forms of family, and the impact of colonialism and transnational forces on populations across the globe. We are studying kinship through examining ideologies, using narratives, and placing the anthropologist among his or her subjects (rather than as an aloof analyst).¹⁹²

Some of the first scholars to apply Schneider’s approach to gender analysis were Sylvia Yanagisako and Jane Collier who question the traditional disciplinary boundary between kinship and gender, arguing, “...what have been conceptualized as two discrete fields of study constitute a single field

¹⁹⁰ *Critique*, 199. For an earlier debate over “biological kinship,” see Needham, “Descent Systems and Ideal Language,” *Philosophy of Science* 27 (1960), 96-101; Ernest Gellner, “The Concept of Kinship,” *Philosophy of Science* 27 (1960): 187-204. Needham’s rejection of “biological kinship” is generally recognized as the consensus over Gellner; see John Beattie, “Kinship and Social Anthropology,” *Man* 64 (1964): 103, who criticizes Gellner, especially for his “wild goose chase in pursuit of an ideal kinship language.” cf. Schneider, *Critique*, vii, for his remarks on Needham and where they differ. Other reasons for abandoning kinship exist as well: e.g. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 75, says the term connotes “primordial ties” when used by western anthropologists “to measure degrees of advancement or modernization.” Anderson-Levy, “Colliding/Colluding Identities,” n. 2, uses “the terms kin, kin networks, family and family systems interchangeably as a way of demystifying or de-exoticizing the term kinship. My fluid usage is an attempt to destabilize or denaturalize this meaning.”

¹⁹¹ “Phoenix-like...” in Schneider, *Schneider on Schneider*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 193; “new ways...” in comments by Lamphere, “Whatever Happened to Kinship Studies? Reflections of a Feminist Anthropologist,” in *New Directions in Anthropological Kinship*, ed. Stone, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 21.

¹⁹² Lamphere, “Whatever Happened,” 42.

defined by our folk conception of the same thing, namely, the biological facts of sexual reproduction.”¹⁹³ The category of gender identity is now widely recognized as central to anthropological studies of kinship.¹⁹⁴

Another way in which scholars have attempted to circumvent Schneider’s denial of kinship as an analytical category is by replacing the notion of biological kinship with alternate demarcations.¹⁹⁵ J. Carsten, who seeks “to rescue kinship from its post-Schneiderian demise,” renders the western boundary between the biological and the social by referring to kinship in terms of shared “substance.”¹⁹⁶ Although approaches such as Carsten’s

¹⁹³ “Toward a Unified Analysis of Gender and Kinship,” in *Gender and Kinship: Essays toward a Unified Analysis*, eds. Collier and Yanagisako, (SUP, 1987), 7. For the stated understanding of “sex” (i.e. male/female anatomy over “gender”) as a universal, the premise attacked by Collier and Yanagisako, see Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender, and Society*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) and Judith Shapiro, “Anthropology and the Study of Gender,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 64 (4 1981): 446-65. For general reviews of feminist approaches to anthropology before Yanagisako and Collier, see J. Shapiro, “Cross-cultural Perspectives on Sexual Differentiation,” in *Human Sexuality: A Comparative and Developmental Perspective*, ed. H. Katchadovrian, (UCP, 1979); S. Rogers, “Women’s Place: A Critical Review of Anthropological Theory,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1 1978): 123-62; S. Tiffany, “Models of the Social Anthropology of Women: A Preliminary Assessment,” *Man* 13 (1 1978): 34-51; and N. Quinn, “Anthropological Studies on Women’s Status,” *ARA* 6 (1977): 182-222. For a criticism of Collier and Yanagisako, see Harold Scheffler, “Sexism and Naturalism in the Study of Kinship,” in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*, ed. Micaela di Leonardo, (UCP, 1991), 369, who summarily rejects the “semi-theoretical foundations of the arguments of the anti-kinship school.”

¹⁹⁴ See discussions in Stone, *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000); Stone, ed., *New Directions*; and Parkin and Stone, eds., *Kinship and Family*. Another discussion contributing to kinship studies is that of gay and lesbian critiques: e.g. Kay Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Weston, “Forever is a Long Time: Romancing the Real in Gay Kinship Ideologies,” in *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*, eds. Yanagisako and C. Delaney, (New York: Routledge, 1995); and C. Hayden, “Gender, Genetics and Generation: Reformulating Biology in Lesbian Kinship,” *CA* 10 (1 1995): 41-63. For a discussion of gay and lesbian studies and their influence on anthropological discussions of kinship, see Janet Carsten, “Introduction: Cultures of Relatedness,” *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, ed. Janet Carsten, (CUP, 2000), 12-13. Another example is the new reproductive technologies that have arisen in recent decades: e.g. Richard E. Maddy, “Fictive Kinship in American Biomedicine,” in *New Directions*, ed. Stone, 285-302; Judith S. Modell, “Open Adoption: Extending Families, Exchanging Facts,” in *New Directions*, ed. Stone, 246-263; Lynn Åkesson, “Bound by Blood? New Meanings of Kinship and Individuality in Discourses of Genetic Counseling,” in *New Directions*, ed. Stone, 125-138.

¹⁹⁵ Parkin and Stone, “General Introduction,” 5.

¹⁹⁶ “The Substance of Kinship and the Heat of the Hearth: Feeding, Personhood, and Relatedness among Malays in Palau Langkawi,” *AE* 22 (1995), 224. cf. Schneider, “What is Kinship All About?” 263ff., on “shared substance.”

utilising some expression of “relatedness” have been criticized, the approach has found many supporters in recent anthropological studies.¹⁹⁷

Although earlier studies like those of Levi-Strauss and others that assumed evolutionary principles – that is they placed European “civilization” as the most advanced of all societies – have been dismissed as ethnocentric, recent approaches have reintroduced evolution and/or biological understandings into the discussion of kinship.¹⁹⁸ This debate has continued past Schneider’s works into present debates over biology in the field of biological anthropology, sometimes deemed “neoevolutionists.”¹⁹⁹ The primary critics of such approaches have been feminist scholars who argue that any attempt to naturalize kinship or gender unavoidably results in chauvinistic understandings of sexes.²⁰⁰ Moreover, many agree that “scientific ‘facts’ are not ‘pure truths’ waiting to be discovered, but cultural creations of the scientist.”²⁰¹ The search for a “valid” analytical category other than kinship

¹⁹⁷ See criticism by Ladislav Holy, *Anthropological Perspectives on Kinship*, (London: Pluto Press, 1996), 168, who contends that this approach makes no distinction between ‘relationships’ of kinship and those of any other social contact, therefore making kinship “analytically vacuous.” Also, Stone, “Introduction,” 6-7. For supporters, see papers in Carsten, ed., *Cultures*.

¹⁹⁸ Parkin and Stone, “General Introduction,” 17.

¹⁹⁹ Stone, “Introduction,” 9-10. Examples include Robin Fox, *The Red Lamp of Incest*, (New York: Dutton, 1980); Joan B. Silk, “Ties that Bond: The Role of Kinship in Primate Societies,” in *New Directions*, ed. Stone, 71-92; and Barry Hewlett, “Neoevolutionary Approaches to Human Kinship,” in *New Directions*, ed. Stone, 93-108. cf. Schneider’s comments in *A Critique*, 199, for his views on the “sociobiologists.”

²⁰⁰ For a few examples, see L. Leibowitz, S. Slocum and R.R. Reiter, *Towards an Anthropology of Women*, (New York: Monthly Review, 1975); F. Dahlberg, ed., *Woman the Gatherer*, (New Haven: YUP, 1981); N.R. Peacock, “Rethinking the Sexual Division of Labor: Reproduction and Women’s Work,” in *Gender at the Crossroads*, ed. Leonardo, 339-360; S. Sperlings, “Baboons with Briefcases vs. Langure in Lipstick: Feminism and Functionalism in Primate Societies,” in *Gender at the Crossroads*, ed. Leonardo, 204-234; and M.W. Conkey and S.H. Williams, “Original Narratives: The Political Economy of Gender in Archeology,” in *Gender at the Crossroads*, ed. Leonardo, 102-139.

²⁰¹ Carsten, “Introduction,” 10; in support Carsten cites D.J. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Sciences*, (London: Routledge, 1989), and Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, (London: Free Association Books, 1991), 21. For criticisms of social anthropologists’ rejection of Biological Anthropology, see Michael G. Peletz, “Kinship Studies in Late Twentieth-Century Anthropology,” *ARA* 24 (1995), 343-72; and Scheffler, “Sexism,” 367.

highlights the internal debate among post-Schneiderian anthropologists over phenomenological comparison.

Many scholars agree with Schneider's insights on kinship as a social construct and yet disagree with any deduction that the analytical category of kinship is obsolete.²⁰² Kathey-Lee Galvin declares, "I would argue... that while the Schneiderians have exposed Western biases in anthropological kinship and demonstrated the value of emic approaches to 'kinship,' it does not follow that on another level etic concepts and cross-culturally valid models cannot be developed."²⁰³ While debate continues over the validity of any universal analytical category, most ethnographers can concede to Schneider's suggestion to allow a qualified understanding of kinship to serve as a model which can be tested empirically in other societies.

To summarize, the direction of recent kinship studies is multifaceted in that anthropologists recognize that western constructs such as "Blood is thicker than Water" should not limit what could be subsumed under the rubric of kinship in other societies. Many now concur with Schneider's critique:

The division of the sociocultural world into institutions, domains, or rubrics of kinship, economics, politics and religion which are presumed to be universally vital, distinct functions and the major building blocks out of which all cultures or

²⁰² This is not to say that Schneider himself discounted the possibility of all cross-cultural comparisons; for a review, see Stone, "Introduction," 5.

²⁰³ "Schneider Revisited: Sharing and Ratification in the Construction of Kinship," in *New Directions*, ed. Stone, 122. Similarly, Carsten, "Introduction," 5; ref. A. Strathern and M. Lambek, "Introduction: Embodying Sociality: Africanist-Melanesianist Comparisons," in *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*, ed. Lambek and A. Strathern, (CUP, 1998), 23, for the view that comparison is inescapable in ethnographic work because of the ethnographer's culture. Carsten, "Introduction," 14, also cites Yanagisako and Delaney, eds., *Naturalizing Power*, esp. their article, "Naturalizing Power," for the possibility of cross-cultural analysis in a post-Schneiderian approach which has lost the distinctions between kinship, politics, economics and other categories, saying that the recognition of these categories as cultural constructs allows for such cultural constructs to be compared cross-culturally. In agreement are Parkin and Stone, "General Introduction," 19, "Although there are differences over how much significance to accord the biological foundations of kinship, a wider measure of agreement has returned that its study should, and can, be comparative."

societies are made assumes a priori what should be the question: of what blocks is *this* particular culture built? ... We then approach a particular culture and describe it first in terms of one, then another of these institutional entities. And then comes the great discovery! All of these institutions are inextricably interrelated and intertwined so that in any particular case they cannot be distinguished!²⁰⁴

The resulting trend allows scholars to move fluidly between what were once hard and fast theoretical distinctions. Issues of power, politics, class and economics now regularly fall under the study of kinship.²⁰⁵ Not only have feminists intertwined kinship and gender, many anthropologists view gender identity, ethnic identity and class identity as inextricable from kinship.²⁰⁶

2.2.3 *Class Theory and Class Identity*

While early anthropologists were largely focusing on social organization in terms of kinship, early founders of class theory were reading anthropological studies. According to Donham, Karl Marx developed his approach to class by reading “extensively” in anthropology, and in doing so he was able (1) “to construct the broad outlines of history that led up to capitalism” and (2) “to undermine and to question the widespread assumption that capitalist norms offered the only possible way for human beings to live. If the Iriquois got along perfectly well without private property, the possibility of socialism seemed all the more real.”²⁰⁷ From these early studies class theory came to be known as a field of political science and later Sociology, largely removed from Social Anthropology.

²⁰⁴ *A Critique*, 197.

²⁰⁵ Peletz, “Kinship Studies,” 366.

²⁰⁶ e.g. Anderson-Levy, “Colliding/Colluding,” 185-203.

²⁰⁷ Donham, *History*, 4-5; following closely to Maurice Bloch, *Marxism and Anthropology: The History of the Relationship*, (OUP, 1985).

While the entirety of class theory outside of the discourse of anthropology need not be accounted for here, the key elements of Marx and Weber's theories have been accommodated by anthropologists. Marx's classical dichotomy between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie primarily applied to industrialized nations where property and the means of production became the boundary between classes.²⁰⁸ Marx's primary interest, however, was not so much a universally applicable theory of society, but rather a mobilizing ideology. As Ortner claims, "Indeed, the political (specifically, revolutionary) question in the classic Marxist frame-work has been precisely that of getting people to see their 'objective' positionality and to act upon it."²⁰⁹ In other words, Marx's class theory often focused on class identity.²¹⁰ As opposed to forwarding a meta-theory of property as a polarizing force, Weber understood class as one of many possible forms of social stratification, others of which include status and ethnicity.²¹¹ In other words, while Marx focused on duality and conflict with an end towards class awareness and mobilization, Weber problematized class, focusing on its fragmentation and contradictory nature.²¹²

Anthropologists began incorporating class theory in the 1960s by way of appropriating Marxism into their discourse. Donald credits the "radical

²⁰⁸ Ortner, "Identities," 2. Although Marx himself considered these classes subdividable (e.g. petite-bourgeoisie, etc.), he never systematized his understanding of the relationship between classes and subclasses; see Stephen Edgel, *Class: Key Ideas*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 2-10.

²⁰⁹ "Identities," 3.

²¹⁰ For later developments in Marxist theories of class, see Edgel, *Class*, 17.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹² For an introduction into these developments and debates, see Erik Olin Wright, ed., *The Debate on Classes*, (London: Verso, 1989). For the use of class in Sociology, especially the "death of class" movement and the countermovement, see Rosemary Crompton and John Scott, "Introduction: the State of Class Analysis," in *Renewing Class Analysis*, ed. Rosemary Crompton, Fiona Devine, Mike Savage and John Scott, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2000), 1-15.

thought” of the decade to the French philosopher, Louis Althusser, as introduced by anthropologists Marshal Sahlins and Eric R. Wolf.²¹³ Moreover, as Donald further elaborates, many anthropologists had ignored the colonial encounter of the recent era which led to omissions and even misunderstandings of the class make-up of many ethnographic subjects, and it was the realization of this omission that functioned as a catalyst for the incorporation of Marxist theories of class into anthropological studies.²¹⁴ Alice Littlefield and Hill Gates explain the appropriateness of Marxist theory in that it enables ethnographers and theorists “to integrate our knowledge of the human which is the anthropologist’s principal task.”²¹⁵ Littlefield and Gates, however, further elaborate that most anthropologists refuse to privilege economic factors in their ethnography, as does Marxism proper, but they incorporate a Marxist understanding of propertied classes into their broader descriptions of societies.²¹⁶

The momentum Marxism had gained within anthropology in the 1960s and early 1970s slowed down significantly until the collapse of the Soviet Union, which presented a challenge to Marxists of all fields.²¹⁷ As early as 1975, Bloch had noted the break-down of Marxism’s “monolithic” voice, which resulted in increasingly numerous challenges to the philosophy’s

²¹³ *History*, ix. Bloch, “Introduction,” in *Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology*, ed. Bloch, (London: Malaby Press, 1975): xi-x, also credits Althusser, and adds the influence of Emmanuel Terray, *Marxism and ‘Primitive’ Societies [Le Marxisme devant les sociétés ‘primitives’]*, trans. Mary Klopfer, (London: Monthly Review Press, [1969]1972). For more bibliography of Marxist influence on anthropology, see Donald, *History*, 4 n.6.

²¹⁴ *History*, 6; cf. Raymond T. Smith, “Anthropology and the Concept of Social Class,” *ARA* 13 (1984), 470.

²¹⁵ “Introduction” in *Marxist Approaches in Economic Anthropology*, eds. Alice Littlefield and Hill Gates, (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 1.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 2; they point out that this especially applies to the more recent anthropological approaches since the 1960s and 1970s. cf. Donham, *History*, ix, on the debate over Marxist liberating agenda in anthropology.

²¹⁷ Littlefield and Gates, “Introduction,” 2.

validity in anthropological study.²¹⁸ Explaining the deconstructing and contextualizing of the Marxist understanding of societies and the resulting relevance to anthropology, Donham opines, "...the realm that we in capitalist societies think of as 'economic' is just as peculiar and as culturally constructed as any other way of organizing material life. It is neither 'harder,' nor more 'abstract,' nor more of a system 'unto itself' than others. ...Realizing this anthropological point forces, if not an overturning of Marxism, then a revision of how it has often been understood."²¹⁹ The "revision" Donham mentions has often been that offered by Weberians in their understanding of class theory.

Although there is no parallel "Weberian Anthropology" like what is claimed with Marxist approaches, Weber's theories have made many in-roads into recent anthropological fieldwork and theoretical discussions.²²⁰ Weber's approach, which allows for contextually constructed aspects of class, provides anthropologists with an understanding that avoids essentializing any one aspect of a society. One example is Kevin A. Yelvington who employed some of Weber's understandings in his ethnographic work in order

to take into account historical situations where such factors as ethnicity and gender determine access to economic class and power. ...This theoretical move enlarges on the restricted Marxian concept of exploitation to include all exclusion practices through which one group enhances its rewards by closing off opportunities to others, whether the basis of

²¹⁸ "Introduction," xii-xiii.

²¹⁹ *History*, 11.

²²⁰ For a review, see Charles F. Keyes, "Weber and Anthropology," *ARA* 31 (2002): 232-55, who specifically attributes Weber's influence via Geertz and Bourdieu.

exclusion be property ownership, credentials, or ethnicity, regardless of the official legitimation.²²¹

Ethnographers like Yelvington appreciate the focus on contextuality afforded by Weber's class theory. The divorce of "class" from Marx's notion of property-ownership, according to Eriksen, serves as one of the most helpful insights incorporated from Weber by anthropologists.²²²

In employing the concept of class as an analytical category anthropologists generally stipulate the distinction between the theories of both Marx and Weber and their own approach in that the former base class on property ownership, means of production or some other empirically observable "fact" of economics.²²³ While class is often conceived of in economic terms such as wealth, anthropologists also emphasize and correlate other factors such as age, ritual purity, gender and any number of other socially specific referents which can be used to construct a class identity.²²⁴

Disagreement still exists among anthropologists as to how to study class in ethnographic research and how to apply class as an analytical category. Because scholars detect economic factors in virtually all known societies, some conclude with Donham who states, "I believe (1) that all

²²¹ *Producing Power*, 28-9; Note that Yelvington (30) still ties class to economic means, but simply stresses that the emphasis on the socially constructed symbols that restrict or permit individuals and groups to economic means should be determined by the context. In doing so, he cites Bourdieu's notions of capital, which extend beyond the purely economic connotations of the term, but includes (31), "economic capital, or productive property (money and material objects that can be used to produce goods and services); social capital, or positions and relations in groups or social networks; cultural capital, or life-style, tastes, skills, educational qualifications, and linguistic styles; and symbolic capital, or the use of symbols to legitimate the possession of varying levels and configurations of economic, social and cultural capital." Although this is primarily articulated in terms of modern capitalism, it illustrates how anthropologists are willing to deconstruct "class" into various symbolic or socially constructed forms of class identity. Also, see (32) where he calls ethnicity and gender forms of "embodied social capital" because they are socially constructed as fixed.

²²² *Small Places*, 151.

²²³ Edgel, *Class*, 14.

²²⁴ Eriksen, *Small Places*, 154.

human societies to the present have been organized by systems of material domination and (2) that these systems everywhere have been, to varying degrees, socially problematic.”²²⁵ In opposition to class universalists, Eriksen suggests, “Both Marxist thought about social class and other theories of social strata or classes have been criticised for being ethnocentric. ... Whereas some would hold that all societies are stratified and that concepts of class or strata are therefore universally useful, others would stress that the concepts themselves are European and relate intrinsically to modern state societies.”²²⁶ Additionally, however, Eriksen explores the implications of the postcolonial critiques of the universality of class and cites more nuanced approaches to class in order to conclude, “Class is an appropriate concept for anthropological analysis and, in some circumstances, an indispensable one.”²²⁷ Despite disagreements over the nature of class in comparative studies, a general consensus among anthropologists can be found in which class is a social construct requiring further elaboration and description.

Given the ambiguous nature of the applicability of class to any specific context or study, anthropologists often specify the element or aspect of the analytical category of class they employ in their work as an explanatory theory. One common approach to class is to recognize the encounter in

²²⁵ *History*, 7; note that Donham explicitly counters the received tradition of both Marxism (i.e. un-classed, pre-Capitalist societies) and Social Anthropology (i.e. cultural relativity.)

²²⁶ *Small Places*, 151; note how Eriksen bases his statement (153-4) on Bourdieu's fieldwork in his native France and in post-colonial Algeria; ref. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* [*La distinction: critique sociale du jugement*], trans. Richard Nice, (HUP, [1979]1984). cf. L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* [*Homo hierarchicus: Le système des castes et ses implications*], 2nd ed., trans. Mark Sainsbury, Louis Dumont and Basia Gulati, (ChUP, [1966]1980), 247-66, who claims that theories of social stratification are ethnocentric and the hierarchy of Indian society can only be understood in terms of ideology that generates the principles of social order; cited in Smith, “Anthropology,” 473.

²²⁷ *Small Places*, 491.

postcolonial societies, wherein capitalism spreads as a part of the globalizing trend of the last century. Smith acknowledges how this trend promises “to bring the whole universe of the anthropologist’s concerns into a comprehensive and comprehensible framework, since no society is now untouched by the modern world system.”²²⁸ Taking issue with such an “overgeneralizing master narrative,” Kate Crehan defends the use of class in postcolonial contexts, saying, “It is not, I would argue, that class is, as [some] would have it, a distinct dimension of inequality, or one factor alongside others such as nationalism, ethnicity, and generation, but rather that class should be seen as a way of analysing systematic patterns of inequality, reproduced over time, which are in various ways gendered, ethnicized, and so on.”²²⁹ Similarly, Karen Brodtkin Sacks nuances “inequality” towards a focus on “oppression”:

I am seeking both to retain Marx’s notion of class and to modify it very significantly so that it becomes both a gendered and racially specific concept, one that has no race-neutral or gender-neutral “essence.” This may be controversial to some Marxists and some feminists, but it seems to be a way to move toward that unified understanding sought by both, of how racial, class, and gender oppression are part of a single, specifiable, and historically created system.²³⁰

In summary of many such approaches to postcolonial forms of class studies, Eriksen concludes, “Class theory is nearly always a kind of conflict theory, seeing the conflicts between different classes as fundamental.”²³¹ The importance of conflict to class theory readdresses the overarching concern of

²²⁸ “Anthropology,” 471; ref. E.R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, (UCP, 1982), 381-3, who tracks the phenomenon.

²²⁹ Gramsci, *Culture and Anthropology*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 188-9, 195.

²³⁰ “Toward a Unified Theory of Class, Race and Gender,” *AE* 16 (1989), 534.

²³¹ *Small Places*, 151.

social identity, highlighting the interrelation and encounter of various group and individual identities.

Anthropologists apply class theory as part of a looser and broader set of social identities, much like recent approaches to kinship.²³² Littlefield and Gates note how even Marxist anthropologists now seek an “integration of gender and kinship with other elements of political economy.”²³³ Similarly, the clear and distinct divisions between class and ethnicity have been deconstructed in anthropological studies of class, resulting in approaches which Ortner asserts “embody a class referent.”²³⁴ Even the boundary between class and religious identities has been permeated by ethnographers of class theory.²³⁵ Another approach to identity that supplements the discussions of social identity, kinship identity and class identity is that of ethnicity theory.²³⁶

²³² Smith, “Anthropology,” 467, notes the “parallel” between class theorists who even deny that “class” exists and with kinship theorists. Other approaches that question the presuppositions of class theory tend to draw on the critique offered by Bourdieu; e.g. Ortner, “Identities”; and Charlesworth, *A Phenomenology*.

²³³ “Introduction,” 3; additionally, see the various papers in their volume which address this “integration.” For this same trend in sociological studies, see Rosemary Crompton, *Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), ix. For various Marxist responses to the integration of kinship and class, see the review in Donham, *History*, 9. For similar developments in Sociology, see Patrick Joyce, *Class*, (OUP, 1995), 6-7.

²³⁴ “Identities,” 4. Yelvington, *Producing Power*, 8, agrees, arguing, “Ethnicity, class, and gender are socially constructed in relation to each other.”

²³⁵ Smith, “Anthropology,” 484; ref. Taussing, *The Devil*. e.g. Rudolf C. Heredia, “Subaltern Alternatives on Caste, Class and Ethnicity,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* n.s. 34 (1 2000): 37-62.

²³⁶ Approaches to class in the fields of classics and Roman history will be introduced in the following chapter. For an overview of class in ancient societies such as Greece and Rome, see P. Calvert, *The Concept of Class*, (London: Hutchinson, 1982), 12-44; and a brief discussion of class in the Roman Empire by Edgel, *Class*, 1. For anthropological theories of class applied to archeology, see Meskill, “The Intersection.”

2.2.4 Ethnicity Theory and Ethnic Identity

Studies of ethnicity have a relatively short history in the discipline of anthropology in that early fieldwork focused on characteristics of a “people” or “tribe” observed rather than the “ethnicity” of those observed.²³⁷ Scholars explain the sudden appearance and popularity of the term “ethnicity” by the “sense of revulsion and shame at the events that racial doctrines, and specifically Nazi racial doctrines, brought about in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.”²³⁸ In other words, “race” intonated biologically fixed categories, a notion now discredited in most disciplines, especially Social Anthropology.²³⁹ Anthropologists currently understand ethnic identity in various ways, which can be categorized as primordialism and constructivism.

Since anthropologists reject “ethnicity” as some “thing” biologically fixed for individuals and groups (i.e. “race”), alternate criteria must be forwarded for what is and is not “ethnicity.” The primordialist position, expressed by Clifford Geertz’ article, explains ethnicity in terms of “givens” or “congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an

²³⁷ Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, (London: Pluto Press, 1993), 4.

²³⁸ Elisabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald and Maclolm Chapman, *History and Ethnicity*, (London: Routledge, 1989), 11-17 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, (OUP, 1996), 18-24, citation from 22.

²³⁹ Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 5; and Audrey Smedley, “‘Race’ and the Construction of Human Identity,” *AA* 100 (3 1998), 690. Eugenia Shanklin, “The Profession of the Color Blind: Sociocultural Anthropology and Racism in the 21st Century,” *AA* 100 (3 1998): 669-79, explains how anthropologists can still undertake “racial studies” as the study of people’s understanding of “race” in society. The substitution of “ethnicity” for “race” does not avoid all of the methodological and theoretical problems as noted by many scholars; cf. Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 5; Smedley, “Race,” 690; Tonkin, et al., *Ethnicity and History*, 22.

ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves.”²⁴⁰

Primordialists themselves may not attribute such “givens” as fixed, but claim that the informants do, which requires the notion to be incorporated into theory.²⁴¹ The theory, however, has been sharply criticized by Fredrik Barth, because the approach “allows us to assume that boundary maintenance is unproblematical and follows from the isolation which the itemized characteristics imply.... We are led to imagine each group developing its cultural and social form in relative isolation....”²⁴² Alternatively, Barth proposes a focus on the intersection, or “boundary,” between ethnic groups, citing the possibility of “cultural givens” to transmute across such boundaries and between “ethnicities.”

Constructivist approaches to ethnicity entail a further retreat from any notion of “boundedness” or essentialism. On one hand, anthropologists can understand ethnic identity as constructed for a “social, political and cultural

²⁴⁰ “The Integrative Revolution,” in *Old Societies and New States*, ed. Clifford Geertz, (New York: Free Press, 1963), 108-113 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 40-5; citation from 41-2. Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 41-3, notes Geertz’ reliance on Sociology, comments on how most sociologists and political scientists are primordialists. For an example, see Hutchinson and Smith, “Concepts of Ethnicity,” 9, who criticize both instrumentalist and constructivist approaches.

²⁴¹ Hutchinson and Smith, “Concepts of Ethnicity,” 8.

²⁴² “Introduction,” *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. Barth, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969), 9-38. For another criticism of primordialism, see Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, “The Poverty of Primordialism: The Demystification of Ethnic Attachments,” *ERS* 16 (1993): 182-201. For a defense of primordialist views, see Steven Grosby, “The Verdict of History: The Inexpungeable Tie of Primodality – A Response to Eller and Coughlan,” *ERS* 17 (2 1994), 164-71, reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 51-6.

resource for different interest- and status-groups.”²⁴³ Less functionalist approaches emphasize the discursive aspect of ethnicity, as Banks explains, “The content of the [ethnic] group – in terms of both ‘culture’ and personnel – has no a priori existence or stability. That is to say, it is not so much the group which endures as the *idea* of the group.”²⁴⁴ R. Neeman described the constructivist perspective as one in which “ethnic cultures are fluid, changing, and even invented, subject to the interpretations and choices of groups and individuals.”²⁴⁵ Some constructivist scholars, however, find even Barth’s approach unsatisfactory in that he believes the boundary itself to be somewhat fixed.²⁴⁶

More recent studies of ethnicity tend to destabilize even the boundaries on which Barth focused and adopt a more flexible and less essentialized understanding by focusing on the process of boundary construction. Levine discusses the extent to which ethnicity has been “decentred” in recent anthropological discourse, noting how “existing approaches have repeatedly

²⁴³ Hutchinson and Smith, “Concepts of Ethnicity,” 8; an approach also known as instrumentalism. For a three-fold outline of primordialist, instrumentalist and constructivist, see Sergey Sokolovskii and Valery Tishkov, s.v. “Ethnicity,” in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, eds. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, (London : Routledge, 1996), 190-3. J.L. Comaroff, “Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Difference in an Age of Revolution,” in *The Politics of Difference: Ethnic Premises in a World of Power*, eds. E.N. Wilmsen and P. Mallister, (ChUP, 1996), 164, argues that instrumentalism should be subsumed under constructivism. Alternatively, Banks, *Ethnicity*, reviews the debate in regional groupings or “schools.”

²⁴⁴ Banks, *Ethnicity*, 12; original emphasis.

²⁴⁵ “Invented Ethnicity as Collective and Personal Text: An Association of Rumanian Israelis,” *AQ* 67 (3 1994), 135.

²⁴⁶ cf. Barth, “Introduction,” 17. The accusation of Abner Cohen, *Urban Ethnicity*, (London: Tavistock, 1974), xii-xv, that Barth’s static understanding reifies ethnicity (and is, therefore, primordialist), is seen by Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 55, as “debatable.” More recently, Banks, *Ethnicity*, 13, concludes that Barth’s “position is closer to that usually known as primordialism – ethnicity as a permanent and essential condition,” because of Barth’s understanding of ethnicity as “a superordinate identity, one which transcends or is at least equivalent to all other identities (such as those based on gender, or status)....” Hal B. Levine, “Reconstructing Ethnicity,” *JRAI* n.s. 5 (2 1999), 167, represents a common understanding: “[Barth] developed an approach to ethnicity that contained elements of both...”

been discredited.”²⁴⁷ In other words, ethnicity has now become so malleable it is accused of being meaningless, as Banks concluded, ethnicity is a non-thing, it only exists “...in the observer’s head; it is an analytical tool devised and utilized by academics to make sense of or explain the actions and feelings of the people studied.”²⁴⁸ Frank Proschan, however, represents a common stance among anthropologists studying ethnicity:

If we require, by prior definitional fiat, that only a certain conception can be honored (or, variously, condemned) with the name of “ethnicity,” or that “ethnicity” can exist only in specified sociopolitical contexts, we have just as surely missed the point as if we insist (along with nationalist demagogues) that the ethnographic situation we see today must always have looked the same as it does now.²⁴⁹

Often even those who disavow the analytical validity of ethnicity, such as Banks, concede that discourse on ethnicity can continue by viewing ethnic

²⁴⁷ “Reconstructing Ethnicity,” 165; citing the assessment of Comaroff, “Ethnicity,” 164-5, who rejects past theories for a more anti-essentialist approach wherein “[ethnic and other] identities are not things but relations.”

²⁴⁸ *Ethnicity*, 186; elsewhere (47) Banks likens the problem to kinship theory. Banks readily admits that his work is a “deconstructive” exercise (187). Levine, “Reconstructing Ethnicity,” 177, responds, “Ethnicity moves around in everyone’s head, not just the social scientist’s.” Levine’s argument is similar to the one made by Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World*, (ChUP, 1989), pages 10-15 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 24-28. Such an understanding is also articulated by biological anthropologists (e.g. Richard McElreath, Robert Boyd and Peter J. Richerson, “Shared Norms and the Evolution of Ethnic Markers,” *CA* 44 (1 2003): 122-9) and by cognitive theorists (e.g. Francisco Gil-White, “Are Ethnic Groups Biological ‘Species’ to the Human Brain?: Essentialism in our Cognition of Some Social Categories,” *CA* 42 (4 2001): 515-54). It should be noted that Banks, *Ethnicity*, 183, acknowledges this usage in non-academic discourse: “But while ethnicity has an ever more insubstantial place within the narrow world of academia I hope the previous chapter showed that it appears to be increasingly important in the wider world.”

²⁴⁹ “‘We are all Kmhmu, Just the Same’: Ethnonyms, Ethnic Identities and Ethnic Groups,” *AE* 24 (1 1997), 106. Similarly, Tonkin et al., *History and Ethnicity*, 24. Even Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 162, after his section, “The End of Ethnicity?”, concludes that study of ethnicity “has much to offer.”

identity as one aspect of social and individual identities.²⁵⁰ By placing ethnicity within the broader discussions of identity, anthropologists can explore what has been called a “kaleidoscopic and seemingly paradoxical set of phenomenon,” a “set” which includes kinship, class and religion, to name a few.²⁵¹

Despite specific criticisms of Barth’s theory, many anthropologists agree with his central tenets, specifying that ethnic groups “cannot exist in isolation but only contrast to other groups.”²⁵² Most anthropologists agree that ethnicities cannot be classified simply by noting differences in traits and customs but instead it is the “social boundaries” between groups formed by their encounter and “not the cultural content enclosed by the boundary” that

²⁵⁰ Banks, *Ethnicity*, 182, and 188-9. Earlier, he lists “identity” as a “partner” category (see 142-9). Hutchinson and Smith, “Concepts of Ethnicity,” 12, comment, on how “anti-essentialist anthropologists” allow ethnicity to remain as “an optional identity... often overshadowed by other (gender, class, regional) identities. The role of women, in particular, in ethnic and national reproduction has in the last decade begun to attract considerable scholarly attention.” ref. Tonkin, et al., *History and Ethnicity*, Étienne Balibar, “The Nation Form,” in *Race, Nation, Class*, eds. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, (London: Verso, 1991), pages 96-100 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 164-8; Stuart Hall, “The New Ethnicities,” in *Race, Culture and Difference*, eds. J. Donald and A. Rattansi, (London: Sage, 1992), pages 256-8 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 161-3; and Eriksen, *Ethnicity*.

²⁵¹ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 8. For ethnicity and class, see Richard Harvey Brown, “Cultural Representation and State Formation: Discourses of Ethnicity, Nationality and Political Community,” *DA* 21 (3t4 1996): 265-97; Laurie Kroshus Medina, “Development Policies and Identity Politics: Class and Collectivity in Belize,” *AE* 24 (1 1997): 148-69; and general comments in Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 7 on the ‘correlation’ that often found between ethnicity and class, as well as his discussion (40-5) of the ‘economic’ elements of “social organization.” For ethnicity and religion, see Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 8, as well as Cynthia Enloe, “Religion and Ethnicity,” in *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe*, ed. P. Sugar, (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1980), pages 350-60 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 197-202; and Paschalis Kitromilides, “‘Imagined Communities’ and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans,” *European History Quarterly* 19 (2 1989), pages 177-85 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 202-8; Smith, “Chosen Peoples: Why Ethnic Groups Survive,” *ERS* 15 (3 1992), pages 440-9 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 189-97.

²⁵² Banks, *Ethnicity*, 13; also, Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 12

allow for discourse on ethnic identity.²⁵³ The focus on boundaries, encounter and even “conflict,” allow anthropologists to establish clear analytical methodologies while avoiding the essentializing tendencies of primordialism.²⁵⁴ Levine elaborates on Barth’s insights, “Demarcating self from other, in-group from out-group, the boundary component of ethnicity remained stable while society and culture changed. Individuals, moving across boundaries in response to changing conditions, could choose their ethnic identities from those available to them.”²⁵⁵ In this explanation, Levine highlights another aspect anthropologists have incorporated since Barth: the element of multiple ethnic identities, especially in postcolonial contexts.²⁵⁶

With Barth’s theories of boundaries incorporated and modified, many scholars return to the content of ethnic identities as perceived by informants and the manner in which they function as ethnic boundaries. Eriksen speaks of the balanced approach needed for scholarly delineation of ethnic markers or characteristics by noting both the subjectivist (emic) and the objectivist (etic) approaches: “Ethnic identities are neither ascribed nor achieved: they are both.”²⁵⁷ Scholars generally agree that the specific factors that can serve as boundary markers are all but innumerable. Manning Nash forwarded the triad

²⁵³ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 9. Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 37-8, agrees, noting, “Instead of listing traits of ‘objective culture,’ which members often share with non-members anyway, Barth defines ethnicity as categorical ascriptions....” As an example Eriksen cites Eugene E. Roosens, *Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis*, (London: SAGE, 1989), 12-3: “There is more chance that the Flemish in Brussels, who always have to speak French, will become more ‘consciously’ Flemish than their ethnic brothers and sisters in the rather isolated rural areas of West Flanders or Limburg.”

²⁵⁴ Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 3.

²⁵⁵ Levine, “Reconstructing Ethnicity,” 167; it should be noted that at this point in her summary, Levine – like most – begins to criticize other elements of Barth.

²⁵⁶ Also, Eriksen, *Ethnicity*, 8.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 56; the only debate, he says (58), is “on where to put the emphasis.” cf. Barth’s own statement in “Ethnic Boundaries,” 11: “[Ethnicity is] a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.”

of “blood, food and cult” as salient elements of most emic demarcations of ethnic identity.²⁵⁸ Hutchinson and Smith suggest six features which are held “in varying degrees”:

- (1) A common proper name
- (2) A myth of common ancestry
- (3) Shared historical memories
- (4) One or more elements of common culture, including “religion, customs, or language”
- (5) A link with a homeland
- (6) A sense of solidarity “on the part of at least some sections of the *ethnie*’s population.”²⁵⁹

In features (2) and (6), the authors reflect the understanding of Roosens, namely, that ethnicity is a “psychological reality,” and even if there is no common ancestry, the individuals can establish themselves with a certain ethnic identity.²⁶⁰ By forwarding descriptions and depictions – rather than definitions or essential elements – of ethnicity, anthropologists continue the discourse on ethnic identities with fruitful results; examples of such insights not only stem from the cornucopia of studies on contemporary ethnic groups, but also from the ethnography of historical records like those remaining from Roman Africa.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ *The Cauldron*, 25.

²⁵⁹ “Concepts of Ethnicity,” 6-7; note Hutchinson and Smith’s preference of the French *ethnie* over the English “ethnicity” or the Russian “ethnos,” and that they allow for “ethnic categories” when some of the six features are not prominent.

²⁶⁰ *Creating Ethnicity*, 15ff.

²⁶¹ The use of the analytical category in ancient history, particularly Roman history, will be surveyed in chapter three. For examples on the use anthropological theories of ethnicity in archaeology, see Philip L. Kohl, “Nationalism and Archaeology: On the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote Past,” *ARA* 27 (1998): 223-46; and Meskell, “The Intersection of Identity and Politics in Archaeology.” On the fact that the “complimentary” processes of ethnicity and globalization have occurred far into the the historical past, see the survey of Gheorghita Geană, “Ethnicity and Globalisation: Outline of a Complementarist Conceptualisation,” *SA* 5 (2 1997): 197-209. For example of anthropologists who compare historical, especially Roman, concepts of ethnicity, see John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*, (UNCP, 1982), pages 206-13 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 120-7; Moses Finley, *The Use and Abuse of Ancient History*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), pages 121-7 and 233-5 are reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 111-6; and William H. McNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History*, (TUP, 1986), pages 14-22 reprinted in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 107-11.

2.2.5 Anthropology of Religion and Religious Identity

In anthropology religion has always been a central concern to scholars for both fieldwork and theoretical discourse, having been understood to be a “cultural universal.”²⁶² One problematic element scholars found in discussing religion was defining precisely what was meant by the term, often with Eurocentric distinctions of “religion”/“paganism,” “religion”/“superstition” and “religion”/“magic.”²⁶³ One of the oldest anthropological definitions of religion is that championed by Edward Tylor, who forwarded a minimum definition of religion as a “belief in Spiritual Beings.”²⁶⁴ Although supernaturalist definitions of religion are still employed by some, many scholars find the theory untenable because it assumes a sharp distinction between “primitive” and “complex” peoples, and simply begs the questions of what is “supernatural” (e.g. ancestors?)²⁶⁵ An alternative definition of religion came in the work of Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912); he claimed previous “supernatural” approaches excluded religions such as Buddhism.²⁶⁶ Durkheim, therefore, defined religion with the emphasis on the social referent in sacred/secular terms: “A religion is a unified system

²⁶² Lambek, “General Introduction,” in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Lambek, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 4. On “cultural,” see Hicks, “Introduction,” xviii, and Bowie, *The Anthropology*, 21.

²⁶³ Eriksen, *Small Places*, 209. On the etymology of “religion,” see Hicks, “Introduction,” xvii-xviii.

²⁶⁴ *Primitive Culture*, (New York: 1871); see discussions in Bowie, *The Anthropology*, 22-24, who claims Tylor’s definition to be “remarkably durable”; and Lambek, “General Introduction,” 19. Similarly, see definitions of “anthropomorphic,” reviewed in R.H. Crapo, “More on a Cognitive Theory of Religion,” *CA* 23 (3 1982): 341-4.

²⁶⁵ Lambek, “Skeptical Rejoinders,” 83, outlines “skeptical ‘deconstruction’” of this view. See discussions in Bowie, *The Anthropology*, 22; Eriksen, *Small Places*, 210; and Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 27-30.

²⁶⁶ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* [*Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totémique en Australie*], trans. Karen E. Fields, (New York: The Free Press, [1912]1995), 21-33. See Eriksen, *Small Places*, 210-1; and Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 19.

of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set aside and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”²⁶⁷ Durkheim’s functionalist understanding was attacked for assuming his ethnographic subjects were uncritical “primitives” who required a religious crutch to stabilize their society.²⁶⁸ Moreover, both Durkheim and Tylor fall victim to the charge that they were seeking the “origins” of religion in humankind, an endeavor which assumed social evolution as a constant and therefore differentiated between “primitive” forms of religion – understood, at best, in the Freudian sense of naïve, coping mechanisms or, at worst, in the Marxist

²⁶⁷ Cited in Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 20; for a good summary and discussion of Durkheim, see David A. Gellner, “Anthropological Approaches,” in *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Peter Connolly, (London: Cassell, 1999), 12-5. Edith Turner, “Anthropology, Fieldwork and Belief,” *AT* 19 (2 2003), 22, examines Durkheim’s implicit value judgment of religion: “After every long and beautiful description – wooing the reader as well as himself – he carefully lifts his readers away from it all, distancing them, as it were, and bids them take another look, wearing those Durkheimian spectacles. The ‘spectacles’ are to cut out the glare, so to speak. Passage by passage Durkheim unbuilds each edifice and shows it to be – nothing, beautifully constructed by society. The power that people felt in religion most certainly did exist, he assured them. That power was society.”

²⁶⁸ Eriksen, *Small Places*, 204; Lambek, “Opening Frameworks,” in *A Reader* ed. Lambek, 19. cf. the arguments of Melford E. Spiro, “Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation,” in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. M. Banton, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), 85-126. Similarly, Hicks, “Introduction,” xviii, discusses Durkheim’s reductionism. Against functionalists, Eriksen, *Small Places*, 219, cites Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure*, (London : Athlone Press, [1954]1970), whose fieldwork undermined the Durkheimian understanding of “stability” by providing an example of mythical and political systems (egalitarian v. hierarchical) which changed cyclically.

formulation of oppressive, deceptions perpetuated by the powerful – and “complex” religions.²⁶⁹

An alternate approach came in Geertz, who shifted the discussion from the Durkheimian, functionalist approach to an attempt to “interpret” the emic importance of religion.²⁷⁰ Geertz defines religion as “(1) a system which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”²⁷¹ The goal of writing a “thick description,” as Geertz phrased it, is classically illustrated by a winking boy.²⁷² A so-called “thin description” would scientifically note that the boy closed one eyelid. The anthropologists’ aim, however, would be to interpret the meaning of this gesture, an aim even more significant for the anthropology of religion. Although Geertz too received criticisms, yet such criticisms are

²⁶⁹ Matthew Engelke, “The Problem of Belief: Evans-Pritchard and Victor Turner on ‘The Inner Life,’” *AT* 18 (6 2002), 3-8; and Klass, *Ordered Universes*. One famous early example is James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 12 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1890), who collects massive amounts of material on magic to argue that all religion – even Christianity – began as fertility cult; see discussion of Frazer in D. Gellner, “Anthropological Approaches,” in *Approaches*, ed. Connolly, 11. The strongest critic of the secularist agenda in anthropology was Evans-Pritchard, “Religion and the Anthropologists,” in *Essays*, 29-45; see discussion in Stewart, “Secularism,” 327; and Bowie, *The Anthropology*, 16. For examples of Islamic anthropology, Indian anthropology and various other scholars who have openly embraced some form of religious faith and practice, see Jonathan Benthall, “The Religious Provenances of Anthropologists,” *AT* 12 (4 1996): 1-2. A larger consensus, however, is represented by D. Gellner, “Studying Secularism, Practising Secularism: Anthropological Imperatives.” *SA* (9 2001), 339, who calls for “minimal skepticism”; similarly, Englecke, “The Problem of Belief,” 3, suggests a “professional” distance.

²⁷⁰ Eriksen, *Small Places*, 211; and the conclusion of Geertz’ article: “Religion,” 125. For the correlation of “interpretation of culture” in the U.S. with the shift to “meaning” in the British schools of Anthropology, see D. Gellner, “Anthropological Approaches,” 27. On the “interpretivist” method, see D. Gellner, “Religion, Politics and Ritual: Remarks on Geertz and Bloch,” *SA* 7 (2 1999), 136. Similarly, for the “symbolist” approach, as it is sometimes described, see Bowie, *The Anthropology*, 22; and Hicks, “Introduction,” xix.

²⁷¹ “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York : Basic Books, 1973), 90.

²⁷² The example of the philosopher Gilbert Ryle used by Geertz, “Thick Description,”

notably fewer and less damning; moreover, a large consensus of anthropologists employ his approach.²⁷³

Even since Geertz, however, religion, like kinship, gender, ethnicity and other anthropological categories, has been problematized. Eriksen indicates how some ethnographers attempting to describe an emic understanding of “religion” find that “religion” is an etic concept for the society or social group under observation.²⁷⁴ In accordance with what anthropologists discover for many of the so-called “cross-cultural” categories of the discipline, Benson Saler finds “religion” to be a western derived notion, as he maintains,

Long before European scholars of religion become scholars of religion, they have fairly well developed ideas of what to look for in searching the world for religions. In large measure, indeed, their scholarly efforts to define or characterize religion are efforts to refine and deepen the folk category that they began to use as children, and to foreground what they deem most salient or important about religion.²⁷⁵

The view of Saler and others that religion is a western category has not deterred anthropologists from studying religion; instead, many agree with the approach like that described by Bowie, who states, “When we come to look at various definitions of religion, we need to remember that we are constructing a category (‘religion’) based upon European languages and cultures, and that the term has no necessary equivalent in other parts of the world.”²⁷⁶ In light of the “failure” of anthropology to produce a universally applicable definition of

²⁷³ e.g. of critics: Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 23, claims that Geertz gives a definition of what a religion is, not a universal “rubric” of religion.

²⁷⁴ *Small Places*, 209.

²⁷⁵ *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories*, rev. ed. (New York: Bergham Books, [1993]2000), ix.

²⁷⁶ *The Anthropology*, 22.

religion, some scholars attempt to incorporate Geertz while returning to the phenomenological approach.²⁷⁷

In order to allow an interpretation of religion in emic terms and still provide a universal rubric or category, some scholars have delineated several elements or aspects of religion.²⁷⁸ Gellner outlined three “types” of religion in order to provide a universally valid category:

The category of religion needs to be deconstructed; it should be replaced by a hierarchy of (at least) three types of religion. First comes soteriology or salvation religion. Second is social or communal religion, the kind about which Durkheim was concerned to theorise and for which his theory works well. Third, there is instrumental religion, the attempt to make specific things happen within the world. It will be noted that this approach does not define religion in terms of belief, but in terms of what is done; and it distinguishes between the different purposes for which different kinds of religious actions are done.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 38 is an example of a scholar who explicitly offers this move. His own definition, described as an incorporation of Geertz to Durkheim, he suggests should be a hypothesis tested by the ethnographer: “Religion in a given society will be that instituted process of interaction among the members of that society – and between them and the universe at large as they conceive it to be constituted – which provides them with meaning, coherence, direction, unity, easement, and whatever degree of control over events they perceive possible.” Although such a definition could apply to the western understanding of science or philosophy, Klass answers (39), “How shall we, for example, set boundaries between religion on one side and, on the other sides, science, philosophy, medicine, psychology, and so on? Do we indeed need boundaries?” cf. D. Gellner, “Anthropological Approaches,” 20, who cites Robin Horton, “African Traditional Thought and Western Science,” *Africa* 37 (1967), 50-71, 155-87, republished in Horton’s essays, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West*, (CUP, 1993), to argue that despite differences, African religions and Western science both were “systems” that explain, control and predict the world.

²⁷⁸ D. Gellner, “Anthropological Approaches,” 36; Gellner cites the example of M. Southwold, “Buddhism and the Definition of Religion,” *Man* n.s. 13 (1978), 370-1, who lists twelve possible characteristics: (1) A central concern with godlike beings and men’s relations with them. (2) A dichotomisation of elements of the world into sacred and profane, and a central concern with the sacred. (3) An orientation towards salvation from the ordinary conditions of worldly existence. (4) Ritual practices. (5) Beliefs which are neither logically nor empirically demonstrable or highly probable, but must be held on the basis of faith. (6) An ethical code, supported by such beliefs. (7) Supernatural sanctions on infringements of that code. (8) A mythology. (9) A body of scriptures, or similarly exalted oral traditions. (10) A priesthood, or similar specialist religious elite. (11) Association with a moral community, a church. (12) Association with an ethnic or similar group. Similarly, Bowie, *The Anthropology*, 24, cites Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World’s Beliefs*, (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 10-11, who lists seven “dimensions.”

²⁷⁹ *Religion*, 142.

Anthropologists do not always agree on any one phenomenological or universally applicable definition of “religion,” but instead typically refine the category in terms of their own purposes in order to forward their work, usually focusing on a certain aspect of any one religion, including the aspect of religious identity.²⁸⁰

Religious identity can be constructed in varying ways by groups and individuals, such as when religious rituals or the specialists who enact them are used in differentiating insiders from outsiders.²⁸¹ The reason ritual is important for religious identity is that anthropologists often speak of ritual as the “social aspect of religion” and understand them as “rule-bound public events.”²⁸² Similarly, when observing religious specialists, ethnographers sometimes perceive there to be a correlating group, congregation or “church” – in the Durkheimian sense, what some have deemed a “collective consciousness.”²⁸³ While a Durkheimian theory of “church” or religious group may not always be present in religious systems, when it does appear anthropologists find it often occurs in relation to a religious “Other,” which shapes the group’s construction of their own religious identity.

Anthropological studies of religion often involve the confrontation between religious groups, requiring anthropologists to discuss topics such as

²⁸⁰ Eriksen, *Small Places*, 209-10.

²⁸¹ “Ritual” is yet another problematic category; see Eriksen, *Small Places*, 216, for examples of anthropologists who have discussed cockfights, modern Olympic games, etc. in terms of ritual.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁸³ Lambek, “Opening Frameworks,” 19. While past anthropological studies exhibited western-biased hierarchies of religious specialists (e.g. priest, shaman, witchdoctor, sorcerer, etc.), recent scholars focus primarily on any distinction between “lay-persons” and “clerics”; see Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 63-71. Moreover, this is not to say that the specialist/non-specialist is a universal distinction, but when societies attribute higher powers, special access, formal or informal training or some other distinctive feature to one or more of its members the designation is appropriate; see Eriksen, *Small Places*, 215.

difference. Lewis credits Evans-Pritchard, and those who have followed his approach, with recognizing how religion – and politics – have an “institutional basis of conflict and cohesion” which often constructs meanings and identities in terms of the “Other.”²⁸⁴ Klass offers a way to understand the religious “Other” as “sinner”: “By sinner, I mean the individual (or, better, the category of individuals – the role) who has violated the rules, who is (temporarily or permanently) not in good standing with the rest of the congregation.”²⁸⁵ By attaching religious practice to “standing” or “solidarity,” anthropologists can speak of group identities. While explicating the relationship between religion and the identities of ethnographic subjects, Albert Doja adds,

The collective identities are only applicable in reference to an “otherness,” which points to the organization of dichotomous groupings between “we” and “others.” These identities can only be realized on the boundary of “we,” in contact or confrontation with, or in contrast to, “others.”²⁸⁶

Although few anthropologists would claim that religious boundary markers and religious identities can be universally applied, many scholars insist that religion often infiltrates other aspects of society, including the aspects that effect individual and group identities.

Because religion is often described as an all encompassing system, anthropological theorists often assume its import in discussing other forms of identities. People’s religion often affects (or is affected), determines (or is determined) and/or correlates (positively or negatively) with aspects of

²⁸⁴ *Arguments*, xii; cf. R.L. Stirrat, *Power and Religiosity in a Post-Colonial Setting: Sinhala Catholics in Contemporary Sri Lanka*, (CUP, 1992).

²⁸⁵ *Ordered Universes*, 84.

²⁸⁶ Albert Doja, “The Politics of Religion in the Reconstruction of Identities,” trans. Angela McLachlan, *CrA* 20 (4 2000), 423.

kinship, gender, class, ethnic and innumerable other forms of social identities.²⁸⁷ On many occasions “politics” serves as a synonym for a totalizing category or system of any given element in any given society, especially when used to indicate the interconnectedness of religion and power.²⁸⁸ In other words, religion provides anthropologists with a comparative category that often entails the complex web of social and individual identities that accompany religious practice and belief. Religious identity, like other forms of identity discussed above, is often contextually constructed in terms of insiders and outsiders.

2.3 Conclusion

The above survey of anthropological theories focused on how those theories explored aid the ethnographer in interpreting individual and group identities. These categories and theories can now be applied to the postcolonial context of Roman Africa. Therein, these theories will be shown to provide explanatory assistance by citing scholars who have already applied them to the ancient Mediterranean world. After the depiction of the socio-political landscape comes into focus in chapter three, chapter four will apply the same theories – aided by the findings of chapter three – to the Christian

²⁸⁷ For religion and kinship (among other things), see Carol Delaney, “Father State, Motherland, and the Birth of Modern Turkey,” in *Naturalizing Power*, ed. Yanagisako and Delaney, 177-200; for religion and gender, see Chia Longman, “Empowering and Engendering ‘Religion’: A Critical Perspective on Ethnographic Holism,” *SA* 10 (2 2002): 239-48; for religion in relation to class, see Stephan Feuchtwang, “Investigating Religion,” in *Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology*, ed. Maurice Bloch, (London: Malaby Press, 1975), 61-84; and for religion and ethnicity, see Nicole Rodriguez Toulis, *Believing Identity: Pentecostalism and the Meditation of Jamaican Ethnicity and Gender in England*, (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

²⁸⁸ *Religion*, 150. Similarly, Stewart, “Secularism,” 326; and Bowie, *The Anthropology*, 19, who attributes this point to A.M. Hocart, *The Life-giving Myth and Other Essays*, (London: Tavistock/Methuen, [1952]1973). cf. the opening of this chapter.

communities of North Africa that existed during Tertullian's era. Chapters five through nine will then explore Tertullian's writings applying these same theories and contextual insights to his works.

CHAPTER THREE

THE AFRICAN CONTEXT OF TERTULLIAN: SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND ROMAN AFRICA

3.1 Introduction – Roman Africa and African Romans

Was Tertullian a Tunisian? While one level of discourse might allow scholars to apply such appellations, historians would typically deem such an identification anachronistic. What identities, then, were available to Tertullian, writing from the context of Roman Africa?²⁸⁹ In order to explore the possibilities, a brief chronology of Roman colonization of African will prove helpful, followed by the application of anthropological theory to the North Africa of Tertullian's period. Before beginning, however, one should appreciate recent discussions of the classical concept of Romanization and its import for Roman Africa.

3.1.1 Romanization of Africa

When historians reference Rome's colonization of Italy and what became the Roman provinces, they employ the term "Romanization," a concept which usually involves political dominance coupled with the usurping of indigenous or pre-Roman elements with Roman "culture" (Latin language, Roman religion, baths, gladiatorial games, architecture, etc.). Romans, as early as Pliny the Elder, felt a vocation to "civilize" (i.e. Romanize) the world

²⁸⁹ e.g. British? See *Adu. Iud.* 7.4: "...the haunts of the Britons – inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ" [...*et Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca Christo uero subdita*]. Or high-caste Indian? See *Apol.* 42.1: "We are not Indian Brahmins or Gymnosophists..." [*Neque enim Brachmanae aut Indorum gymnosophistae sumus...*].

by extending the *pax Romana*.²⁹⁰ Often, the process of Romanization is said to have been extensive in the West but limited in the Greek speaking East.²⁹¹

Due to this “misleading” model, historians too often assumed that the entire region of the Mediterranean was Graeco-Roman because they overlooked the distinction between colonizers and colonized, assuming that no “civilization” existed in many provinces until Romanization occurred.²⁹² In reaction to the pro-colonial perspective, scholarship on Romanization began to reexamine the notion of “resistance” and constructed a new model of Romanization which depicted static dichotomies: Roman/barbarian, urban/uncivilized, accommodation/resistance.²⁹³ These debates and the use of these models impacted the historiography of ancient North Africa.

Several scholars of Roman history have contributed to the discussion of Romanization in Africa by focusing on the presuppositions held by contemporary historians and emphasizing the perspective of the colonized. One of the first to question the scholarly assumptions regarding the

²⁹⁰ Janet Huskinson, “Looking for Culture, Identity and Power,” in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*, ed. Janet Huskinson, (London: Routledge, 2000), 20-3; ref. *Naturalis historia* 3.39.

²⁹¹ e.g. James B. Rives, “Religion in the Roman Empire,” in *Experiencing Rome*, ed. Huskinson, 269, who argues “that the reason for this lies in the fact that the cultures of the west lacked the prestige of Greek culture, and so could not compete as well with the culture of the conquerors.” For full discussion, see Greg Woolf, “Becoming Roman, Staying Greek: Culture, Identity and the Civilizing Process in the Roman East,” *PCPS* 40 (1994): 116-143.

²⁹² On “misleading,” Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire [Les Cultes Orientaux dans le monde Romain]*, trans. Antonia Nevill, (Oxford: Blackwell, [1989]1996), 2. Also, Ton Derks, *Gods, Temples and Ritual Practices: The Transformation of Religious Ideas and Values in Roman Gaul*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 2, adds that Romanization discourse can be characterized as having an “aversion to social theory.” For a general review of the major voices for and against Romanization, see David Cherry, “Marriage and Acculturation in Roman Algeria,” *CPh* 92 (1 1997), 71. For a review of the colonial “bias” in North African scholarship, see D.J. Mattingly and R.B. Hitchner, “Roman Africa: An Archeological Review,” *JRS* 85 (1995), 165-213.

²⁹³ Huskinson, “Looking, 20-3. For examples of anti-Roman sentiment, or “resistance” in Egypt, see Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict*, (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 331.

Romanization of Africa was A. Laroui.²⁹⁴ Based on the evidence of repeated indigenous revolts in Africa against Rome, Laroui argues that Africans under Rome led a continuous resistance to Roman power.²⁹⁵ Similarly, M. Benabou claims that Africans resisted Rome “culturally” as well as militarily.²⁹⁶ The wake of scholars that followed polarized to favor a colonial perspective or an indigenous perspective, the former claiming that Laroui and Benabou were anachronistic in assigning nationalism to an ancient civilization. Although Mattingly and Hitchner agree that the postcolonial perspective can in turn offer an equally one-sided approach, they declare that “the scholarly reaction to Laroui and Benabou has been unjustifiably harsh.”²⁹⁷

Criticisms of one-sided approaches continue to affect the academic research of ancient North Africa, and some scholars claim that the critique of Laroui and Benabou is still unanswered in light of archeological data. David Cherry asserts, “The physical record, too, is inadequate, largely because the archaeologists of the colonialist era concentrated their attention, perhaps naturally enough, on the spectacular and mostly urban Roman monuments that served as visible reminders of the grandeur of the European heritage, so that very little attention was paid to the material record of North African culture (where it survived), and almost none at all to the countryside, where the

²⁹⁴ *L'histoire du Maghreb: Un Essai de Synthèse*, (Paris, 1970), cited in Quinn, “Roman Africa?”, 8.

²⁹⁵ On indigenous revolts, see the following discussion in section 3.1.2.

²⁹⁶ *La Résistance Africaine à la Romanisation*, (Paris: F. Maspero, 1976); discussed in Cherry, “Marriage,” 71.

²⁹⁷ “Roman Africa,” 170. Regarding a “one-sided approach,” Quinn, “Roman Africa?”, 9, discussing the Republic, concludes both “Romanization” and “Punicization” are inadequate categories.

indigenous is most likely to be preserved.”²⁹⁸ Elsewhere, Cherry sharpens his criticism by saying,

In the almost complete absence of evidence for any significant measure of cultural change in the region, it is difficult now to understand why so much modern writing about North Africa has maintained that it was extensively Romanized. I suppose that some part of the explanation is to be found in the once widely shared mostly implicit assumptions about the superiority of European civilization.²⁹⁹

Another scholar, Brent Shaw, similarly critical of past studies remarks, “There was a hardened preconception in the minds of most Europeans, especially the *colons* and colonial administrators who went to North Africa, that they were the latter-day counterparts or heirs of a glorious Roman (that is to say, European) past.”³⁰⁰ Both Shaw and Cherry are reviving the archaeological arguments forwarded by T.R.S. Broughton in his work *The Romanization of Africa Proconsularis*.³⁰¹

Broughton, however, was not well received by his colleagues. Cherry explains why: “[Broughton’s] book, I think, was never really given the attention it deserves, perhaps because many of its conclusions ran counter to views which were widely held at the time it was published, and which, in a tradition that was not entirely overthrown even by the Algerian revolution of 1962, tended both to interpret the Roman conquest of North Africa as a blessing for its ‘less civilized’ indigenous population, and to assume that the Romans profoundly altered North African economy and society.”³⁰² More

²⁹⁸ *Frontier and Society in Roman North Africa*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 2-3; for a survey of the archeology of ancient North Africa, see Susan Raven, *Rome in Africa* 3rd ed., (London: Routledge, 1993), xxx.

²⁹⁹ *Frontier*, 160-1.

³⁰⁰ *Environment and Society in Roman North Africa*, (Aldershot, Great Britain: Variorum, 1995), 384.

³⁰¹ Broughton, *The Romanization*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1929).

³⁰² *Frontier*, vii.

recently, through the efforts of the aforementioned scholars, the study of North African history has entailed a renewed approach.

The concept of Romanization has now been problematized, and the resulting discussions prefer to focus “process” instead of a reified accommodation/resistance model.³⁰³ When introducing a series of papers collected to address the issues of imperialism and Romanization, D.J. Mattingly explains, “Part of the problem lies in the monolithic nature of most visions of Roman imperialism, whether praising it or damning it utterly. Such studies give the impression of a static and unvaried structure and suggest that there is, and was, only a single viewpoint.”³⁰⁴ In view of these debates, what may be assumed is that not all Africans reacted to Roman occupation homogeneously; while some were “Romanized,” others resisted, many navigated between either extreme.³⁰⁵

The remainder of this chapter concerns itself with an exploration of ancient North Africans’ social identities, and it outlines the identities of various groups within the ancient North African societies both by surveying current studies of Roman and African history and by utilizing theories of Social Anthropology. Although the scope of this work is limited primarily to Africa Proconsularis in the second and third centuries, other neighboring

³⁰³ Woolf, “The Unity and diversity of Romanization,” *JRA* 5 (1992): 349-52. For a discussion of how “these conceptions can be seen to be embedded within the rhetoric of European imperialism from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” see Ray Laurence, “Introduction,” *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, ed. Laurence and Joanne Berry, (London: Routledge, 1998), 2.

³⁰⁴ “Introduction,” in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse, and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire*, ed. Mattingly, *JRA* Supplementary Series no. 23, (1997), 7. Also, Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Roman Civilization in Gaul*, (CUP, 1998), 20. See, for example, where even Romans, such as Tacitus, can be understood to in terms of “resistance,” in Paula James, “The Language of Dissent,” in *Experiencing Rome*, ed. Huskinson, 277-303.

³⁰⁵ See Loveday Alexander, ed., *Images of Empire*, in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Supplement Series 122 (1991), for a collection papers that highlight the varying and often contradictory reactions to Rome.

contexts and eras will be discussed when they illuminate the focal community. Before addressing specific social identities and applying anthropological theories, a brief summary of North African history under Rome will be presented.

3.1.2 Colonization of Africa

Scholars know relatively little about North Africa before Roman colonization and must rely on the reports of Greek and Roman historians.³⁰⁶ The local populations, variously referred to as Libyans, *Afri* (African) and Berbers, consisted of various pastoral and agricultural, urban and rural, as well as oral and literate societies.³⁰⁷ Long before Roman occupation, colonization of North Africa involved Phoenicians on their trade route to the Iberian peninsula who established sea ports along the North African coastline (c. 1000 BCE). The most famous and influential of these ports was Carthage, traditionally said to be founded (c. 814 BCE) by Dido. Punic language and customs expanded inland during the centuries before Rome, intermingling language, practices and gods among other indigenous peoples.³⁰⁸ With its military and naval superiority, Carthage expanded its own imperial endeavors through much of North Africa. Although peaceable trade with Rome existed as early as 509 BCE, Carthage conflicted with Rome resulting in its sequential defeats in the three Punic wars and the ultimate destruction of Carthage (146

³⁰⁶ The following chronology is taken from Raven, *Rome*; and Anthony R. Birley, *The African Emperor: Septimius Severus*, rev. ed. (London: B.T. Batsford LTD, 1988); unless otherwise noted. For an archaeological survey of this period, see Quinn, "Roman Africa?"

³⁰⁷ On "Berber" as an Arabic loan-word from Greek, see Fergus Millar, "Local Cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic and Latin in Roman Africa," *JRS* 58 (1968), 128.

³⁰⁸ For "African accent," see Millar, "Local Cultures," 127; and Birley, *The African Emperor*, 35.

BCE). Rome declared the territory around Carthage a Roman province, which became known as Africa Vetus.

North Africa consisted of many peoples and kingdoms, with varying loyalties and identities. One example is the peoples of Numidia: those known as the Massyli also fought against Rome in the second Punic war (218-202 BCE), while the Massaesyli, sided with Rome against Carthage. Later, the Numidian king, Jugurtha, would go to war with Rome, only to be betrayed by his father-in-law to Rome (104 BCE). In 46 BCE King Juba I would ally Numidia with Pompey, but after his defeat by Caesar Numidia would be incorporated as another province, Africa Nova. The Mauretians occupied much of modern day Algeria and Morocco, and, after Rome had gained military control of much of North Africa, Caesar Augustus appointed Juba II, who was raised and educated in Rome, as king of the client kingdom, but Caligula would later kill Juba's son (40 CE) and make Mauretania a Roman province. Also of interest are the Gaetulians of the western deserts who sided first against Rome with Jugurtha before allying with Rome and the Garamantes, who themselves generally resided south of Tripolitania, and who later occasionally raided settlements along the coast until subdued by Rome in 70 CE.

Long into the Empire, natives of North Africa continued to speak both Punic and Libyan as their native languages and continued to worship both Punic and Libyan gods, and thus, the overlaying of Punic customs creates the first layer in a complex matrix of North African identities.³⁰⁹ Throughout North Africa, Punic influence assimilated into the indigenous societies to the

³⁰⁹ On the problems of "Punicization" and the archaeological material data, see Quinn, "Roman Africa?", 23-7.

extent that Raven remarks, "...it was the Libyans in the third [century] who finally transformed 'Tyrians into Africans' and, in turn, became the upholders of neo-Punic language and traditions for centuries under the Romans."³¹⁰

3.1.2.1 Romanization of Africa

Roman colonization of Africa can be understood as a process that penetrated the inland in stages, thereby increasing the grain supply for the empire.³¹¹ Carthage was refounded in 29 BCE by Octavian – soon to be Augustus, and Africa Vetus and Africa Nova were subsumed under the larger Africa Proconsularis. In the first century, as Rome grew stronger and the need for more grain increased, Roman settlements increased and pushed inland, furthering the acculturation of indigenous people with the Latin language and even Roman religions, largely by transplanting military veterans. Broughton insists that the amalgamation of language and customs came about by trade and not by imperial intent.³¹² By the end of the second century, Rome was well established in Africa, at least in economic terms. However, the inscriptions left by natives under Roman occupation reveal that comparatively few gave up their own language, cults, and customs for the Roman.³¹³ Latin became the trade language because most of the colonizers came from Italy.

³¹⁰ Raven, *Rome*, 31; it should be noted that Raven in no way discounts the enormous diversity within North Africa.

³¹¹ Broughton, *The Romanization*; the following outline is taken from his work. For the same pattern with other Punic settlements in the Mediterranean, see, for example, Peter van Dommelen, "Punic Persistence: Colonialism and Cultural Identities in Roman Sardinia," in *Cultural Identity*, ed. Laurence and Berry, 25-48. For further discussion of the process of grain supply from Egypt and Africa Proconsularis, see Phil Perkins, "Power, Culture and Identity in the Roman Economy," in *Experiencing Rome*, ed. Huskinson, 197-8.

³¹² *The Romanization*, 116ff.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 119ff.

Despite the imposition of Roman trade, “the cultural situation in Africa was quite complex, much more so than that in most other provinces in the western Roman Empire. There was to begin with an indigenous culture which lasted well into the imperial period.”³¹⁴ Just as the Punic influence in no way voided the indigenous customs and practices, neither did the Roman victory over Carthage annihilate the Libyo-Punic.³¹⁵ The Punic population returned to the now Roman Carthage of Augustus to form a large percentage of the lower classes.³¹⁶

As Roman trade created more of a Latin presence in North Africa, more Africans assimilated into Roman societal structures. In discussing the Romanization of Africa, Edwin Champlin states, “In Africa, as elsewhere, this [Romanization] was tantamount to urbanization. Therein the ancient cities of the East had a tremendous advantage, and a complementary disadvantage for Africa lay in the vestiges of its strong and alien Punic culture.”³¹⁷ Colonists came to Africa for land with which to raise grain and olives, and with land ownership they hired native workers or re-rented portions resulting in “a society of unprivileged serfs.”³¹⁸ Whether urban or rural, the new lower classes created by Roman colonization retained many of their indigenous customs and practices.

³¹⁴ Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 14.

³¹⁵ Millar, “Local Cultures,” on the survival of Punic late into the imperial period.

³¹⁶ Broughton, *The Romanization*, 57; and Frend, “Heresy and Schism as Social and National Movements,” in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. D. Baker, (CUP, 1972), 39-40.

³¹⁷ *Fronto and Antonine Rome*, (HUP, 1980), 12. For more on urbanization during this time, see Phil Perkins and Lisa Nevett, “Urbanism and Urbanization in the Roman World,” in *Experiencing Rome*, ed. Huskinson, 213-244.

³¹⁸ Broughton, *Romanization*, 227; cf. Mattingly, “Africa, a Landscape of Opportunity?” in *Dialogues*, ed. Mattingly, 124-6.

3.1.2.2 Africanization of Rome

Well into the second century, a shift occurred where the trend of Rome influencing Africa was reversed, and Africa began to influence Rome. Raven explains, "For most of the second century [the Africans] were to dominate the intellectual life of the Empire, and by the 180s nearly a third of the Roman senate was of African origin."³¹⁹ Moreover, in 193 (and until 211) Lucius Septimius Severus became the first African emperor of Rome, followed by his two sons, Geta and Caracalla. Whereas, the first period of Roman presence in Africa could be described as the Romanization of Africa, the latter period could conversely be labeled the Africanization of Rome.³²⁰

The wealth of Africa Proconsularis allowed many of the provincials to become upwardly mobile in the Roman system. The identities of the upwardly mobile Africans grew in complexity: were they African or were they Roman? Raven writes, "They remained loyal to their native cities; individual senators frequently became the patrons of their birthplaces, interceding with the Emperors to raise them from *municipium* to *colonia*, or pleading for favors for compatriots newly arrived in Rome."³²¹ As will be evidenced below, in some instances loyalties were not so clear, creating complex identities for the upwardly mobile Africans.

Africa of the later empire was riddled with political instability, and the indigenous populations varied widely in their allegiances. Septimius Severus came to power by defeating his rivals Pescinius Niger, an Italian officer in Syria, and Clodius Albinus, an African general in Britian, and he ruled by

³¹⁹ *Rome*, 122.

³²⁰ See Birley, *The African Emperor*, 83, for examples of "the advance of Africans."

³²¹ *Ibid*, 126.

transferring power from senators to the military. His son and successor was murdered by Macrinus, a Mauretanian who briefly became emperor.

Emperors who succeeded him also met untimely deaths, including Maximinus Thrax who was killed (238 CE) in an uprising that originated in Africa.

Gordian I, himself probably of Roman descent and a proconsul of Africa, was named emperor by leaders of a revolt in Africa that consisted largely of indigenous and lower class peoples in and around Carthage. Although Gordian and his son, Gordian II, were defeated, Gordian III would be appointed emperor, only to be challenged by another indigenous revolt in Africa, led by the proconsul Sabinianus (240) who was swiftly defeated.

Roman officials would also have to face repeated revolts on the borders of Africa Proconsularis for the following decades. Firmus, from Mauretania, led an indigenous revolt that was suppressed (375) by Rome with the help of Firmus' brother, Gildo. Later, Gildo himself rebelled against Rome (397), mustering a large following in Africa before being defeated the emperor who was aided by Gildo and Firmus' brother, Mascezel.

The invasion of the Vandals (428) of the fifth century and the Byzantine reconquest saw the wealth and prosperity of the provincials depleted. The constant turmoil between the empire and the indigenous peoples preceded the Arabian re-colonization of Africa in the seventh century. Looking back over the entire period, Cherry states, "Putting even the best face on the Romans' actions in the region, it is hard not to conclude, with Broughton, that their only identifiable policy in the frontier-zone is one of 'exploitation' ... [resulting in] little immigration into the frontier-zone; hardly any change in native economic structures; limited interaction between the

intrusive and indigenous cultures.”³²² Cherry is echoing the argument of Broughton, “The Romans adapted themselves to Africa; they gave her peace, and made her prosperous, but they never made her Roman.”³²³ The historical data suggests that around and amidst the numerous Roman colonial centers in North Africa remained a vast plethora of indigenous communities that retained much of their pre-Roman practices and customs. With this presentation of the political landscape of Roman Africa in the background, the categories of identities that were used by the various peoples of North Africa under the Roman Empire will now be explored.

3.2 Applied Theories

Theories from Social Anthropology have enjoyed a renewed usage among archaeologists and ancient historians.³²⁴ Nevertheless, a few scholars, such as K.J. Matthews, reject any “borrowing” of theory and prefer to claim their “roots are in the dirt of the archaeological site, the best foundation for a truly archaeological theory.”³²⁵ Despite the insistence of some to avoid theory, many archaeologists have turned to anthropological theory to assist in the interpretation of their findings.³²⁶

A strong proponent of anthropological theory among classicists is S.C. Humphreys, who criticizes historians’ presumptions about objectivity:

³²² *Frontier*, 73.

³²³ *The Romanization*, 227-8. Similarly, see Dommelen, “Punic Persistence,” 25-48, for the Punic settlement in Sardinia, which was “Romanized” much earlier militarily, but remained Punic in “material culture.”

³²⁴ For discussion, see Laurence, “Introduction,” 1-9.

³²⁵ “Archaeological Data, Subculture and Social Dynamics,” *Antiquity* 69 (1995), 592.

³²⁶ P.S. Wells, “Identity and Material Culture in the Later Prehistory of Central Europe,” *JArR* 6 (1998): 239-298. For the current state of the relationship (or lack thereof) between the disciplines of Archaeology and History in general, see Laurence, “Introduction.”

“Historians and philologists share a bit of leaving their assumptions about psychology, culture and social relationships unstated – and even, for the most part, consider this a positive virtue.”³²⁷ Explaining the usefulness of social theory, Humphreys explains, “Anthropologists are not likely to offer us help with filling in our the blanks in our knowledge of Bronze Age kinship or religion. But they *can* offer a framework within which we can try to put together fragments of Greek culture and society studied in isolation, into a coherent whole. And this does seem to be a crucial need at present for Classical Studies generally.” More recently, John Scheid promotes Anthropology for similar reasons in that it “offers an excellent school of thought and a methodology that will help to distance us from our ethnocentrism and to ‘decolonise’” Roman studies.³²⁸ This decolonizing refers especially to the “Other” of ancient history, as is discussed by Simon Goldhill, the editor of a work similarly interested in identity in the Roman world, who bemoans the problem: “[Anthropology’s] direct effect on classics has been small, in part because the opportunities of studying ‘working class’ (slave, helot, latifundia, poor man, even female) culture are severely handicapped by the largely elite evidence which survives.”³²⁹ Similarly, Huskinson insists that historians should concern themselves as much with ethnocentrism as with anachronism in order “to hear the hitherto ‘silent voices’ in Roman society.”³³⁰ What follows, therefore, is an appropriation of

³²⁷ *Anthropology and the Greeks*, (Boston: Routledge, 1978), 22.

³²⁸ *An Introduction to Roman Religion [La religion des Romains]*, trans. Janet Lloyd, (EUP, [1998]2003), 17.

³²⁹ “Introduction: Setting an Agenda,” in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, ed. by Simon Goldhill, (CUP, 2001), 16.

³³⁰ Huskinson, “Introduction,” 1.

several theories and categories of Social Anthropology applied to the context of North Africa under Roman rule.

3.2.1 *Roman Studies and Social Identity*

In the last two decades historians studying the Roman Empire have turned their attention to individual and group identities.³³¹ The shift, according to Richard Miles, correlates to an interest in identities in the wider academic discourse in light of events in the past century.³³² Many classicists have undertaken works on identity, ethnicity and nationalism in the ancient context, partly in light of calls to shed the Classic's disciplinary stigma as "the quintessential representative of elitism, the custodian of western tradition, the pillar of Eurocentrism."³³³ More importantly, identity theories have provided historians with a means of interpreting the identities of the ancients, including

³³¹ Some examples from Roman archaeology are Mark Graham, *Reading Space: Social Interaction and Identity in the Houses of Roman Pompeii*, British Archaeological Reports 886, (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2000); Graham, "Material Culture and Roman Identity: The Spatial Layout of Pompeian Houses and the Problem of Ethnicity," in *Cultural Identity e*, ed. Laurence and Berry, 156-178; Valerie Hope, "Fighting for Identity: The Funerary Commemoration of Italian Gladiators" in *The Epigraphic Landscape of Roman Italy*, ed. Alison E. Cooley, (London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2000): 93-113; Hope, "Negotiating Identity and Status: The Gladiators of Roman Nîmes," in *Cultural Identity*, ed. Laurence and Berry, (London: Routledge, 1998), 179-95; and other papers in Laurence and Berry, ed., *Cultural Identity*. For non-classical example, see Olivier P. Gosselain, "Materializing Identities: An African Perspective," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 7 (3 2000): 187-217.

³³² "Introduction: Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity," *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 2.

³³³ Erich S. Gruen, "Cultural Fictions and Cultural Identity," *TAPA* 123 (1993), 1.

ancients from the periphery of the historical sources: non-Romans, non-conquerers, non-elites and non-literates.³³⁴

One way ancient historians employ identity theory is to begin with, what shall be deemed in this discussion, social identity, by forwarding the anthropological insight that identities are discursive. The resulting understanding is to focus on identities as social constructs which are fluid, dynamic and contextual, rather than ascribe a fixed essence based on birth, biology or some other naturalizing criteria.³³⁵ Most often, identities are understood as constructed in terms of difference, a dialectic of we/they, that is, by establishing an "Other" from which to differentiate the self or the group.³³⁶ Given this understanding, the historian can perceive various and multiple, sometimes even conflicting, identities attributable to, and/or held by, groups and individuals.³³⁷ These aspects of identity especially apply in the context of Roman colonization.

By expanding into other territories, Rome created circumstances of postcoloniality wherein varying groups came into conflict and various

³³⁴ Wells, "Identity," 239. e.g. Jewish identities: Sian Jones & Sarah Pearce, "Introduction: Jewish Local Identities and Patriotism in the Graeco-Roman Period," *Jewish Local Patriotism and Self-identification in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. Jones and Pearce, (Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1998): 13-28. Other examples will be dealt with below. For a general discussion of the "voiceless masses" and the historian's task, see T.F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity*, (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1975); more recently, J. Sharpe, "History from Below," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, rev., ed. P. Burke, (Cambridge: Polity, [1991]2001), 25-42, who is appreciative of anthropological theories like that of Geertz (see esp. 36). Also, Peter Burke, "Overture: the New History, its Past and its Future," in *New Perspectives*, rev., ed. Burke, 1-24, discusses various methodological shifts by historians. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xix, cites parallel shifts in other academic disciplines.

³³⁵ Huskinson, "Looking," 10-11, 15-16; Miles, "Introduction," 5; and Wells, "Identity," 241-2.

³³⁶ Gosselain, "Materializing Identities," 188; Gruen, "Cultural Fictions," 2; Jones and Pearce, "Introduction," 31-2; Huskinson, "Looking," 16; Miles, "Introduction," 6, 10; Wells, "Identity," *passim*.

³³⁷ Jones and Pearce, "Introduction," 31-2; Huskinson, "Looking," 9; see R.R.R. Smith, "Cultural Choice and Political Identity in Honorific Portrait Statues in the Greek East in the Second Century A.D.," *JRS* 88 (1998), 57, on how in the Greek East art was used "to represent overlapping Greek and Roman identities."

identities were formed. One example is the ancient near east, wherein, long before Roman colonization, Greek military expansion created what Doron Mendels has outlined as a three-tiered model of social identities: Greek colonists, natives and Hellenists.³³⁸ Similarly, Huskinson understands the social identities from the province of Asia to have been overlaid with waves of Greek and Roman colonization, creating “three different cultural layers: Roman officialdom, the local Greek-speaking elite, and an indigenous element which may or may not have preserved traditions of its own.”³³⁹ Social identities serve as theories that can be applied to a given context in order to explore the possible identities constructed by various groups and individuals.³⁴⁰ In order to interpret the social identities of North Africans under Roman rule, the following discussion delineates three categories: Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans and new elites.³⁴¹

The use of social identity in this discussion will involve a more elusive referent than other theories of identity, such as ethnic or religious identity. The intention is to address the phenomenon that some identities are constructed in an imprecise manner, often involving several other elements of a person’s or group’s identity. It is necessary to begin with “social identity” in order to specify that the discussion is not interested in “personal identity,” or any form of identity attributable to an individual’s uniqueness or specific role.

³³⁸ *Identity, Religion and Historiography: Studies in Hellenistic History*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 1998), 13.

³³⁹ “Elite Culture and the Identity of the Empire,” in *Experiencing Rome*, ed. Huskinson, 108.

³⁴⁰ On “Roman,” “Greek,” “Barbarian” and others “problematic” labels, see Miles, “Introduction,” 4, 10-1; and see below.

³⁴¹ It should be noted that many other social identities could likely be listed for Roman Africa, such as Greek identity. The categories listed represent those of interest to this discussion. Some other elements of possible identities available to North Africans will be discussed in the remaining sections below.

Moreover, although these three categories will be applied repeatedly throughout the sections on other forms of identity, this is done only as an organizing principle for the purposes of this present work, not as an indication of any primordial or essential nature of these categories.

In turning to the notion of Roman social identity, one immediately notes the problem of defining *romanitas*, or Roman-ness.³⁴² As John Scheid begins, “Besides, even the term ‘the Romans’ covers a multitude of people, identities and cultures. What, after all, was a Roman? A citizen of Rome itself or of Latium? And in what period? At the time of the Punic Wars, at the beginning of the common era, or under the Empire?”³⁴³ One way scholars answer these questions is by describing general ideals Romans attributed to themselves, such as the importance of upholding Roman law, or adhering to the images constructed in Augustan propaganda.³⁴⁴ Another approach which has gained a large consensus among scholars is to understand how Roman identity was constructed in the process of colonization. Woolf discusses this political element of Roman identity:

Romans did not conceive of their identity as underwritten by a unique language or a common descent in the same way that some others (including Greeks) did, and their traditions of origin stressed the progressive incorporation of outsiders. Roman identity was based to an unusual degree on membership of a political and religious community with common values and *mores* (customs, morality and way of life).³⁴⁵

³⁴² Rives, “Roman Religion Revived,” *Phoenix* 52 (3/4 1998), 352.

³⁴³ Scheid, *An Introduction*, 1. For civic identity in general in the Hellenized areas of the Roman empire, see Sheila L. Ager, “Civic Identity in the Hellenistic World: The Case of Lebedos,” *GRBS* 39 (1 1998): 5-22.

³⁴⁴ For a recent example, see Erik Gunderson, *Declamation, Paternity and Roman Identity: Authority and the Rhetorical Self*, (CUP, 2003). On “Augustan,” see, for example, Katherine Toll, “Making Roman-ness and the Aeneid,” *CLAnt* 16 (1 1997): 34-56, for *romanitas* deliberately broadened to incorporate Italians.

³⁴⁵ “Becoming Roman,” 120. Woolf’s point about the Latin language is largely in relation to the Greek-speaking East; more on Latin in the province of Africa will be discussed below.

As Romans – Italian, or otherwise – began to inhabit the provinces, much of their Roman identity was constructed in relation to the “barbarian” or provincial “Other,” especially in Western provinces such as Africa.³⁴⁶ In other words, those individuals and communities who immigrated to Africa to homestead and/or to trade understood themselves – and, it should be noted, were understood by others – as Romans, explicitly. Even in the later centuries, veterans from Italy or other provinces who came to Africa for the most part retained their Latin language and many of their Roman ideals.

The second category established in this study is the African indigenous identity. Since the vast majority of colonizers were Italian, they were a predominately monolithic group, justifying a monolithic category, unlike the indigenous population, which was by no means homogeneous. The Romans, however, specifically those dealing with North Africa, easily identified all indigenous peoples as barbaric Africans by the very fact that they were not Roman.³⁴⁷ From the perspective of the African peoples, however, identity would likely have been constructed in terms of family, clan, municipality, language and/or religion. The fact that North Africans from any port, village or clan traveled throughout the northern parts of the continent encountering

³⁴⁶ e.g. Cic., *Ad Quintum fratrem* 1.1.27, who, writing to a provincial officer in the Greek East, states, “What if the casting of lots had allocated you Africans or Spaniards or Gauls to rule over? – wild and barbarous peoples, even then you would owe it to your own *humanitas* to take into account what suited them to concern yourself with their well-being and safety”; cited/trans. in Woolf, “Becoming Roman,” 119.

³⁴⁷ For an example where Carthaginians are considered to be “Africans” by Romans, see an inscription of a statue in honor of a flamen of Divus Titus at was erected Carthage “by the decree of the Africans”; cited in Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*, vol. 3: “Provincial Cult,” part 2: “The Provincial Priesthood,” (Brill: Leiden, 2002), 199. Also, see the example of Punic settlements in Sardinia, where Cicero could call the inhabitants “Sons of Africa,” as late as 54 BCE; cited in van Dommelen, “Punic Persistence,” 43. Eirean Marshall, “The Self and the Other in Cyenaica,” in *Cultural Identity*, ed. Laurence and Berry, 49-63, argues that Cyrenaicans, who described themselves as Libyans, constructed the desert Libyans as “barbaric” as a means of constructing their own “civilized” identity.

others of same or similar language and customs did not necessarily cause them to have an “African” social identity.³⁴⁸ When the Roman colonizers’ presence persisted, however, Africans faced a new category of Other-ness from which to distinguish themselves. The more contact an indigenous African person had with Roman colonizers and merchants, the more that person understood – and perhaps explicitly heard – that he or she was not Roman, but African.³⁴⁹ Therefore, while it is highly likely that indigenous Africans constructed their self-identity from other immediate factors (age, kin, religion, etc.), thereby making a widespread “African” identity somewhat unlikely, there was, consciously or otherwise, a new self-identity as “not-Roman,” resulting in an often *de facto*, yet sometimes explicit, African identity.³⁵⁰

A third category of social identity in North Africa during the Roman Empire discussed here is that of the new elite, which refers to Africans who personally benefited under Roman colonization. By constructing a category of new elite, this discussion does not reify North African identities, but the opposite: the category of new elite demystifies modern constructs of “Roman” and “African” and underscores the complexity and multiplicity of identities in colonized Africa. By introducing a third analytical category of new elites, the former two are in a sense decategorized; they are destabilized; they are shown to be analytical paradigms consisting of individuals with fluid

³⁴⁸ Although the Hamito-Semitic or Afro-Asiatic language group consisted of many dialects, Punic was likely the trade language according to David Soren, Aicha Ben Abed Ben Khader, and Hedi Slim, *Carthage: Uncovering the Mysteries and Splendors of Ancient Tunisia*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 46.

³⁴⁹ For a discussion of this phenomenon throughout African history, see V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, (London: James Currey, 1988), 44-97.

³⁵⁰ e.g. Augustine, *Epistula* 138.19: “Apuleius of whom I choose rather to speak, because, as our own countryman, he is better known to us Africans...” [*Apuleius, enim, ut de illo potissimum loquamur, qui nobis Afris Afer est notior.*] One should note, however, the polemical context.

and competing social loyalties and self-perceptions. Moreover, since this study is interested in Tertullian's African identity, there is a danger of essentializing "social identities" in terms of regional or ethnic identities. In an attempt to overcome this problem, the following chapters allow the somewhat arbitrary category of "social identity" to represent Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans and new elites as separate groups. Throughout the discussion, however, each of these are problematized and their distinctives are blurred, especially by setting each social identity within other theories of identity – namely, kinship, class, ethnicity and religion. By creating such groups and categories, they inevitably are reified; it is suggested here, however, that the categories allow for a focus on non-Roman and African aspects of ancient group's and individual's identities which can in turn illustrate the complexity of those identities, especially in the case of new elites.

Throughout the Roman provinces, elites, although "hard to define," are generally understood by scholars as individuals who have adopted a sense of *romanitas* through "cultural pursuits," or accommodating to the "elite Graeco-Roman culture."³⁵¹ Rives argues, "Local elites in the west tended to refashion themselves as Romans, so that by identifying with the dominant culture they could use its prestige to reinforce their own social positions."³⁵² Jane Webster has argued that the concept of "Romanization" is misleading and should be replaced with "Creolization" in order to highlight the distinction between

³⁵¹ Huskinson, "Elite Culture," 95-6.

³⁵² "Religion," 269.

those provincial elites who began accepting Roman practices and those indigenous provincials who did not.³⁵³

The difficulty in interpreting new elites is the question of multiple identities and divided loyalties. Huskinson discusses how “evidence may need careful questioning to reveal its standpoint. Its agenda may be hidden: it may voice dissent as well as conformity, aspiration as well as actual ownership.”³⁵⁴ Cherry provides an example from another province of how elites conformed, at least outwardly to Romanization, “It was Tacitus’ understanding (*Agr.* 21) that Britons who adopted Roman ways did so because they were eager to be promoted (*honoris aemulatio*).”³⁵⁵ To be accepted in the Roman system, the more “Roman” and the less “barbaric” one had to become.

Likewise, indigenous Africans began the process of “adopting Roman ways,” and therefore, their social identity became extremely difficult to pinpoint, comprising a new category of identification, that of the new elites. Hope cites the inscription of one new elite as an example: Marcus Servilius Draco Abucianus from Gigthis in North Africa, who “was honoured by a statue and an inscription which recorded his munificence and services to the town, which included several trips to Rome to promote the status of the community. No doubt he elevated his own profile in elevating that of the

³⁵³ “Creolizing the Roman Provinces,” *AJA* 105 (2001): 209-25.

³⁵⁴ “Elite Culture,” 98. See Smith, “Cultural Choice,” 56-93, for a discussion of this phenomenon in eastern provinces.

³⁵⁵ *Frontier*, 81; ref. Tacitus, *Agricola* 21, “...and the rivalry for his compliments took the place of coercion... As a result, the nation which used to reject the language began to aspire to rhetoric: further, the wearing of our dress became a distinction, and the toga came into fashion, and little by little the Britons were seduced into alluring vices: to the lounge, the bath, the well-appointed dinner table. The simple natives gave the name of ‘culture’ to this factor of their slavery.” [*ita honoris aemulatio pro necessitate erat... ut qui modo linguam Romanam abnuebant, eloquantiam concupiscerent. Inde et iam habitus nostri honor et frequens toga. Paulatimque descendsum ad delenimenta uitiorum, porticus et balinea et conuiuiorum elegantiam. Idque apud imperitos humanitas uocabatur, cum pars seruitutis esset.*] Also on elites and *aemulatio*, see Huskinson, “Looking,” 21-2.

town.”³⁵⁶ More examples of how new elites in North Africa traversed the boundaries between “Roman” and “African” identities will be discussed through the lens of specific theories in the section below.

Here it should be noted that unlike the previous two categories, it is highly unlikely that anyone would have actually used this category in ancient times.³⁵⁷ Instead, the category underscores the fact that neither the Roman colonizers nor the African indigenous knew exactly to which group these new elites belonged, and neither group would have uniformly reacted to the new elites with acceptance or rejection. Instead, group distinctions would begin to break down and identity would likely be determined on a case by case basis of difference and similarity. For example, a Roman colonizer who encountered a toga-clad new elite in the market spending large sums might assume the toga-wearer to be as Roman as themselves. If, however, that same Roman-garbed new elite were then to speak to another Roman colonizer in a Punic accent, the colonizer might consider the new elite to be a member of the non-Roman/African/barbaric “Other.”³⁵⁸ The new elites’ identities were fluid, having both Roman and African aspects – to name only two.

Since many of the new elites had more opportunity for education, they often provided indications for their classification through their writings in a way that the illiterate masses were unable to produce, making elites “relatively accessible in the ancient sources (compared, for instance, with indigenous cultures in many parts of the empire).”³⁵⁹ Moreover, as people who in one

³⁵⁶ “Status and Identity,” 137.

³⁵⁷ Although *honoris aemulatio* itself illustrates such a category in terms of process, if not of identification.

³⁵⁸ These and other indicators of ethnicity, class and other forms of identity will be discussed further below.

³⁵⁹ See Huskinson, “Elite Culture,” 98.

sense could be classified as indigenous, the new elites also provided a witness for the self-identity of the second category, that is the indigenous Africans, the Roman “Other.” Many of the individuals classified here as new elites provide a Rosetta Stone to interpreting all three categories of identity in Roman North Africa. These categories will be recounted below in the discussion of other forms of identity, including kinship identity.

3.2.2 *Kinship and Kinship Identity*

“Family trees: what do they give rise too?”, Juvenal asks in the first line of a satire on Roman aristocracy.³⁶⁰ His answer, according to one commentator, is “They grow Romans.”³⁶¹ In the last two decades the study of Roman kinship has flourished among historians, producing helpful insights on the nature of kinship identity under the empire. While early anthropologists drew from Roman history, recent Roman historians have returned to anthropological kinship theory.³⁶² Although some Roman historians allow anthropological insights to infiltrate their practice, others impose the western

³⁶⁰ *Satire 8: Stemmata quid faciunt?*

³⁶¹ John Henderson, *Figuring out Roman Nobility*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 15.

³⁶² Richard Saller, “Roman Kinship: Structure and Sentiment,” in *The Roman Family: Status, Sentiment, Space*, ed. Beryl Rawson and Paul Weaver, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 8; e.g. Maurizio Bettini, *Anthropology and Roman Culture: Kinship, Time and Images of the Soul [Antropologia e cultura romana: Parentela, tempo, immagini dell'anima]*, trans. John Van Sickle, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, [1988]1991). For a review of Roman kinship studies going back to Morgan, see Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), chapter 1. See also Dixon, “Conflict in the Roman Family,” in *The Roman Family*, ed. Rawson and Weaver, 149-167, for a review of sociological studies of the family and historians of the family. For criticism of early anthropologists’ use of Roman kinship, see Geoffrey S. Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity: The Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.

understanding of kinship as something biological onto their studies.³⁶³ The following section will limit itself to a few important elements of Roman kinship, namely, the two primary kinship patterns (*domus* and *familia*), and some specific kinship ideals embedded within these kinship frameworks.

It is important to note when surveying Roman kinship that there is no Latin equivalent for the English word, “family.”³⁶⁴ Roman historians recognize the need to explore the term *familia* alongside its counterpart, *domus* (house, household, etc.), in order to better understand Roman kinship. Both of these kinship structures are based on legal and social bonds and not, necessarily on biological consanguinity.³⁶⁵ The Roman *familia* is best understood in terms of descent and inheritance and is defined, in anthropological terms, as inclusive of all agnatic or patrilineal kin.³⁶⁶ Therefore, a woman would remain in her father’s *familia* even after marriage

³⁶³ e.g. M. Golden, “Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?” *G&R* 35 (1988): 159-60, who argues that the ancients did “care” because they shared the same psychosomatic emotions as individuals today. More recently, see E. Dickey, “Literal and Extended use of Kinship Terms in Documentary Papyri,” *Mnemosyne* 57 (2 2004), 132-3, who struggles to explain the use of kinship terminology that is “not merely exotic; they are biologically impossible.” This is not to say that *no* Roman understood *any* form of kinship as biological or based on “blood.” The Stoics for example invoked “nature” as the formal cause of kinship (e.g. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.54). Stoics, however, often tend to explain phenomenon in terms of ‘nature’ and, therefore, should not represent Roman conceptions of kinship at large. Although Tertullian himself could invoke “blood” imagery (e.g. *Adv. Marc.* 4.19.1) in matters of descent, a biological model of kinship, it is argued here, should not predetermine or limit any reading of the sources in light of anthropological theories of kinship. Matters of kinship, much like gender, were not fixed, or essentialized in the Roman context; see Huskinson, “Looking,” 10-1. It should be noted, moreover, that recent Roman historians typically do emphasize the complex interconnections of kinship, economics, religion, etc., especially regarding “identity”; e.g. Shelley Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, (CUP, 2003), 1-3.

³⁶⁴ Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family*, (CUP, 1994), 96.

³⁶⁵ Jane F. Gardner, “Legal Stumbling-Blocks for Lower-Class Families in Rome,” in *The Roman Family*, ed. Rawson and Weaver, 35.

³⁶⁶ Nathan, *The Family*, 30.

and her children would remain in her husband's *familia* even after divorce.³⁶⁷

The *domus*, on the other hand, is closer to the English term "household," in that anyone living in the estate of a *dominus* (lord, master, head of house, etc.) is considered kin, meaning that kinship by *domus* includes spouses/concubines, children, clients and slaves.³⁶⁸ Here, the concept of "dependents" is helpful in that a *domus* often includes all – things and persons – under the *dominus*.³⁶⁹ On the double application of *domus* to both people and physical property, Nathan's assessment of two models is helpful: (1) Nathan criticizes the "legal model," wherein the *domus* encompasses the property of the *dominus* (children, slaves, goods, etc.), as too rigid and limiting; (2) he also criticizes the "sociological model," that is the *domus* as space consisting of a physical house and inhabited by individuals, for "confusing family with space."³⁷⁰ If, as Nathan suggests, both models are inadequate, they do, nevertheless, help to underscore the physical or legal referents sometimes indicated by the term *domus*.³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ It should be noted that these are legal constructs of the *familia* and may not completely represent all Roman kinship networks; see below. On *sine manu* marriages, see Gardner and T. Wiedemann, *The Roman Household: A Sourcebook*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 17 and 57. This practice was especially prevalent in the Principate. Whereas, in the Republic, more marriages included the legal transfer of the daughter/wife from the father's *familia* to the husband's *familia*.

³⁶⁸ Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 4. For time when *domus* and *familia* can "shade into one another" in legal terminology, see Saller, *Patriarchy*, 86-7; however, Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 4, draws on the consensus of scholars who read the *domus* as the nuclear family in general usage. Similarly, see the definition of Gardner and Weidemann, *The Roman Household*, 3. On slaves as kin, see Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 2; Dale B. Martin, "Slave Families and Slaves in Families," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 207-30; and Nathan, *The Family*, 32-3. Similarly, on clients as kin, see Gardner and Wiedemann, *The Roman Household*, 43-5; and Saller, "Patronage and Friendship in Early Imperial Rome: Drawing the Distinction," in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. A. Wallace-Hadrill (London and New York, 1989), 49-62, who discusses the many aspects of the "relationships," including numerous North African examples.

³⁶⁹ Saller, *Patriarchy*, 81; or, less often, under the *domina* (lady, mistress, head of house, etc.)

³⁷⁰ Nathan, *The Family*, 8.

³⁷¹ Saller, *Patriarchy*, 80.

Although much could be said about the institutions of the *domus* and the *familia*, for present purposes their symbolic importance in Roman identity needs delineating. Gardner has argued that the *familia*, defined as “Roman citizens, joined in lawful matrimony and producing legitimate children, and (usually) with some property to transmit by inheritance,” served to perpetuate the status quo of the upper classes.³⁷² Moreover, the legal use of *familia*, and often the common parlance, represented one’s status in society in the sense of being “well-born” – a phenomenon of great importance to many Romans.³⁷³ Regarding the *domus*, Saller notes that one could have multiple *domi* (in the sense of physical places of residence), or, alternately stated, multiple places of residence could fall under one *dominus* and technically be considered his *domus*, and he suggests that the primary home “might be distinguished from his other houses by a sacred quality (the *lar*) and a practical managerial function (the account books).”³⁷⁴ Saller further elaborates on how “the sacred quality of the *domus* made it an especially emotive symbol for generals to employ in appeals to their soldiers. ... Romans were called on to fight for *patria domusque*.”³⁷⁵ The symbolism of the *domus* is also important in terms one’s identity and place in society: “In terms of their perception of their place

³⁷² Gardner, “Legal Stumbling-Blocks,” 36. On the connection between class and kinship, see Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 11; Nathan, *The Family*, 3 and 27; and Weaver, “Children of Junian Latins,” in *The Roman Family*, ed. Rawson and Weaver, 55-72. On the kinship of slaves, see M.B. Flory, “Family in *familia*: Kinship and Community in Slavery,” *AJAH* 3 (1978) 89, who says, “Within slave society the terms ‘conseruus’ and ‘collibertus’ undoubtedly had all the force of kinship designations.”

³⁷³ Gardner, “Legal Stumbling-Blocks,” 35.

³⁷⁴ *Patriarchy*, 81; for more on the religious and economic aspects of the *domus*, see below. Saller also notes (94) how one can “...diminish the honor of the household. In the choice of a new Vestal Virgin in AD 19 Fonteius Agrippa’s daughter was passed over through no fault of her own: ‘For Agrippa had diminished his house by divorce’ (*nam Agrippa discidio domum imminuerat*, Tacitus *Annals* 2.86). Of course, divorce was common at this time, and it was frowned on only in special situations where religious purity was required.”

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 90; ref. Tacitus *Historiae* 1.29; and Silius Italicus 16.593, where in defeating the Carthaginians, Scipio was said to be taking revenge for *patria and domus*; and Virg. *Aeneid* 7.122, who has Aeneas exclaim upon landing in Italy, ‘*Hic domus, hae patria est.*’

in the world, [Romans] symbolized their leading position in society, not by representing themselves as head of a clan or family – Roman kinship relations were not hierarchical in this sense – but by representing themselves as lords (*domini*) of wealthy and powerful houses (*domus*).³⁷⁶ The terms *domus* and the *familia*, therefore, both represent aspects of Roman kinship and both symbolize status and wealth.

Romans valued several other ideals in their construction of kinship and kinship identity, including the authority of the father, the importance of pious heirs and the hierarchical symbolism of the *domus*. In the legal and literary sources, the *pater/paterfamilias/dominus* held absolute authority over his dependents, and his right over children, *patria potestas*, is depicted as including even the right to take their life.³⁷⁷ Women on the other hand, especially women as wives, were not highly valued, as seen in the high rate of divorce and remarriage, but they were deemed important in producing heirs for their husbands.³⁷⁸ While some valued the practice of *uniuira* (life-long allegiance to one spouse, even after the spouse's death) during the Republic, the ideal had all but disappeared by Tertullian's day, especially under the

³⁷⁶ Saller, "Roman Kinship," 29.

³⁷⁷ Gardner and Wiedemann, *The Roman Household*, 5. Past understandings of a strict *paterfamilias* with absolute authority have been challenged: Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 45-8; Dixon "Conflict," 152; Saller, *Patriarchy*; a consensus of scholars now understand the *paterfamilias* to have had authority over *familias* – parallel of *dominus* in the *domus* – and that this authority was a highly valued ideological construct of ancient Rome: Nathan, *The Family*, 27; and Shaw, "Raising and Killing Children: Two Roman Myths," *Mnemosyne* 54 (1 2001): 31-77. Moreover, scholars recognize the *paterfamilias* to symbolize "property owner": Gardner and Weidemann *The Roman Household*, 113; Saller, *Patriarchy*, 155; Saller, "Pater Familias, Mater Familias, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household," *CPh* 94 (2 1999): 182-197.

³⁷⁸ For an overview of Roman women, see Dixon, *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres, and Real Life*, (London: Duckworth, 2000). On marriage, see Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). On divorce, see Nathan, *The Family*, 20-1; for debate on the "ease" of divorce, see Treggiari, "Divorce Roman Style: How Easy and Frequent was it?" in *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome*, ed. Rawson, (Oxford, 1991), 31-46.

Augustan laws penalizing celibacy.³⁷⁹ Children, as both heirs and status symbols, were expected to uphold *pietas* (duty or respect) in relation to their *pater*, a value propagandized in the Anchises-Aeneas-Ascanius model.³⁸⁰

These values formed an image of the home as a microcosm of larger society, wherein the patron/client roles extended to everyone within the empire.³⁸¹

The correlation between the household religion and the imperial cult: each member of the household is expected to honour the *genius* of the *dominus*, as the empire at large is expected to do the same for the emperor.³⁸²

Since Roman historians know practically nothing about the kinship practices of the lower classes in Rome and Italy, it is no surprise that the same can be said of Carthage and *Africa Proconsularis*. In reference to areas outside of the Roman center of power – namely the areas of Spain and Gaul, Nathan asserts, “native systems of family and community may well have endured or even prevailed.”³⁸³ In reference to the relatively late periods of the empire, Jonathan Barlow argues against the notion that the Franks’ “kinship structures break up as a result of Romanisation,” maintaining that Franks kept close ties to kin regardless of whether kin were inside or outside of the

³⁷⁹ On this ideal, see Gardner and Wiedemann, *The Roman Household*, 57; and Nathan, *The Family*, 22 n. 60, “An Ideal espoused by the imperial poets.” On ‘Augustan,’ see Saller, *Patriarchy*, 1; however, Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 160-1, argues that only legal changes took place, not “significant” societal shifts. Also see I.C. Mantle, “The Roles of Children in Roman Religion,” *G&R* 49 (1 2002), 105, for the ideal of *uniuira* remaining in the offices of religious cults because *uniuira* symbolized one’s purity.

³⁸⁰ Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 22; cf. Seneca, *De consolatione ad Marciam* 26.2, who says one should hand on the *domus* “in an undiminished state” [*in integro statu*]; Tacitus *Annals* 4.1, 6.46; and Suetonius, *Caligula* 13. On *pietas*, see Saller, *Patriarchy*, 105-9. On “Anchises-,” see Rawson, “The Iconography of Roman Childhood,” in *The Roman Family*, ed. Rawson and Weaver, 205-232.

³⁸¹ Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 24-5; and Saller, *Patriarchy*, 102;

³⁸² Christopher P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*, (HUP, 1999), 84; Gardner and Weidemann, *The Roman Household*, 31 and 124; Mantle, “The Roles,” 7; Hans-Friedrich Mueller, “*Vita, Pudicitia, Libertas*: Juno, Gender, and Religious Politics in Valerius Maximus,” *TAPA* 128 (1998), 234; Nathan, *The Family*, 26; and Saller, *Patriarchy*, 89;

³⁸³ *The Family*, 7.

empire.³⁸⁴ Barlow, moreover, views the kinship networks of Gauls and Germans within the broader discourse on identity, asserting that such peoples would hold a “multicultural identity.”³⁸⁵ Even within certain provinces kinship structures would have varied widely, as in Egypt where urban and rural households differed.³⁸⁶ The variations in kinship throughout the empire is reflected in North Africa as well.

Although the problem of scant sources remains for the topic of indigenous kinship structures in North Africa, scholars like David Cherry rely on archaeology to unearth relevant data. Cherry finds Libyan society patriarchal and believes that marriage was generally polygamous, although the Punicizing influence of Carthage removed polygamy from the surrounding rural areas.³⁸⁷ Cherry proceeds to link the kinship structure of indigenous North Africans with the overall organization of society around local elders, which extended to broader clan networks; he limits “chiefdoms” and “kingdoms” to the western region of Numidia which were largely established by the influence of Rome. As Rome colonized North Africa, the new elites who rose in status from the indigenous population and assimilated Roman kinship ideals.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ “Kinship, Identity and Fourth-Century Franks,” *Historia* 45 (2 1996), 223.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Saller, *Patriarchy*, 4.

³⁸⁷ *Frontier*, 20; ref. Herodotus, 4.172, and Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum* 80, and J.A. Ilevbare, “Family and Women in North Africa from the Fifth to the First Century B.C.,” *Nigeria and the Classics*, 10 (1967-8), 36; cf. Cherry, “Marriage,” 71-83, where he finds the marriages between “Roman(ized) and un-Romanized” uncommon.

³⁸⁸ Cherry, *Frontier*, 102-3, notes, “There is, however, no evidence, of any kind, to show that soldiers (or the Roman civilians who took up residence in the frontier-zones) routinely married indigenous women (in North Africa or in any of the other provinces). The marriage-patterns attested on the surviving epitaphs of the Algerian frontier-zone, which are examined below, would seem to indicate that the opposite is more likely to have been true – few of the soldiers or Roman(ized) civilians who are attested appear to have married indigenous women.”

As with so many new elites from the provinces, Africans rising into the ranks of the equestrian and senatorial classes often kept kinship ties and even primary residences in their *patria*. Although Senators were required to take up residence in Rome, many provincials of senatorial rank kept their focus on home estates, as summed up by Trajan, who said that Rome was seen by many senators “*non pro patria, sed pro hospitio aut stabulo.*”³⁸⁹ Werner Eck comments on this passage and this phenomenon, explaining that new elites’ *patria* symbolized a family’s history and identity.³⁹⁰

Extant accounts of African new elites indicate that many individuals assimilated kinship practices and ideals of Romans in order to help improve their status in society. Two examples of new elites are Marcus Cornelius Fronto from Cirta (c.100-166 CE) and Apuleius of Madauros (c.124-180 CE) both invoked *hospitii iura* (the rights of friends) in terms of kinship in order to further themselves and fellow Africans in Roman society.³⁹¹ As someone wishing to leave an estate to his *familia*, according to Saller, Fronto mourned the loss of his first five children.³⁹² Both Terence and Apuleius employ Roman imagery from the Roman wedding in their writings, although this

³⁸⁹ Pliny 6.19.4, cited/trans. In Eck, “Rome and the Outside World: Senatorial Families and the World They Lived In,” in *The Roman Family*, ed. Rawson and Weaver, 7.

³⁹⁰ Eck, “Rome,” 73-99.

³⁹¹ Gardner and Weidemann, *The Roman Household*, 176; ref. Fronto, *De nepote amisso* 1.3 and Apuleius, *Apologia* 94f.

³⁹² *Patriarchy*, 9; ref. *De nepote amisso* 2.1-2; and *Ad amicos* 1.12, where Fronto wrote to his son-in-law Aufidius Victorinus, legate of Germany early in Marcus Aurelius’ reign, that with the favor of the gods *nostra familia* would be increased “by children and grandchildren” [*liberis ac nepotibus*]. On this last quote, Saller notes that it is one of only three times that *familia* refers to cognate kin. Another being Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 5.28 who included Cupid in the familia of Venus. The last occasion is a “carelessly” presented example by Suetonius, who elsewhere only used *familia* agnatically. Unfortunately, no one has explored these African new elites’ alternate usage of *familia*.

would be natural when writing for a Roman audience.³⁹³ The more prominent aspect of new elites' assimilation of Roman kinship is found in reference to the *domus*.³⁹⁴

The *domus* as a representative of status and wealth was highly valued by many new elites in Africa.³⁹⁵ Dixon understands Apuleius' "defense" as primarily regarding the accusation of opportunistic marriage made by his new son-in-law: "...the stereotype of the scheming stepfather is the core of the case which he must demolish."³⁹⁶ This understanding of Apuleius' strategy, Saller observes, explains where he returns the accusation to the son-in-law, whose *domus* is said to be "drained and full of children" (*exhausta et plena liberis*).³⁹⁷ Apuleius, like many new elites, subsumed the Roman understanding of the *domus* as patrimony of the *familia*. Another example of the *domus* as symbolic of Romanization of African new elite is in the "Mactar Harvester."³⁹⁸ This new elite's information is known by the inscription in his honor, and Saller describes how he began without *domus* and had an "insignificant father" (*paruus parens*) but worked to earn "a *domus* that lacked nothing" (*nullis opibus indiget ipsa domus*).³⁹⁹ The emphasis of the

³⁹³ On Terence, see Katerina Philippides, "Terence's *Eunuchus*: Elements of the Marriage Ritual in the Rape Scene," *Mnemosyne* 48 (3 1995): 272-84; on Apuleius, see Sophia Papaioannou, "Charite's Rape, Psyche on the Rock and the Parallel Function of Marriage in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Mnemosyne* 51 (3 1998): 302-324, who interprets the scene of Charite's rape – and thereby the whole *Metamorphoses* – in light of the Roman wedding rituals; however, Donald Lateiner, "Marriage and the Return of Spouses in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Classical Journal* 95 (4 2000): 313-332, believes the overarching story turns the attention away from religious rituals and ceremonies and focuses on the "redirection of an entire life from sexual promiscuity into social isolation" (330). For Septimius Severus on marriage laws, see Saller, *Patriarchy*, 118.

³⁹⁴ Hales, *The Roman House*, 7, 167-72.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 171, 195-204.

³⁹⁶ "Conflict," 163; for more on the step-father, see Dixon, "Conflict," 155.

³⁹⁷ *Patriarchy*, 86; ref. *Apologia* 76.

³⁹⁸ An inscription discussed by M.I. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 2nd ed., (Oxford, 1957), 331; and taken up by Saller, *Patriarchy*, 88.

³⁹⁹ *Patriarchy*, 88.

inscription, according to Saller, is his *domus* which signified his status, which in turn provided him with upward mobility in Roman society. New elites represent individuals with kinship networks bound up in indigenous society, but with kinship ideals reflective of Roman colonizers, ideals which emphasized the economic ramifications of the *familia* and the *domus*, a topic discussed further under the heading of class identity.

3.2.3 *Class and Class Identity*

Although Roman scholars have for some time discussed Roman “classes,” such as senatorial, equestrian, etc., fewer have applied class theory from Anthropology or other academic disciplines.⁴⁰⁰ Noting the attitude of many classicists, David Konstan comments, “By and large, classical scholars have tended to claim for Greek and Roman literature a superiority to mundane economic and political concerns, and to treat it as a storehouse of timeless values and transhistorical or metaphysical meaning that pertain not to collective entities such as class but to problems in the lives of autonomous individuals.”⁴⁰¹ Facing such presuppositions, P.W. Rose answers, “In Homer, despite objections to ‘class conflict’ analysis, ‘conflict’ seems to me the only accurate term to describe the class relationships of central interest in the *Odyssey*.”⁴⁰² Most discussions of Roman class either follow the traditional approach, with class constructed legally, or alternative and complementary models, which view class identity as constructed ideologically.

⁴⁰⁰ Two examples are Gruen, “Class Conflict and the Third Macedonian War,” *AJAH* 1 (1976): 29-60; and R.J.A. Talbert, “The Role of the Helots in the Class Struggle at Sparta,” *Historia* 38 (1989): 22-40.

⁴⁰¹ “The Classics and Class Conflict,” *Arethusa* 27 (1 1994), 48.

⁴⁰² “Class Ambivalence in the *Odyssey*” *Historia* 24 (1975), n.1.

Roman class systems consisted of various divisions of society, often enacted into Roman law. Because of elite bias in the sources, most discussions treat only the class identity of the upper levels of society, as Gruen laments, "Ancient writers, notoriously, were unconcerned with the behavior and feelings of the lower orders. Their focus was politics and war. Social questions, economic distress, a struggle between classes that may have lain beneath the surface were items not considered worthy of serious attention."⁴⁰³ Roman classes are typically outlined, therefore, in terms of senatorial, equestrian and lower classes, or more generally with an *honestiores/humiliores* dichotomy.⁴⁰⁴

Moreover, the phenomenon of citizenship bestowal became extremely important, especially because only citizens could attain higher office, vote and receive all of the benefits of the empire. As the body of "citizens" increased, especially during the later empire, citizenship became a less important distinction for identity, and many of the merchants throughout the region of the empire prospered from the empire's conquests to the extent that they attained a higher status than many citizens. Citizenship also began to blur the classic Roman/barbarian distinctions, as Rives argues, "Nor did the Roman government consider all these areas within the empire as equally Roman. For an emperor like Tiberius, the scion of an ancient republican family, only the *urbs Roma* was truly Roman, while the rest of Italy was Roman only by

⁴⁰³ "Class Conflict," 46-7.

⁴⁰⁴ Two helpful studies on the nuances of the senatorial class are T.D. Barnes, "Who Were the Nobility of the Roman Empire?" *Phoenix* 28 (1974) 444-9; and Michele Renee Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire*, (HUP, 2002), 22. On the changes to the equestrian class over time, see J. Osier, "The Emergence of Third-Century Equestrian Military Commanders," *Latomus* 36 (1977): 674-687.

extension, and Africa and the other provinces only in the sense that they were ruled by Rome.”⁴⁰⁵ While certain traits were defined in legal code to establish classes, other aspects of society constructed class identity and ideology in terms of status symbols.

With the lack of sources for the lower ranks of society, historians look to the “the production of an aristocratic, ruling class ideology and its immanent tensions” with the lower ranks.⁴⁰⁶ In other words, one can explore the ways in which class identity was constructed through the symbols and values underpinning the social stratification of Roman society. A prominent status symbol that has already been mentioned in terms of kinship is the *domus*, which also invokes a class identity.⁴⁰⁷ Another way in which the *domus* constructed class identity, was by the juxtaposition with the slave “Other”:

There was also an awareness, at least among some Romans, that had the vicissitudes of war been different, they themselves could have become the slaves. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising to find, in some areas of Roman culture, an almost neurotic need for the slave to be fundamentally different from the master. Moreover, it was not enough that he be a different type of person; rather, he had to be a different type of creature all together – a speaking tool, a pack animal, an appendage psychically linked to his master’s will. That such patent absurdities survived despite the fact that the slave, like his master, had two arms, two legs, human feelings, and intellect is telling. But it was in fact this very shared humanity, and elite discomfort with it, that were responsible for the Roman’s dehumanizing constructions of the slave. Reclassifying the slave as non-human, as “not like us,” was a somewhat clumsy solution to a deeply rooted ideological conflict.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ *Religion*, 171.

⁴⁰⁶ Konstan, “The Classics,” 48.

⁴⁰⁷ For bibliography and discussion in terms of class, see Treggiari, “The Upper-class House as Symbol and Focus of Emotion in Cicero,” *JRA* 12 (1999): 33-56.

⁴⁰⁸ Mahalia L. Way, “Violence and the Performance of Class in Plautus’ *Casina*,” *Helios* 27 (2 2000), 204.

Slave-holding and the domus of course were part of the wider symbolism of wealth and power.⁴⁰⁹ Often wealth enabled a Roman's status in terms of education or office which were accessible through property and other status symbols.⁴¹⁰ It was these status symbols that helped to construct one's identity as a Roman. As Hope states, "In short, the Roman world was a status-conscious place, where a value was put on access to and use of status symbols such as a special seat at the theatre or a detail of dress."⁴¹¹ The "Roman world" as it expanded to colonize the provinces exported the importance of status and class.⁴¹²

The indigenous Africans organized along different lines with most Libyan villages led by elders, and most land likely owned and worked communally.⁴¹³ Clans and broader societal structures also followed the pattern of the villages.⁴¹⁴ As Roman influence came to bear on the indigenous Africans, they were labeled as both barbaric and *humiliores* (humble class), a status which would have subjected them to the dual penalty system which

reserved for people of humble status capital sentences like crucifixion and *damnatio ad bestias* (a mauling to death by wild animals in the arena), and the harsher non-capital penalties like hard labour in the mines, flogging, and chained imprisonment. Nor were *humiliores* allowed to bring against

⁴⁰⁹ Konstan, "The Classics," 68.

⁴¹⁰ Saller, "Promotion and Patronage in Equestrian Careers," *JRS* 70 (1980): 44-63.

⁴¹¹ "Status and Identity," 150.

⁴¹² Richard Gordon, "From Republic to Principate: Priesthood, Religion and Ideology," in *Roman Religion*, ed. Clifford Ando, (EUP, 2003), 74-5, originally in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Beard and J. North, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 179-98, claims, "This more or less uncontrolled imperialism led in turn to class, or quasi-class, formation."

⁴¹³ On sources of African "elders," see Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads and Christians in Roman North Africa*, (Aldershot, Hampshire: VARIORUM, 1995), originally as "The Structure of the Local Society in the Early Maghrib: the Elders," *The Maghreb Review* 16, nos. 1-2 (1991), 18-54. For land usage, see Cherry, *Frontier*, 18.

⁴¹⁴ Cherry, *Frontier*, 19-20; Cherry uses the term "tribe," which has been criticized by anthropologists Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman, *History and Ethnicity*, 20, as a generic term applied to any "political units that are not of the familiar nation and nation-state kind." cf. discussions in Atkinson, *Roots of Ethnicity*, 12-3; and Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 9-10.

their “betters” civil actions like those of fraud, theft, and grievous bodily harm, for such charges, by their very nature, would involve derogation of the respectability (*honestas*) of people of rank and high status and a denial of the deference (reverence) that was their due.⁴¹⁵

While much work has been done on wealth and status in the provinces, the class identity of indigenous populations remains elusive, except for instances of new elite class identity.⁴¹⁶

The new elite population that burgeoned under Roman colonization in North Africa attempted to transcend their class identity and move upwardly into the Roman nobility. Salzman notes, “In the western empire the senatorial aristocracy had spread its institutions, values and lifestyle so thoroughly that, by the late third century, aristocrats from Spain and Africa can be said to have lived very similar lives and to have held many of the same values.”⁴¹⁷ The shared “values” and ideals marked the new elites in North Africa, those individuals who accommodated a sense of *romanitas* in terms of a class identity. Early in the period of colonization, the freedmen, a position representing upward mobility, were given positions of authority in their homeland.⁴¹⁸ Later into the Roman Empire, more and more Africans rose in the social ranks of the colonizers.

⁴¹⁵ Lloyd J. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, (London: Routledge Press, 1989), 145.

⁴¹⁶ For wealth in Britain, see N.B. Aitchison, “Roman Wealth, Native Ritual: Coin Hoards within and beyond Roman Britain,” *WA* 20 (2 1988): 270-284; for Egypt, see Haas, *Alexandria*, 51; for Gaul, see J.F. Drinkwater, “Gallic Personal Wealth,” *Chiron* 9 (1979): 237-242, and response by R.P. Duncan-Jones, “The Wealth of Gaul,” *Chiron* 11 (1981): 217-220; for Greece, see Vincent J. Rosivach, “Class Matters in the Dyskolos of Menander,” *CQ* 51 (1 2001): 127-134; for Italy, see N. Purcell, “Wine and Wealth in Ancient Italy,” *JRS* 75 (1985): 1-19; for Spain, see L.A. Churchin, “Personal Wealth in Roman Spain,” *Historia* 32 (1983): 227-244.

⁴¹⁷ *The Making*, 19-20.

⁴¹⁸ Broughton, *Romanization*, 55.

The North African writer, Fronto, claimed to have transcended his indigenous African status of “barbarian.”⁴¹⁹ Fronto received his education, became a writer, and moved to Rome, wherein he interacted with the most prestigious circles of society.⁴²⁰ Champlin observed, “Thus Fronto and his brother, Quadratus, should be seen not as isolated phenomena but as products of the process of Romanization which was leading the African aristocracy to its destined role in the Roman senate in the late first and early second centuries, after a proper period of training in the equestrian class.”⁴²¹ The primary factors of wealth and education played a role in aiding the new elites to move up through Roman social structures.

To be admitted into the noble classes one needed wealth, and Africa under Rome grew wealthy. This phenomena was widespread, as Raven states, “Many Africans were now rich enough to be admitted to the Roman knights class; there were perhaps three or four equestrian families in the average sized African city, and members of these families could make careers for themselves in the imperial administration or as officers in the army.”⁴²² It is plausible that the empire did not necessarily entice many Africans to become Romans but rather to seek after Roman extravagancies, as Cherry reasons, “In fact, it could be argued that there was little about Roman culture that was inherently

⁴¹⁹ See *Epistula ad M. Caesarem* 5, “I will compare myself, then, with Anacharsis, not, by heaven, in wisdom, but as being like him a barbarian. For he was a Scythian of the nomad Scythians, and I am a Libyan of the Libyan nomads.” [*παραβαλῶ δὴ ἑμμαντὸν Αναχαρασιδι οὐ μὰ Δία κατὰ τὴν σοφίαν ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ βάρβαρος ὁμοίως εἶναι. Ἦν γὰρ ὁ μὲν Σκύθης τῶν νομάδων Σκυθῶν, ἐγὼ δὲ Λίβυς τῶν Λιβύων τῶν νομάδων.*] Haines remarks in his introduction to the LCL edition (xxiii) that Fronto “jestingly calls himself” a Libyan, and Haines deduces from Fronto’s name that “he was doubtless a Roman citizen,” as if the two were mutually exclusive.

⁴²⁰ On the importance of education for the new elite in general, and for Fronto in particular, see Miles, “Communicating Culture, Identity and Power,” in *Experiencing*, ed. Huskinson, 48-9.

⁴²¹ Fronto, 10.

⁴²² Raven, *Rome*, 126.

desirable, perhaps only, in MacMullen's estimation, 'hot baths, central heating, softer beds, and the pleasures of wine.'"⁴²³ Wealth provided many indigenous Africans with the resources to enter into the Roman social classes, and thereby become the new elite of North Africa. Returning to the example of Apuleius, sources indicate that he attained enough wealth to traverse class boundaries. When the orator defended himself against the charge of greed, he pointed out that he had inherited two million sesterces, but with it, he brags, "I have lent support to most of my friends, I have shown my thanks to many of my teachers, and some of their daughters I have even provided with a dowry. For I would not have hesitated to spend my entire patrimony on what is worth more, through contempt of it."⁴²⁴ With this wealth, as Augustine tells,

[Apuleius] was so ambitious of greatness that he gave spectacles of gladiatorial combats, provided the dresses of those who fought with wild beasts in the circus and, in order to get a statue of himself erected in the town of Coea, the birthplace of his wife, appealed to law against the opposition made by some of the citizens to the proposal, and then, to prevent this from being forgotten by posterity, published the speech delivered by him on that occasion.⁴²⁵

Wealth allowed the indigenous Africans to acculturate in the social spheres of the Roman colonizers, thus placing them in two spheres of identity.

The other major factor that allowed the new elite to be upwardly mobile was education in that education allowed one to travel abroad and to

⁴²³ *Frontier*, 81; ref. R. MacMullen, *Changes in the Roman Empire: Essays in the Ordinary*, (PUP, 1990), 63.

⁴²⁴ *Apologia* 23: *Nam et amicorum plerisque opem tuli et magistris plurimis gratiam rettuli, quorundam etiam filias dote auxi; neque enim dubitasset equidem uel uniuersum patrimonium impendere, ut acquirerem mihi quod maius est contemptu patrimonii.*

⁴²⁵ *Epistula* 138.19: *pro magno fuit ut munera ederet, uenatoresque illos uidelicet qui sese in iis exercebant muneribus, quae Apuleius exhibebat. Munera quippe dicebantur ludi non modo gladiatorum, sed etiam uenatorum, id est in bestias pugnantium. Venationes, quae munera uocantur, saturno attributae sunt. Vestiret, et pro statua sibi apud Coenses locanda, ex qua ciuitate habebat uxorem, aduersus contradictionem quorundam ciuium litigare? quod posteros ne lateret, eiusdem litis orationem scriptam memoriae commendauit. (This quote includes the variant readings on which the Cunningham's translation relies.)*

become “civilized.” Apuleius likely began his study in his hometown of Madauros, before going on to Carthage to learn rhetoric, and later travelling to and studying in Athens, the center of higher learning in his day.⁴²⁶ Stephen J. Harrison emphasizes the importance of Apuleius’ education, by stating, “His life falls at the height of the Greek intellectual revival of the Second Sophistic, when Greek writers famously sought to revive the past glories of their culture in the rich cities of the Greek Mediterranean under the protection of Roman rule. Apuleius’ choice of career and literary genre are fundamentally influenced by what was happening to his contemporaries in the Greek world.”⁴²⁷ The two factors of wealth and education empowered many Africans dissociate their previous class identity and appropriate that of upper class Romans.

The consideration of class identity in North Africa illustrates some of the ways ancients constructed their identity in the midst of a postcolonial context. By applying class theory, historians can explain some of the reasons why individuals could belong to two distinct social identities, Roman and African. Class theory also helps to explain why some indigenous Africans could and did construct for themselves a Roman identity and others did not. As seen with kinship, class identity involved many other aspects of social encounter and, therefore, needs to be seen in light of other forms of identity, such as ethnic identity.

⁴²⁶ Hilton, “Introduction by John Hilton to *Florida*,” in *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works*. ed. Stephen J. Harrison, (OUP, 2001), 126.

⁴²⁷ “General Introduction: Life and Writings of Apuleius,” in *Apuleius*, ed. Harrison, 2.

3.2.4 *Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity*

When introducing the compilation he edited, Irad Malkin asks, “Is it legitimate to apply the term ‘ethnicity,’ invented in the mid-twentieth century, to an ancient phenomenon?”⁴²⁸ Malkin’s collaborators, along with what Aaron Johnson calls a “flood of literature” on ethnicity in antiquity, concur with his affirmative answer.⁴²⁹ While many historians argue for a primordialist understanding of ethnicity, as some anthropologists were shown to do in the last chapter, such debates will be tabled in the following section, following the understanding of ethnicity where specific indicators of ethnic identity can be interpreted as a boundary between groups.⁴³⁰ Where most historians agree with anthropologists, however, is in the understanding that ethnic identities are constructed in terms of difference.

As seen with other forms of identity, ethnic groups construct their identity by distinguishing themselves from an ethnic “Other.”⁴³¹ The ethnic “Other,” moreover, allowed ancients to construct for themselves multiple ethnic identities. A few examples discussed by historians include (1) Lucian, Syrian and “international”; (2) Cassius Dio, Bithynian, Roman and Greek; (3) Augustine, North African, Christian and Roman; (4) Paul, of Tarsus, Roman

⁴²⁸ “Introduction,” *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. Malkin, (HUP, 2001), 3.

⁴²⁹ Johnson, “Identity, Descent, and Polemic: Ethnic Argumentation in Eusebius’ *Praeparatio Evangelica*,” *J ECS* 12 (1 2004), n.21. Also, cf. Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex, “Introduction,” *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, ed. Mitchell and Greatrex, (London: Duckworth, 2000). See Denise McCoskey, “Answering the Multicultural Imperative: A Course on Race and Ethnicity in Antiquity,” *CW* 92 (6 1999), 553-4, on the “divisive” subject in Classics.

⁴³⁰ e.g. Huskinson, “Looking,” 11, says, “But ‘essentialism’ is not just a modern view. There are also some indications of it in the Roman world.” Also, Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, (CUP, 1997), 17-26, argues for a primordialist understanding. Opposed to such a view is Johnson, “Identity,” 29.

⁴³¹ On Greeks, Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 33; on Romans, Huskinson, “Looking,” 14; regarding the ancient near east, Mendels, *Identity*, 19; and in the provinces, Mitchel and Greatrex, “Introduction,” xiii

and Jewish; and (5) Strabo, from Pontus, “barbarian,” Roman and Greek.⁴³²

Ethnic identities in the ancient world were complex, discursive, manifold and sometimes even contradictory, as seen in the ethnic identities of Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans and new elites.⁴³³

Roman ethnic identity has proved difficult to define, as shown in the above discussion of Romanization and *romanitas*. As Roman power expanded, and Romans colonized the provinces, it could be said that “... many Roman writers seem to insist on differences between themselves and others as a way of justifying the conquest of these populations.”⁴³⁴ On the other hand, each source must be interpreted in light of specific contextual items, because, as Michael Dewar argues in his article, “We’re All Romans Now (Except for the Foreigners),” Romans could at times portray provincials as barbarian “Others,” and at other times incorporate provincials into their own ethnic identity.⁴³⁵ In order to see how Romans constructed their own ethnic identity, one can turn to the boundary markers employed by Romans in describing the ethnic “Other.”

Romans could incorporate and/or exclude other collectivities in their ethnic identity by establishing various boundary markers. When factors such as language, customs or even appearance are correlated by Romans to a

⁴³² On Lucian, John Matthews, “Roman Law and Barbarian Identity in the Late Roman West,” in *Ethnicity and Culture*, ed. Mitchell and Greatrex, 31. On Cassius, Augustine and Paul, Mitchell and Greatrex, “Introduction,” xiii. On Strabo, Edward van der Vliet “The Romans and Us: Strabo’s Geography and the Construction of Ethnicity,” *Mnemosyne* 56 (3 2003), 269-70.

⁴³³ Carla M. Antonaccio, “Ethnicity and Colonization,” in *Ancient Perceptions*, ed. Malkin, 113-157.

⁴³⁴ McCoskey, “Answering,” 556.

⁴³⁵ “We’re All Romans Now (Except for the Foreigners): Multi-Ethnic Armies and the Ideology of *Romanitas* in the Poetry of Claudian,” *SCI* 14 (2003): 143-159. van der Vliet, “The Romans and Us,” 270, describes the phenomenon in terms of “narrowing, concentric circles.”

particular group of people, they are here understood to be boundary markers of ethnicity.⁴³⁶ At times, Romans could invoke their Trojan ancestry as an ethnic boundary while other times accepting the notion of common descent with provincials.⁴³⁷ Another example is the Roman toga, which became “loaded with moral significance” to those colonizing the provinces, especially in contrast to the *pallium*, a garment “unsuitable to be worn by Romans.”⁴³⁸ Another element that influenced Roman’s construction of ethnic identity, although not a precise boundary marker, was the way in which Romans, especially well-educated Romans, divided the world into three regions: (1) the northern, cold climate inhabited by the Scythians who were light skinned and light haired; (2) the southern, hot climate inhabited by the Ethiopians with dark skin; and (3) the middle, temperate zone, with Greece and Italy in the center.⁴³⁹ The spectrum flowed north to south, white to black – establishing Romans as the perfect balance. Thompson argues that this view never led to racism as it would be known today but rather to ethnocentrism.⁴⁴⁰ The ethnocentric tendency inherent in the Roman colonizers helps elucidate how they identified themselves and others: the more Roman, the more civilized.

⁴³⁶ e.g. Tacitus, *Germania* 4, “*habitus corporum*” (‘physique’); 28, “*institutus moribus*” (‘habits,’ and ‘type of character’); 45 “*ritus habitusque*” (“customs and dress”); and ‘*lingua*’ (‘language’); for a discussion of Tacitus’ usage, see Walter Pohl, “Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity,” in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. Pohl and Helmut Reimitz, (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 17-70. See Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 177-81, for the importance of language in ethnic identities.

⁴³⁷ Sue Elwyn, “Interstate Kinship and Roman Foreign Policy,” *TAPA* 123 (1993): 261-288.

⁴³⁸ “...loaded...,” in Woolf, “Becoming Roman,” 130. “...unsuitable...,” in Huskinson, “Looking,” 9. Also, see Strabo’s understanding of dress in van der Vliet, “The Romans and Us,” 264.

⁴³⁹ Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 171ff; cf. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 100ff. While these authors primarily concern themselves with Ethiopians, they serve to further the understanding of ethnic identity in Roman North Africa by interpreting ethnicity from the perspective of non-Romans.

⁴⁴⁰ *Romans*, 112-120; Mitchell and Greatrex, “Introduction,” xii.

To the Romans and the Roman colonizers, the indigenous Africans bore certain traits that served as ethnic boundaries. One of the minor poems of (Ps.-)Virgil states, "She was his only help, African by race, her whole appearance proclaiming her native land."⁴⁴¹ The fact that an outsider could look at a woman and know by her *figura* that she was an *Afra* suggests that there were physical signifiers by which North Africans were recognized. Snowden, who seeks to reconstruct the actual somatic type of North Africans, explains, "The child of a white mother and an Ethiopian father was *decolor* (*discolor*). These two words were often used to describe the skin color of the peoples of India and Mauretania. Hence, the Roman usage of these words to describe children born of Ethiopian and white parents suggests that the children of such unions resembled in color the lighter Indians and Mauretians."⁴⁴² Likewise, Thompson attempts to pinpoint the skin color of North Africans compared with Ethiopians and Romans, when he states, "The very darkskinned Berber group known as the Aphodelodes is likewise described as resembling *Aethiopes* only in colour but not in morphology. The ethnic label *Melanogaetuli* (black Gaetulians) is similarly a coinage reflecting the fact that this southern Berber people combined normal Mediterranean morphology with a very dark complexion."⁴⁴³ Sometimes *Afer* (African) was even used by Romans as the equivalent of *Aethiops* (i.e. black-skinned).⁴⁴⁴ This, however, was usually due to a lack of familiarity with darker skinned people.⁴⁴⁵ Fearing racializing tendencies, scholars like Gruen have questioned

⁴⁴¹ *Moretum* 31-2: *erat unica custos, Afra genus, tota patriam testante figura.*

⁴⁴² *Blacks*, 4.

⁴⁴³ *Romans*, 61.

⁴⁴⁴ See Snowden, *Blacks*, 11, for examples.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

the use of “appearance” or skin-color in ethnic studies.⁴⁴⁶ What should the scholar do, however, when Roman sources use appearance as an ethnic boundary? Art historians, for example, have commented on the way in which Africans were portrayed differently from Romans.⁴⁴⁷ It seems that to the Roman colonizers, the Africans were darker than themselves, yet not as dark as the Ethiopians further south. Other ethnic boundaries were also formed between the Romans and the Africans by dress: Roman and Greek sources often portray Africans as nomadic barbarians wearing the “mantle” or the *pallium* instead of togas.⁴⁴⁸ Similarly, African dialects and Punic remained in wide usage at least until the end of the second century.⁴⁴⁹

The encounter between the Romans and the other ethnic groups in the provinces resulted in a pressure on new elites to “become ... Roman by adopting the Roman way of life, by speaking their language, by adopting their *politeia*.”⁴⁵⁰ Because of the “ethnocentricity” of the Roman colonizers in viewing the indigenous Africans, the self-identity of new elites included an

⁴⁴⁶ “Cultural Fictions,” 3.

⁴⁴⁷ For depictions in art, see Michèle Blanchard-Lemée, Mongi Ennaïfer, Hédi Slim and Latifa Slim, *Mosaics of Roman Africa: Floor Mosaics from Tunisia [Sols de l'Afrique Romaine]*, trans. Kenneth D. Whitehead, (London: British Museum Press, [1995]1996), 19-22, who examines representations of the goddess Africa depicted with dread locks, “brunette-complexioned,” “notably darker” and having “Negroid traits of the whole face.” Huskinson, “Looking,” 14, comments, “This is particularly interesting to note in the case of Africa, since the other mosaic image of her found in the house emphasizes more ‘ethnic’ features by giving her corkscrew curls, large eyes, and darker skin.” Also, Marshall, “The Self,” 49-63, lists examples of artistic depictions of Cyrenaeans depicting themselves and Romans with “Libyan features.” Similarly, see Gilbert Charles-Picard and Colette Charles-Picard, *Daily Life in Carthage at the Time of Hannibal*, trans. A.E. Foster, (London: Ruskin House, 1961), 129, for the archeological examinations of skeletons found at the site of the ancient city of Carthage and the discussion of a variety of somatic types with a majority of “African” or “Negro” types.

⁴⁴⁸ Huskinson, “Looking,” 8; and Marshall, “The Self and the Other in Cyenaica,” 57, who cites examples.

⁴⁴⁹ Cherry, “Marriage,” 71; Miles, “Communicating Culture,” 58; and Miller, “Local Cultures,” 130-3; for sources and discussion. Also, Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 177-81, for the importance of language in ethnic identities.

⁴⁵⁰ van der Vliet, “The Romans and Us,” 269; cf. Hutchinson and Smith, “Concepts of Ethnicity,” in *Ethnicity*, ed. Hutchinson and Smith, 10-11.

awareness of their own African ethnic identity.⁴⁵¹ Several examples in the sources indicate that Africans perceived certain of their characteristics and customs to have been defined by Roman colonizers as ethnic boundary markers.

The playwright Publius Terentius Afer (c.195-159 BCE) is an early example of this self-awareness, with *Afer* ("the African") placed in his Roman name by his owner.⁴⁵² Similarly, Fronto once had to excuse his accent by comparing himself to the "barbarian" Anacharsis who was known for his wisdom: "for he was a Scythian of the nomad Schythians, while I am a Libyan of the nomad Libyans."⁴⁵³ Champlin, recognizing this self-awareness of ethnicity in Fronto, states,

This contrast [between Fronto and the Graeco-Romans] suggests the key to what was truly "African" in the orator. Above all, Fronto was the learned man of his age, thoroughly familiar with both Greek and Latin culture and the standard-bearer of Latin letters. His only misfortune was that he was born neither Greek nor Roman, but African. ... Considerable evidence suggests in the educated elite of Roman Africa a conscious suppression of the non-Latin heritage, a practice in marked contrast with that of the Hellenized East. The *lingua punica* was not a source of pride, most particularly in the late first and early second centuries, just when Africans were first beginning to penetrate the courts, the salons, and the senate of Rome.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Richard Alston, "Philo's *In Flaccum*: Ethnicity and Social Space in Roman Alexandria," *G&R* 2nd ser. 44 (2 1997): 165-175, for the case of Egypt, where the Romans elevated the status of Hellenized, urban elites over rural Egyptians as a means of stratifying and controlling Alexandrian society.

⁴⁵² Snowden, *Blacks*, 188.

⁴⁵³ See above. Miller, "Local Cultures," 126-134, discusses "native" languages of Africa (Punic and Lybian) remaining throughout the Roman period. cf. Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 16.6, "For even in Africa we know several barbarous nations which have but one language" [*Nam et in Africa barbaras gentes in una lingua plurimas nouimus.*]

⁴⁵⁴ Fronto, 16.

Fronto represents just one of many new elites of North Africa with a self-awareness of their ethnic identity.⁴⁵⁵

Other sources also imply that new elites from North Africa struggled with a stigmatized ethnic identity. John Hilton recognizes the same phenomenon in Apuleius:

Since his place of birth was Madauros in Africa Proconsularis, his native language (*sermo patrius*) was probably Punic. ... His linguistic background is therefore complex and this was no doubt the reason why he had to watch his words carefully. He would otherwise no doubt have been disparaged by his rivals, as was the emperor Septimius Severus who "had a melodious voice but sounded like an African somehow right up to his old age." An emperor could afford not to be too concerned on this account, but a sophist would need to be more watchful."⁴⁵⁶

Raven adds to this point of the self-awareness of Septimius Severus, "An African from Leptis Magna, named Septimius Severus, was once congratulated by the poet Martial 'that nothing in his looks or speech betrayed his Punic origin.' His relative of the same name who became the first African emperor 'never lost his African accent, and his Punic-speaking sister, on a visit, is said to have shamed him with her broken Latin.'"⁴⁵⁷ More generally

⁴⁵⁵ See Koen Goudriaan, *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt*, (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1988), for the example of Hellenistic Egypt where the tensions between the colonizer and the colonized created an ethnic awareness among the new Greek-speaking elites of Egypt.

⁴⁵⁶ "Introduction," 126; ref. to *Flor.* 9.6-7, "This is especially true for me, since the reputation that I have already won and your kind confidence in me does not allow me to mouth anything I like off the top of my head. For who among you would forgive me for a single solecism? Who would allow me one ignorantly pronounced syllable? Who would permit me to jabber any wild and uncouth words like those that well up in the mouth of the insane? Yet you easily forgive others for these same faults and quite justly so" [*praesertim mihi, cui et ante parta existimatio et uestra de me benigna praesumptio nihil non quicquam sinit negligenter ac de summo pectore hiscere. Quis enim uestrum mihi unum soloecismum ignouerit? Quis uel unam syllabam barbaram pronuntiatam donauerit? Quis incondita et uitiosa uerba temere quasi delirantibus oborientia permiserit blaterare? Que tamen aliis facile et sane meritissimo ignoscitis*]; and ref. to *Scriptores historiae augustae, Seuerus*, 19.9: *canorus uoce, sed Afrum quiddam usque ad senectutem sonans.*

⁴⁵⁷ *Rome*, 132; ref. *Scriptores historiae augustae, Seuerus*, 15.7: *cum sua Leptitana ad eum uenisset uix Latine loquens, ac de illa multum imperator erubesceret.* Also, see Birley, *The African Emperor*, 36, "The muddled Antiochene chronicler John Malalas, four centuries later, says that Septimius was dark-skinned. There is not much chance of verifying this statement now (although one colour portrait has survived)." A gray-scaled version is in Birley's plate 16.

on new elite usage of language, Richard Miles explains, “In north Africa, with the emergence of a Romano-African elite in the first century AD, bilingual inscriptions in both Latin and Punic reflect this elite’s need to not only maintain its local power base with a self-consciously constructed ‘African’ cultural identity, but also to articulate its position as an important group of people within the framework of the Roman empire.”⁴⁵⁸ Apuleius, Septimius Severus and other examples illustrate how new elites, conscious of language as an ethnic boundary markers established by the Roman “Other,” attempted to transcend their own African ethnic identity.

Recognizing *patria*, or homeland, as a constructed ethnic boundary by some, Apuleius protested,

I proclaimed myself to be “half Numidian” and “half Gaetulian.” Now I cannot see what I should be ashamed of, any more than Cyrus the Great because he was of mixed birth, being half Mede and half Persian. You must not judge a man’s district of origin but his disposition, not *where* but *how* he has commenced to live. ... To be sure, some nations seem remarkable for their stupidity or smartness, but the wise Anacharsis was born among the inert Scythians and the foolish Meletides among the clever Athenians.⁴⁵⁹

All of these examples suffice to show that the new elites of Africa understood their ethnic identity as a hindrance.

The varying responses to Roman colonizers who often established ethnic boundaries highlight the complexities of identity in the postcolonial context, a point noted by van der Vliet in his discussion of a “definition of

⁴⁵⁸ “Communicating Culture,” 58-9.

⁴⁵⁹ *Apologia* 24: *professus sum... Seminumidam et Semigaetulum, non video quid mihi sit in ea re pudendum, haud minus quam Cyro maiori, quod genere mixto fuit Semimedus ac Semipersa. Non enim ubi prognatus, sed ut moratus quisque sit spectandum, nec qua regione, sed qua ratione uitam uiuere inierit, consideratum est. ... quamquam uideantur quaedam stultitia uel sollertia insigniores? Apud socordissimos Scythas Anacharsis sapiens natus est, apud Athenienses catos Meletides fatuus.*

ethnicity”:

But in the meantime we crossed another kind of boundary, because the distinction between Romans and non-Romans has a wider range than inside the citizenries of individual cities. It is independent of these, and stands besides them. Among “Romans” circles of identity should be drawn in respect of their distance from the centre of power: the emperor and his family, the higher administrators and commanders, and next those who support them in the exercise of their tasks – and here Strabo places himself – , and, finally, the subject population. ... The well known principle, that who you are depends on context, applies also here.⁴⁶⁰

The question of “power” and loyalty to the emperor will reemerge below in regard to the new elites; for the present purposes, van der Vliet’s statement helps explain the ethnic identities of new elites. Walter Pohl also clarifies this point by stating, “Romanness, even for those who reached this goal, did not cancel regional and ethnic identities.”⁴⁶¹ The African new elites, like Fronto, Apuleius and even Septimius Severus oscillated between the ethnic identities available to them, including Roman and African. Alongside ethnic, kinship and class identities, North Africans constructed identities for themselves and others through various means, including those related to religion.

3.2.5 Religion and Religious Identity

While recent studies of Roman religion do not often directly engage with social anthropological discussions on religion, many of the anti-ethnocentric and anti-essentialist insights have contributed to the scholarly

⁴⁶⁰ “The Romans and Us,” 271.

⁴⁶¹ “Introduction: Strategies of Distinction,” in *Strategies of Distinction*, ed. Pohl and Reimitz, 1.

understanding of religion in antiquity.⁴⁶² Recently, moreover, Roman scholars have recognized the way in which various groups and individuals with varying interests and competing ideologies constructed identities through religion.⁴⁶³

The following discussion will focus on the way Roman religion shaped the identities of North Africans.

While past approaches to Roman religion focused on its polytheism, current studies tend to explore the various rituals practiced by the Romans.⁴⁶⁴

Because of the polytheistic nature of religion during the Empire, scholars admit that there “was no single ‘religion of the Roman empire.’ Every people and tribe, in certain ways every town, had its own traditions.”⁴⁶⁵ Coinciding with Rome’s colonialism, Romans’ religious worldview allowed for worship

⁴⁶² Jason P. Davies, *Rome’s Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus on Their Gods*, (CUP, 2004), 6; and Rives, “Roman Religion,” 350. For an example who does dialogue with anthropology, see Vasiliki Limberis, “‘Religion’ as the Cipher for Identity: The Cases of Emperor Julian, Libanius, and Gregory of Nazianzus,” *HTR* 93 (4 2000): 373-400, who criticizes Geertz’ “system of symbols” for being “essentialist.” However, Clifford Ando, “A Religion for the Empire,” in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 222, finds most classicists rely on functionalist anthropology of the 19th century in their understanding of Roman religion. Similarly, Robert C. Phillips, III, “Roman Religion and Literary Studies of Ovid’s *Fasti*,” *Arethusa* 25 (1 1992), 56, likens historians’ portrayal of “ancients” to past anthropological understandings of “primitives.” Also, a significant consensus of scholars now reject “Christianizing” Roman religion in terms of “belief” or “doctrine”: Ando, “Introduction to Part V: Roman and Alien,” in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 193; Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, 2 vols., (CUP, 1998); Davies, *Rome’s Religious History*, 7; R. Mellor, “The Local Character of Roman Imperial Religion,” *Athenaeum* 80 (2 1992), 387; Rives, “Roman Religion,” 345; Scheid, *An Introduction*, 3-8; T.R. Stevenson, “Social and Psychological Interpretations of Graeco-Roman Religion: Some Thoughts on the Ideal Benefactor,” *Antichthon* 30 (1996), 1-18; and Woolf, “The Religious History of the Northwest Provinces,” *JRA* 13 (2 2000), 615-630. However, Charles King, “The Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs,” *CLAnt* 22 (2 2003): 275-312, insists that Roman religion did entail some form of “belief.”

⁴⁶³ e.g. Haas, *Alexandria*, 15, on “ethno-religious communities”; and Rives, “Roman Religion,” on religion and ethnic identities. Also, see Guy MacLean Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesos: Foundation Myths of a Roman City*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 148, who briefly concludes with an “analogy” of modern identity politics.

⁴⁶⁴ Scholars now widely agree that this should be recognized. See the many discussions of the term *religio* which define the term in its Roman context differently than its English cognate: e.g. Ando, “Introduction: Religion, Law and Knowledge in Classical Rome,” in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 2-4; Richard Gordon, “From Republic,” 62; and Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome: Religion in Everyday Life from Archaic to Imperial Times [Rome et ses dieux]*, trans. Antonia Nevill, (EUP, [1998]2000), 1. For the distinctions of *religio* and “superstition,” see Ando, “Introduction to Part V,” 23. See Ando, “Introduction,” 2-4, for definitions of *religio* given by Cicero and Valerius Maximus.

⁴⁶⁵ Rives, “Religion,” 245.

of additional deities, which leads Turcan to claim, "Roman polytheism was opportunistic and thus open in advance to possible expansion."⁴⁶⁶ Regarding the imperial nature of Rome's religion, Ando elaborates,

To their staggering number and restricted functions... one might add the bewildering multiplicity of their natures: Greek, Italic, Egyptian, Phrygian, native, foreign, anthropomorphic, abstract, impersonal, indeterminate, transcendent, personal, male, female, locative, utopian and unknown are but a limited number of the ancient and modern categories from which one might construct a taxonomy of divine powers in Roman antiquity.⁴⁶⁷

Complicating the landscape of Roman religion even further is what King called its "polymorphic" nature: "The god could have many forms, and his persona was a matter of context. ...If one Roman understood the Lupercalia to be in honor of the god Inuus, and another believed the deity was Faunus, and another equated the god with the Greek deity Pan, there was no need to choose between the variations."⁴⁶⁸ The reason, however, that scholarly discussion has shifted away from discussions of Rome's polytheism, according to Gordon, is that it misrepresents the categories implicit in the ancient sources:

Cicero would have been surprised to discover that we refer to the religion of the late Republic as "polytheism," thus emphasizing the fact, of interest only in a Christian context, that numerous divinities received worship. By contrast, when C. Aurelius Cotta, the Academic spokesman in Cicero's dialogue *De Natura Deorum*, describes Roman Religion, he does not, in fact, mention gods, whether few or many.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁶ *The Gods*, 13. Similar to the claim of "opportunism," see the emphasis on the results of Roman religion, i.e. that the gods respond appropriately to religious practice: Ando, "Introduction," 11; and King, "Organization," 299.

⁴⁶⁷ "Introduction to Part IV: Theology," in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 141.

⁴⁶⁸ "Organization," 296. Similarly, Rives, "Religion," 257, discusses the ambiguity between the many Jupiters of cult and the one sovereign Jupiter of myth. In reaction to studies which overemphasize such phenomenon, however, Ando, "Introduction to Part III: Ritual and Myth," in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 102, claims, "The myth of a mythless Rome has had an especially pernicious influence on the study of Roman religion..."

⁴⁶⁹ "From Republic," 62; ref. 3.2.5.

Most discussions, therefore, focus on the manifold cult practices and rituals themselves.

As anthropologists have repeatedly found regarding the importance of specialists in constructing religious identity, so too historians of religions in the Roman empire acknowledge the centrality of rituals and specialists in forming religious identities for a community.⁴⁷⁰ Ritual played a central part in Roman society and filled virtually every aspect of individuals' lives.⁴⁷¹ Rives characterizes this complex understanding of Roman religion as one in which there is no secular/sacred distinction and in which ritual, myth, iconography, philosophy all "influenced each other and interacted in important ways, but they did not form a coherent system."⁴⁷² On the importance of ritual, Scheid claims, "...the Roman religion was ritualistic. No modern historian has questioned this formalism."⁴⁷³ Particularly in the case of civic rituals, local governing bodies appointed specialists whose qualifications often were based more on social status than religious training, spirituality or other forms of "specialization."⁴⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Romans placed special emphasis on "Orthopraxy," or correct performance of rituals by specialists, and this emphasis allowed communities to construct their religious identities.⁴⁷⁵

Although Roman religion had no concept of orthodoxy by which to determine

⁴⁷⁰ Ando, "Introduction to Part II: Religious Institutions and Religious Authority," in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 58.

⁴⁷¹ On the translation of *ritu*, Ando, "Introduction," 2, notes "*religio* as *cultu* and therefore as *ritu*"; but Scheid, *Roman Religion*, 30, insists, "The term *ritus* (in Greek *nomos*) designated a mode of action, a mode of celebrating religious festivals or rituals, not the content of those festivals. To designate that content, that is to say what we now call 'rites' or 'rituals,' the Romans employed the terms *sacra* or *caerimoniae*. A *ritus* was, on the other hand, a way of celebrating a traditional ritual – for example, a sacrifice: there was both a 'Greek rite' and a 'Roman rite.'"

⁴⁷² "Religion," 246.

⁴⁷³ *Roman Religion*, 30.

⁴⁷⁴ Scheid, *An Introduction*, 129; and general discussion in Turcan, *The Gods*, 52-8.

⁴⁷⁵ King, "The Organization," 292.

saint from sinner, doctrinally sound from heretic, Romans did stress orthopraxy which they used to construct for themselves a religious identity, a religious “Us” who faithfully sacrifice to “Our” god(s) in opposition to “Them” who do not.⁴⁷⁶ Roman religions performed the same function because they involved “a communal relationship with the gods.”⁴⁷⁷ The “gods,” moreover, for Romans throughout the empire entailed not the entire pantheon, but those gods “of and for a political community or body of citizens.”⁴⁷⁸ Roman religion stressed the “communal nature” of humans with the gods; the gods one worshipped shaped one’s religious identity.⁴⁷⁹ For these reasons, Ando claims, “...the purposes here are better served to focus on ‘which’ god is worshiped in *religio*, Roman or provincial, and for what function.”⁴⁸⁰ In constructing their religious identity through ritual, specialists and communal gods, Romans did not segment that identity from other aspects of their lives and societies.

Religion encompassed and epitomized various aspects of Roman society, such as the home, the local sphere and individuals’ relation to the empire at large. As discussed above under kinship, the Roman *domus* included religious ritual which was reflective of the idealized Roman society.⁴⁸¹ As dependents related to the *paterfamilias* in terms of *pietas*, all inhabitants of the empire honoured the emperor as *patronus* through religious

⁴⁷⁶ David Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius*, (HUP, 1994), 213.

⁴⁷⁷ Scheid, *An Introduction*, 22.

⁴⁷⁸ Ando, “Introduction,” 3.

⁴⁷⁹ Davies, *Rome’s Religious History*, 9-10; and Scheid, *An Introduction*, 175.

⁴⁸⁰ “Introduction,” 4.

⁴⁸¹ e.g. the ambiguity that arose between the common household *lares* and the *lares Augusti*, discussed by King, “Organization,” 286-7. More generally, see Scheid, *An Introduction*, 165-70; and Turcan, *The Gods*, 14-28.

ritual.⁴⁸² Scheid contends that all Roman religion consists of a hierarchy reflective of the patron-client structure of the Roman economy and calls this structure the “implicit theology of Roman ritualism.”⁴⁸³ Similarly, local civic religion politicized rituals and specialists by allowing the local “gods” to symbolize loyalty to political bodies.⁴⁸⁴ The civic model of Roman religion, according to Woolf, portrays “religion as essentially homologous with the social and political structures of ancient societies.”⁴⁸⁵ Local elites, therefore, often displayed their status and power by demonstrating their connection to the emperor via cults and dedications.⁴⁸⁶

Whereas so much scholarly discussion of Roman ritual practice frames religion and religious identity in terms of power, authority and hierarchy, Roman religion is often portrayed in terms of identity politics. Rives states, “Roman culture thus involved a crucial nexus between religion, Roman identity and public power.”⁴⁸⁷ The “nexus” involved ethnic and “political”

⁴⁸² Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 369; Rives, “Religion,” 258; Stevenson, “Social and Psychological Interpretations,” 17; Scheid, *An Introduction*, 162; and Turcan, *The Gods*, 4. On *pietas*, King, “The Organization,” 292; and Scheid, *An Introduction*, 26.

⁴⁸³ “Hierarchy and Structure in Roman Polytheism: Roman Methods of Conceiving Action,” in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, trans. Philip Purchase, 165, originally as “Hiérarchie et structure dans le polythéisme romain: façons romaines de penser l’action,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 1 (2 1999), 184-203.

⁴⁸⁴ Ando, “Introduction,” 3. See especially the Urso discovery and its importance in a revised understanding of *polis* religion: Scheid, *An Introduction*, 21-2; Jason P. Davies, *Rome’s Religious History: Livy, Tacitus and Ammianus on Their Gods*, (CUP, 2004), 3-12; and Woolf, “Polis-Religion and its Alternatives in the Roman Provinces,” in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 39-54, originally in *Römische Reichsreligion and Provinzialreligion*, ed. H. Cancik and J. Rüpke, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 71-84. Another critic of the model is Ando, “A Religion,” 221. For a discussion of civic religion, as opposed to mythological or philosophical, in Roman sources, see Scheid, *An Introduction*, 174. This is not to say that there were not empire-wide rituals and religions; rather, these religions are usually seen categorized as “Eastern,” “mystery cults,” etc., to indicate them as not “Roman” in their origin; e.g. Saraolta A. Takács, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

⁴⁸⁵ “Polis-Religion,” 40; note that Woolf elaborates, “Homology does not, of course, mean identity. Greeks and Romans were perfectly able to conceptualise religion as a discrete cognitive domain.”

⁴⁸⁶ Rives, “Religion,” 266; and Woolf, “The Religious History,” 619-20.

⁴⁸⁷ Rives, “Religion,” 258.

identities enacted through ritual, as in the case of the cult to Jupiter Optimus Maximus as a way Romans displayed “pride in their identity as Romans, the people whom Jupiter had blessed above all others.”⁴⁸⁸ As discussed above under Romanization, Romans understood themselves as especially “blessed” by the gods, a conception that helped construct Roman religious identity and ideology.⁴⁸⁹

Although the various ritualistic practices and religious affiliations can not be oversimplified to characterize Romans as insincerely practicing their religion for the purposes of personal gain, many scholars understand the Roman political authorities to utilize religious rituals for purposes of control and authority.⁴⁹⁰ Scheid elaborates,

In other words, the operation of [Roman] religion was necessarily marked by a certain coldness, by calculation of advantage and by attention to reality: Roman religion was in good health and held in high esteem to the extent that it was linked to politics and the political. ...Roman religion was in essence political and politicized.⁴⁹¹

While Scheid’s comments reflect a view that emphasizes the functionalist nature of Roman religion, his insights help explain the various rituals of Rome and the significance for political power. Discussing the more nuanced understanding of the relationship between religion and political power, Rives adds, “This does not mean that political manipulation of cultic institutions

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid, 274 and 258.

⁴⁸⁹ For Roman religion as “legitimizing ideology,” see Gordon, “From Republic,” 74-6. Similarly, Roberta Stewart, “Domitian and Roman Religion: Juvenal, Satires Two and Four,” *TAPA* 124 (1994), 330. See discussion in Brian A. Krostenko, “Beyond (Dis)belief: Rhetorical Form and Religious Symbol in Cicero’s *de Divinatione*,” *TAPA* 130 (2000): 353-391. For examples, see Ando, “Introduction to Part II,” 60; Gordon, “From Republic,” 77; and Krostenko, “Beyond (Dis)Belief,” 362.

⁴⁹⁰ Davies, *Rome’s Religious History*, 3-12.

⁴⁹¹ “Cults, Myths and Politics at the Beginning of the Empire,” in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 118, originally as “Cultes, mythes et politique au Début de l’Empire,” in *Mythos in mythenlose Gesellschaft: Das Paradigma Roms*, ed. F. Graf. (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993), 109-27.

never took place, but that contemporaries were probably much less sure about identifying it than most modern scholars have been.”⁴⁹²

Religion in the provinces varied regionally, and the reaction, reception and/or rejection of Roman religion differed accordingly.⁴⁹³ Despite the “shift” in scholarly discussions of Romanization, Woolf decries the fact that indigenous religions in the provinces have largely remained unexplored.⁴⁹⁴ The two-fold reason for this is defined as the scarcity of sources and the ideological bias of the existing sources, which were produced by Romans.⁴⁹⁵

Roman policy towards the religions of conquered peoples consisted of complex responses to specific contexts, including both assimilation and rejection. Focusing on the Roman elite, Ando claims, “Romans at Rome had long developed sophisticated and self-conscious mechanisms both for importing and naturalizing foreign cults and for sanctioning and controlling the religious life of subject populations.”⁴⁹⁶ King explicates the openness of Rome to provincial religions:

When the Romans encountered foreign peoples, they likewise did not erect firm barriers between their gods and beliefs and those they encountered elsewhere. If anything, Roman religious history is the history of assimilating and adapting the religious concepts of their neighbors. Romans frequently worshipped local gods when they entered foreign areas, identified Roman gods with the gods of other peoples, and imported the worship of certain outside cults to Rome.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹² “Roman Religion,” 350.

⁴⁹³ For “foreign cults” in Rome, see Turcan, *The Gods*, 106-33.

⁴⁹⁴ “The Religious History,” 615; as exceptions, Woolf cites for Gaul, Derks, *Gods, Temples and Ritual Practices*; for Egypt David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance*, (PUP, 1998); and for Africa, see Rives, *Religion*.

⁴⁹⁵ “The Local Character,” 386. Similarly, Gordon, “Religion: the Civic Compromise and its Limits,” in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Beard and J. North, (London: Duckworth, 1990), 235-55, stresses the ideological nature of Romans’ posture towards provincial religions.

⁴⁹⁶ “A Religion,” 222.

⁴⁹⁷ “The Organization,” 285.

While Romans in general may not have had fixed or “firm boundaries,” boundaries, nevertheless, were sometimes drawn by Romans on religious lines. Krostenko exegetes Cicero’s diatribe between two Roman senators on religion, wherein many dichotomies occur – including “Roman”/“Foreign.”⁴⁹⁸ In Krostenko’s reading, to “attack foreigners or foreign [religious] practices as such,” makes one “the defender of true Roman identity.”⁴⁹⁹ While Cicero’s perspective only represents the view of Roman elite, an exploration of religious encounter between Roman colonizers and indigenous Africans indicates similar patterns of both assimilation and resistance.

The indigenous African population did not cast away their gods when Rome destroyed Carthage. Instead, they kept the gods of their fathers in unique ways, as reported by Pomponius Mela during the reign of Claudius: “[Africans] differ in language and in the cult of the gods whom they worship as ancestral and venerate in the traditional way.”⁵⁰⁰ Whether or not they actually worshiped them in the ancestral manner, they did not always worship them under their ancestral names. Raven gives an example: “The very popularity of Saturn (whose name only thinly disguised his original identity as Baal), in preference to Jupiter or Minerva, for example, also reveals the strength of old loyalties.”⁵⁰¹ One of the best recent discussions on religion and religious identity in northern Africa is that by Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage*. According to Rives, religion helps both outsiders to define a person’s identity and helps an individual to establish his or her self-identity.

⁴⁹⁸ “Beyond (Dis)belief.”

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 365.

⁵⁰⁰ Pomponius Mela 1.41-2: *linguis different et cultu deum quos patrios seruant ac patrio more uenerantur.*

Rives explains,

The Africans of the Roman period largely abandoned the use of non-Roman divine names and instead employed Latin titles for their traditional deities. This is simply a specific aspect of a general tendency to translate as many terms as possible when writing in Latin. People substituted the name of a Roman deity for that of a foreign deity on the basis of a perceived common characteristic. Such substitution is usually described as *interpretatio Romana*, Roman translation.”⁵⁰²

Following this tendency, therefore, many indigenous African gods were given Roman names.⁵⁰³

Not only were Punic gods retained under new names, but also the Libyan gods of whom less is known. Rives reports, “Frugifer is in some ways the most intriguing. He does not have a proper name, only an epithet meaning ‘crop-bearing.’ Outside Africa this epithet is quite rare.... In Africa, however, the title is found alone in over twenty inscriptions. The contrast in usage in itself suggests that in Africa ‘Frugifer’ denoted a local deity, whose chief power lay over agricultural fertility.”⁵⁰⁴ Likewise, Neptune has dedications throughout North Africa, but many of the shrines are far inland and not by the sea, which leads scholars to a general agreement that the name refers to a Libyan god of water and springs.⁵⁰⁵ The continued worship of these gods does not negate the presence and practice of Roman religion by indigenous Africans; rather, indigenous gods indicate a pre-Roman heritage that continued throughout the Roman era alongside the religion of the colonizers, a religion especially amalgamated by new elites.

⁵⁰² *Religion*, 133; for *interpretatio Romana* in Gaul, see Woolf, “Polis-Religion,” 50; note also, Woolf’s warning (44) on a limited understanding of this phenomenon, “as if Romanisation and Resistance were the only issue at stake when provincials turned to the heavens”; and Turcan, *The Cults*, 12-5. Conversely, Shaw, *Rulers*, 19 discusses “*interpretatio Africana*.”

⁵⁰³ e.g. Tanit/Juno-Caelestis, Baal/Saturn, Shadrappa/Bacchus, Melkart/Hercules, *et al.*

⁵⁰⁴ Rives, *Religion*, 127-8.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 131.

The religion of the new elites in North Africa typifies the nature of the role the new elite played as mediators. On new elites use of religion throughout the provinces, Woolf comments, "The central tenets of polis-religion tell us not how ancient religion was organised, but how some groups tried to organise it."⁵⁰⁶ The primary "group" that organized religion in Africa Proconsularis was the new elite.⁵⁰⁷

Very often, new elite individuals in pursuit of prestige would dedicate a temple or a shrine on behalf of the city, the imperial officials and/or the emperor himself.⁵⁰⁸ Thereby, the new elites established themselves in the eyes of the person (or persons) honored as loyal, devoted and capable, while simultaneously portraying themselves before all those who witnessed the dedication as a person of status, power and prestige. The emperor and imperial officials accepted such dedications, often resulting in the bestowal of citizenship or rank in return; the local people, likely, interpreted them as signs that the dedicator had ties with the emperor and the imperial powers. By carefully, and perhaps naturally, "translating" local gods into Roman deities in these dedications, the new elites mediated between the Roman colonizers and

⁵⁰⁶ "Religion," 44.

⁵⁰⁷ The following paragraph relies on Rives, *Religion*. For a similar survey that compares the role of the new elites of North Africa to those of other provinces, see C.R. Whittaker, "Imperialism and Culture: the Roman Initiative," in *Dialogues*, ed. Mattingly, 143-164.

⁵⁰⁸ cf. Rives, "Religion," 268. On provincial resistance to the imperial cult, see Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 258. Similarly, see Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*. For a list of extant inscriptions of *flamen/sacerdos prouvinciae Africae*, see Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, 187-204; for Apuleius, Fishwick (195-7), relies on Augustine, *Epistula* 138.4.19, who says Apuleius was "the priest of a province" [*sacerdos prouvinciae*]. Also, Apuleius, *Flor.* 16.38, states that "[Someone] even showed, on the evidence of the priesthood I have taken up, that the highest honour in Carthage was mine" [*Immo etiam docuit argumento suscepti sacerdotii, summum mihi honorem Carthaginis adesse*]. Rives, "The Priesthood of Apuleius," *AJP* 115 (1994): 273-90, questions this understanding, offering the alternative that he was a priest of Aesculapius.

the indigenous Africans, redefining their identity in the eyes of both parties simultaneously.

3.3 Conclusion

The social identities outlined and discussed throughout this chapter, Roman colonizer, indigenous African and new elite, illustrate the complexity of attempting to describe and define persons' self-ascribed loyalties and group affiliations. These three categories each entail elements such as ethnicity and religion, which have been discussed explicitly, and they encompass aspects such as gender and political allegiances which have been addressed circumspectly. In order to avoid reifying the social landscape of African identities one must keep these labels in constant juxtaposition with other demographic and sociological factors.

North Africa's Roman colonizers throughout the era of imperial presence never fundamentally altered their social identity as colonizers. In fact, they carried out the true spirit of Rome by furthering the empire and the *pax romana*, thus establishing themselves as even more Roman than the Romans.⁵⁰⁹ Such a mindset accounts for the spread of Latin throughout Africa by the Roman colonizers, even when the upper-echelon were still speaking Greek in the city of Rome. Carthage and other colonial cities were modeled after Rome insuring that the self-identity of the Roman colonizers in North Africa remained firm and clear. The indigenous Africans had an equally clear

⁵⁰⁹ Adapting the phrase "more English than the English" from postcolonial criticism: Aschroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 4.

understanding of these colonists: to the native (or perspective of the Roman “Other”), the Roman colonists were aliens representing the Roman Empire.

The indigenous Africans throughout the empire retained much of their indigenous heritage, defying any description in terms of full-scale Romanization. While they were obviously impacted by trade with the wider empire, the evidence does not support any theory that North Africans were amalgamated into the Graeco-Roman norm. Cherry argues, “It seems to me that what we ought to be trying to identify is the acculturation of ideas or values that were rooted or, in anthropological terms, ‘embedded’ in Roman culture. A Roman artifact that carried with it some religious significance, for example, will have been more difficult to acculturate than, say, a pot.”⁵¹⁰ The discussion about indigenous Africans can no longer be passively placed in Western or European terms. While the social identity of the various peoples of ancient North Africa may have been primarily based in local and familial identity, there was an awareness of the “alien-ness” of the Romans, and, therefore, an awareness of their own “native-ness.”

The new elite of North Africa belonged to two worlds: the native *patria* of Africa and the foreign empire of Rome. As Simon Goldhill observes, “In the Roman Empire all are insiders, but some are more insiders than others.”⁵¹¹ The question of which group the new elites belonged to created contested and seemingly contradictory identities: while Rives argues that the new elites sought after the Roman status despite the absence of Roman “civilizing” as a policy, Thompson illustrates the systemic nature of the imperial force:

⁵¹⁰ *Frontier*, 82. More generally, see Gosselain, “Materializing Identities,” 188.

⁵¹¹ “Review Article: Sophistry, Philosophy, and Rhetoric,” *BMCR* 6(1995), 354.

To be sure, it has often been said that Romans did not impose their culture on other peoples. But that is true only if one takes “impose” in the crude sense of a hypothetical Roman official ordering Celtic barbarians (for example) to stop wearing trousers and don togas instead. It is more important to consider Roman attitudes toward Romanization and the fact that, in the geopolitical system dominated by Rome, inexorable social forces made Graeco-Roman culture a prerequisite for the individual’s full realization of his or her talents and potential.⁵¹²

Cherry argues that whatever forces were at play upon the new elites, the new elites were certainly the minority of North Africans.⁵¹³

Several examples of duplicitous loyalty can be seen in the sources from Roman Africa. Addressing Fronto’s allegiances, Champlin states, “...the role of his *patria* is clear. Despite continued residence in Rome and despite connections throughout the empire, Fronto retains an interest in his homeland, an interest closely confined to Cirta and its environs.”⁵¹⁴ Contrary to this understanding of a new elite, Harrison understood Apuleius in different terms: “It is crucially important for a true appreciation of Apuleius to realize that he belongs not to an African subculture but to the mainstream of Latin culture and literature, with his much vaunted fluency in Greek acquired as it would be by a well-educated Roman.”⁵¹⁵ The seemingly contradictory self-identity seen in these two representatives of African new elites signifies the tension in which this category of people found themselves. While these individuals were African in one sense and clearly understood themselves in terms of an African

⁵¹² *Romans*, 127.

⁵¹³ *Frontier*, 159.

⁵¹⁴ Champlin *Fronto*, 15.

⁵¹⁵ “General Introduction,” 1.

self-identity, the new elites also sought and often attained a Roman status.

From this analysis of North African social identities, one can inquire as to which category Tertullian belonged. An initial reading of his background and education seems to indicate that Tertullian deserves to be classified as a new elite.⁵¹⁶ Nevertheless, the following re-reading of Tertullian's works understands Tertullian to have considered himself an indigenous African, rejecting the pursuits of the North African new elite in favor of recovering an identity which in some ways was subversive to the Roman system. Before proceeding to Tertullian's writing, however, the succeeding chapter will explore the Christian community of North Africa to which Tertullian belonged in order to address the identities of groups and individuals who understood themselves to be both Christian and African.

⁵¹⁶ Dunn, *Tertullian*, 5; Stewart-Sykes, *Tertullian*, 14; and Wright, "Tertullian," 1027.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHRISTIAN CONTEXT OF TERTULLIAN: SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND NORTH AFRICAN CHRISTIANS

While Tertullian is the first Christian from the context of North Africa whose writings are extant, he writes from within an already prevalent Christian community. How was North Africa evangelized, and to what extent? What were the demographics of the first Christian churches and what changes did they undergo in their history? In what has become known as social-scientific criticism, biblical scholars in recent decades have begun to implement models and theories from Social Anthropology to the ancient near east in order to answer similar questions.⁵¹⁷ A similar approach could add further insight into the scholarly interpretation of Tertullian's theology.⁵¹⁸

In exploring the historical data of Christians in ancient Africa the discussion will return to the various anthropological theories employed in chapter two. The three categories of social identities (Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans, and new elites) will serve as perspectival categories for reviewing the sources on early Christianity in Africa. The spread of Christianity, however, introduces a new category of social identity, and,

⁵¹⁷ For a review, see D.G. Horrell (ed.), *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999). For anthropology in particular, see Lawrence and Aguilar, eds., *Anthropology and Biblical Studies*. For an alternate critique of Christian origin scholars' claim to "an objectivist reconstruction of early Christian history" as "a scholarly fiction," see Fiorenza, "'You are not to be Called Father': Early Christian History in a Feminist Perspective," *Cross Currents* 29 (3 1979): 301-23.

⁵¹⁸ Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, (OUP: 2004), 15-7, argues for this move specifically for theories of identity in first and second century Christianity. Similarly, J. Patout Burns, Jr., *Cyprian the Bishop*, (London: Routledge, 2002), applies Mary Douglas' approach to group identity and boundaries. Also, Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible*, 6, has suggested the use of sociology of religion in studying the Donatist controversy. For a sociological reading of early Christian history in general, see Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). For an attempt to set theology and anthropology in dialogue more generally, see Douglas J. Davies, *Anthropology and Theology*, (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

therefore, contributes to the complicated web of individual and group identity constructions. The ancient context will be discussed with the understanding of a Christian community which sees itself at odds with the oppressive forces of the outside world, or more specifically, the forces of Rome, both “pagan” and Christian. Before looking at North African Christian sources from the early Christian centuries thematically, it will be helpful to review the material chronologically.

4.1 Introduction – Christianization of Roman Africa

The history of Christian communities in ancient Africa is known through sources that report conflict with Rome.⁵¹⁹ The historical data fall into a broad outline that illustrates this theme: (1) late second to early third century, which includes the *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum*, the *Passio sanctorum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* and Tertullian’s writings; (2) mid to late third Century, which primarily consists of Cyprian’s treatises and letters; and (3) late antiquity to the early middle ages, consisting primarily of the so-called Donatist controversy. The scope of this chronology cannot extend to every aspect of North African Christianity; instead, it is hoped that the broad history, including what follows Tertullian, illuminates some factors that impacted Christian identities in North Africa.

Although the first evidence of Christianity in North Africa is the *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum* (c. 180), scholars agree that the document

⁵¹⁹ Margaret M. Miles, “Patriarchy as Political Theology: The Establishment of North African Christianity,” in *Civil Religion and Political Theology*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 169. Also, see Rankin, *Tertullian*, 10, on conflict in terms of martyrdom.

indicates a previously established Christian presence.⁵²⁰ The question scholars debate, however, is the mode by which the Christian religion entered North Africa.⁵²¹ Although North African Christians used Latin, scholars have generally rejected Roman origins in favour of either Jewish influence or the claim to Greek missions.⁵²² Lacking further information in the sources, scholars have not reached a consensus, other than acknowledging the difference between African Christian practices and the contemporary forms in Rome.⁵²³

The historical data becomes more substantial with the account of the martyrs from the town of Scilli. Many scholars consider the surviving account to be one of the most reliable *acta* from early Christendom.⁵²⁴ In seventeen lines, it tells of seven men and five women who refused to recant their Christianity, and as a result they were beheaded on orders of the proconsul of

⁵²⁰ e.g. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 63.

⁵²¹ See R. Pierce Beaver, "The Organization of the Church of Africa on the Eve of the Vandal Invasion," in *Missions and Regional Characteristics of the Early Church*, vol. XII in *Studies in Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 84, originally in *Church History* 5 (1936): 168-81. cf. Acts 2:10, "and [those from] the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene" [καὶ τὰ μέρη τῆς Λιβύης τῆς κατὰ Κυρήνην.]

⁵²² For Jewish origins, see Daniélou, *The Origins*; R. Hanson, "Notes on Tertullian's Interpretation of Scripture," *JTS* n.s. 12 (1961): 273-9; Frend, "Jews and Christians in Third Century Carthage," in *Town and Country in the Early Christian Centuries*, (London: Variorum, 1980); and Blake Leyerle, "Blood is Seed," *The Journal of Religion* 81 no 1 (Ja 2001): 26-48. For Greek, see W. Telfer, "The Origins of Christianity in Africa," *SP* 4 (1961): 512-7; Barnes, *Tertullian*, 68-9; and Barnes, "Legislation Against the Christians," in *Church and State in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 72.

⁵²³ Rankin, *Tertullian*, 16; Barnes, *Tertullian*, 66-7, and 275-6, on liturgical differences. Dunn, *Tertullian*, 14-5, describes a more complex alternative where competing Christianities spread throughout North Africa. On the "African-ness" of North African Christians, see Frend, "Heresy and Schism as Social and National Movements," in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. D. Baker, (CUP, 1972), 39, who states, "Roman Africa was ostensibly Latin, but beneath the outward form of latinisation, the population retained much of the religious and cultural heritage of Carthage." Frend also (41) likens North African Christians to "Palestinians Jews in the Maccabean period."

⁵²⁴ Barnes, "Legislation," 72; for introductory notes on the textual transmission, see Musurillo, "Introduction," in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. and trans. Musurillo, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), xxii-xxiii.

Africa.⁵²⁵ Nothing is known of the town of Scilli from where the first recorded African martyrs came, nor is there explicit reference as to how or why the proconsul arrested the Scillitans. The image portrayed is of Christians who are not surprised by the pronouncement of their sentence, exemplified by their unanimous response, “*Deo gratias.*”⁵²⁶

Another famous account of African Christian martyrs, the *Passio sanctorum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, bears witness to the first general period of African Christianity.⁵²⁷ This *passio* is a much fuller and grander account of the incarceration, trial, torture and execution of Perpetua and her fellow martyrs. Like the account of the Scillitan martyrs, the witness of the *passio* is sufficiently contemporary to the events it portrays to be considered a credible source to most scholars.⁵²⁸ The date Perpetua and her companions were martyred is said to be the same day as *natale Getae Caesaris* (7.9) – the birthday of Geta, Septimius Severus’ son – which according to Tabbernee was on 7 March 203.⁵²⁹ The trial likely took place in Carthage, and no indication is given of the Christians’ background.⁵³⁰ Like the *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum*, the account portrays the Christians in Africa in conflict with the powers of the world.

⁵²⁵ Stated to be on 17 July in Carthage during the consulship of C. Bruttius Praesens and Claudianus. On the proconsul, P. Vigellius Saturninus, see Tertullian, *Ad Scap.* 3.4.

⁵²⁶ *PSS* 17.

⁵²⁷ For introductory notes on the textual transmission, including comments on the Greek text of *PSPF*, see Musurillo, *The Acts*, xxv-xxvii; and Cecil M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian*, (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 12-3. Some surmise that Tertullian edited the *PSPF*: e.g. J. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, “The Beginnings of Patristic Literature,” (Utrecht, Brussels: Spectrum Publishers, 1950), 181; and G.D. Schlegel, “The *Ad martyras* of Tertullian and the Circumstances of its Composition,” *Downside Review* 63 (1945), 127; see discussion in Barnes, *Tertullian*, 265, note 5; and Robeck, *Prophecy*, 16-8. For bibliography on the *passio*, see Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 55-60, and 108-10.

⁵²⁸ Barnes, “Legislation,” 72.

⁵²⁹ *Montanist Inscriptions*, 108; cf. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 263-4; and Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), 221.

⁵³⁰ Raven, *Rome*, 167.

Representing the second generation of North African Christians, Cyprian of Carthage is reported to have led a church also riddled with conflict.⁵³¹ Soon after his conversion, he took office as Bishop of Carthage (248/9), wherein he was challenged with one of the most aggressive campaigns against Christians to date under the Roman emperor Decian (249-51). Internal conflict arose after some Christians recanted their faith; they sought immediate forgiveness and restoration from the confessors awaiting martyrdom, a practice Cyprian opposed. In the Roman congregation, a dissension occurred where a certain Novatian held the view that the lapsed should not be allowed back into the Church, even at the point of death – another practice Cyprian opposed, and Novation eventually claimed for himself the bishopric of Rome and established rival congregations in Rome and in Africa. Later, another conflict arose, this time directly between the Roman and Carthaginian sees: Stephen I, bishop of Rome (254-7), declared those baptized by heretics could be accepted into the communion, while Cyprian and his fellow African bishops upheld their traditional stance against this view. The conflict was never fully resolved when the Valerian persecution resulted in Cyprian's martyrdom (258).

For the third period of African Christianity, historians often look to the reign of Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313) as the beginning of the Donatist controversy.⁵³² The beginning of the split between the Donatist party

⁵³¹ See Jerome, *De uiris illustribus* 53.3, "...Cyprian was accustomed never to pass a day without reading Tertullian and would frequently say to him, 'Hand me the master,' meaning, of course, Tertullian" [*solitum numquam Cyprianum absque Tertulliani lectione unum diem praeterisse, ac sibi crebro dicere, Da magistrum: Tertullianum uidelicet significans.*] For an overview of Cyprian's life and dates, see G.S.M. Walker, *The Churchmanship of St. Cyprian*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968); for a more recent treatment of some the issues surrounding Cyprian, see Burns, *Cyprian*.

⁵³² Raven, *Rome*, 169.

and the Catholics traces back to an internal dispute of the Christian congregation at Carthage, which resulted in Donatus, a “former bishop from the village of ‘Dark Houses’ (*Casae Nigrae*) in Numidia,” being appointed as a rival overseer in Carthage.⁵³³ The conflict climaxed in the Conference of Carthage (411) where both parties’ bishops convened, wherein, despite the portrayal of anti-Donatist accounts like Augustine and Optatus of Milevis, the council seems to have resulted in a stalemate.⁵³⁴ The Donatists, drawing on Tertullian and Cyprian, understood themselves to be at odds with the world, which was typified in the powers of Rome, seeing the collusion of the Roman church with the Roman state as foreign to the faith of the martyrs and antithetical to the impetus of African Christian tradition.⁵³⁵ Historians especially note conflict with Rome in the alliance of many Donatists to the revolts of Firmus and Gildo.⁵³⁶

The disappearance of widespread practice of Christianity in North Africa presents an enigma to the scholars of Christian history. Henri Teissier asked, “How can a Christianity established in some seven hundred different dioceses, some of them so closely neighboring on Christian Europe, with all their rich doctrinal legacy thanks to Augustine and Cyprian, a Christianity

⁵³³ Shaw, “African Christianity: Disputes, Definitions, and ‘Donatists,’” in *Rulers, Nomads and Christians in Roman North Africa*, (Aldershot: VARIORUM, 1995), 10, originally in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Religious Movements: Discipline and Dissent*, ed. M.R. Greenshields and T.A. Robinson, (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 5-34.

⁵³⁴ Tilley, *The Bible*, 2ff.

⁵³⁵ See Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa*, rev. ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 106; R.A. Markus, “Christianity and Dissent in Roman North Africa: Changing Perspectives in Recent Work,” in *Schism*, ed. D. Baker, 21; Miles, “Patriarchy,” 171; and Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories: The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996). On Donatist use of Tertullian and Cyprian, see Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 111; Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine*, (CUP, 1970), 105-32; and Frend, “Heresy and Schism,” 45, esp. regarding conflict with the “world.”

⁵³⁶ Raven, *Rome*, passim; Frend, “Heresy and Schism as Social and National Movements,” in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. D. Baker, (CUP, 1972), 45, and above, section 3.1.2.

steeped in the blood of the martyrs, have simply and completely disappeared?"⁵³⁷ The Vandal invasion, importing a wave of Arianism, and later the Arab expansion, introducing an entirely new religion, both contributed to the complete eradication of Christianity from Africa Proconsularis, Numidia and Mauritania.⁵³⁸

4.2 Applied Theories

Christian history in North Africa has been presented as an overall tradition of a community that understands itself to be in conflict with those designated as outsiders.⁵³⁹ In order to explore this worldview and this self-conceptualization of African Christians, the discussion will now turn from a chronological approach to a thematic one. By returning to the theories from Social Anthropology, the sources – primarily from the first period of African Christian history and secondarily from the second and third periods as outlined above – will be surveyed for elements of Christian constructions of identities.⁵⁴⁰ First, the discussion of Christians' social identities includes a review of data illustrating how Christians were deemed by outsiders as the "Other."

⁵³⁷ "La scomparsa dell'antica chiesa d'Africa," in *La chiesa nell'Africa del Nord* by various authors (Milan: Paoline; Cinisello Balsamo, 1991), 42; cited in Gibellini, "Introduction," 2.

⁵³⁸ For discussion, see Frend, *The Donatist Church*. Cahal B. Daly, *Tertullian the Puritan and His Influence: An Essay in Historical Theology*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), 72-3, blames Tertullian (via Cyprian) for what happened "at the hands of the Vandal and Mohammedan."

⁵³⁹ Markus, "Christianity, 28, and 32-5. Also, Trevette, *Montanism*, 69-70, points out that African Christianity may not have suffered more actual persecution than other regions, but they did understand themselves as such in Tertullian's time.

⁵⁴⁰ On identity construction and Christian identity, see Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 11-7, 23-6.

4.2.1 Social Identities and North African Christians

Robert L. Wilken explains how he came to write his book, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*: “The more I read the apologists... the more I realized that they could not be understood without first studying the attitudes of outsiders to Christianity.”⁵⁴¹ In an attempt to interpret the Christian social identities in North Africa, this section will outline the way in which Christians were seen by non-Christians in North Africa. Returning to the three categories of social identity used in chapter three, representatives of North African society will be surveyed to determine the various perspectives toward Christians. The ways in which Christians constructed their own identity will be addressed in the following sections, including the conclusion, wherein social identities will be revisited.

The introduction of a Christian identity into North African society in a sense could require a duplication of the three categories: (1.a) Non-Christian Roman Colonizers, (1.b) Christian Roman Colonizers, (2.a) Non-Christian indigenous Africans, (2.b) Christian indigenous Africans, (3.a) Non-Christian new elites and (3.b) Christian new elites. Because non-Christians tended to assume the monolithic constitution of Christianity, however, Christians can be construed as representing a new category of social identity in North Africa: (1) Roman colonizers, (2) Indigenous Africans, (3) new elites and (4) North African Christians. Although it is true that not all members of any one of these categories, such as Roman colonizers, thought and acted unanimously, general stereotypes did exist among certain groups which provide a frame of reference to which we can compare individual attitudes.

⁵⁴¹ *Christians*, (YUP, 1984), xv.

4.2.1.1 Roman Colonizers and Christians

Direct evidence for Roman views of Christians in North Africa is sparse at best, and so the historian must look to examples of Roman stereotypes of Christians elsewhere in order to suggest analogous perspectives in Africa. The fact that many in the Roman Empire did not welcome Christian proselytism goes without saying. The question, more specifically, is “How did non-Christian Romans view the members of this new and seemingly atheistic religion?” A few writers’ comments are extant which present some possible answers to this question.

The first mention of Christianity by a non-Christian did not occur until eighty-years after the death of Christ.⁵⁴² The Governor of the province in Bithynia-Pontus named Pliny the Younger (c. 62-113) wrote to his emperor Trajan to inquire as to the proper treatment of Christians.⁵⁴³ Born in Italy and a citizen of senatorial class, Pliny represents a Roman colonial perspective in a Roman province. Moreover, the actions of Pliny towards the Christians set precedence for the Roman officials in Africa and served to inform the understanding of Romans in Africa Proconsularis.⁵⁴⁴ Wilken argues that the description of the Bacchic orgies in Livy’s history, written during the reign of Augustus, influenced later Roman attitudes such as Pliny’s towards Christians.⁵⁴⁵ Perhaps Pliny has excesses of the Bacchic sort in mind when he asks, “...whether it is the mere name of Christian which is punishable, even if

⁵⁴² Ibid, xii.

⁵⁴³ *Epistula* 10.96; (and Trajan’s response, 10.97).

⁵⁴⁴ See below, section 4.2.5.

⁵⁴⁵ *The Christians*, 16-7; on Bacchanalia, and Roman reactions, see North, “Religious Toleration in Republican Rome,” in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, 199-219, originally in *PCPS* 25 (1979): 85-103.

innocent of crime, or rather the crimes associated with the name.”⁵⁴⁶ Pliny does not elaborate on what “crimes” had been associated with the Christians, but his account does indicate that he is drawing on a general stereotype available to him as a Roman colonizer.

Several non-Christian writers from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire attest to the sort of charges that shaped the stereotypes of many Roman colonizers. Writing in the mid-second century, Lucian, a Syrian who lived for some time in Athens, provides an account of a Christian stereotype available to inhabitants of the Roman Empire. In a work entitled, *The Passing of Peregrinus*, Lucian portrays Christians as gullible and ignorant. No crimes (*flagitia*) are mentioned, but the overall picture is negative. Barnes postulates that Lucian is intentionally countering the general understanding of Christians as culpable of horrendous crimes by showing them to be “credulous simpletons.”⁵⁴⁷ The sophist Aelius Aristides (c. 117-c. 180) expatiates on the stereotype by comparing Cynic philosophers whom he is denouncing to “those impious men of Palestine” who “do not believe in the higher powers,” and Aristides suggests that the Cynics resemble the Christians because they too “have defected from the Greek race, or rather from all that is higher.”⁵⁴⁸ In an Egyptian papyrus dating to the second century a certain Lollianus presents a more gruesome view of Christians where “initiates” (*μινούμενο*) are engaged

⁵⁴⁶ *Epistula* 10.96.4: *nomen ipsum, si flagitiis careat, an flagitia cohaerentia nomini puniantur.*

⁵⁴⁷ Barnes, “Pagan Perceptions of Christianity,” in *Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to AD 600*, ed. Ian Hazlett, (London: SPCK, 1991), 235; cf. an emphasis on Christian “stubbornness” in the second century in the collection of Greek and Arabic texts of Galen’s comments in Richard Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians*, (OUP, 1949), 10ff.

⁵⁴⁸ *Orationes* 3.671; cited/trans. in Barnes, “Pagan Perceptions,” 235.

in promiscuous intercourse and ritual murder.⁵⁴⁹ Towards the end of the second century, Christians were often portrayed as incestuous and cannibalistic in their secret meetings.⁵⁵⁰

In the third Century, the general accusations against Christians were both specified and generalized. They were specified in the writings of Celsus and Porphyry (232/3-c.305) who wrote treatises that moved beyond the accusations of hearsay and attacked particularities of the Christian faith.⁵⁵¹ The accusations against Christians were generalized in that the persecutions required only the name “Christian” for arrest and trial, and no evidence of any crime was necessary for a conviction. Until the Edict of Milan, the predominant posture of non-Christian Roman colonizers towards Christians was suspicious and hostile.

4.2.1.2 *Indigenous Africans and Christians*

The indigenous Africans’ perceptions of Christians are available to historians only through the accounts of Roman colonizers and new elites. While the views of the Romans did not undergo dramatic change until the third period of African Christian history, the view of the *populus* changed

⁵⁴⁹ See Albert Henrichs, “Pagan Ritual and the Alleged Crime of the Early Christians: A Reconsideration,” in *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. Patrick Granfield and Josef A. Jungmann, (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1970), 18-35, for text, translation and discussion of the Cologne papyrus.

⁵⁵⁰ For Christian defenses against such charges, see Justin, *1 Apologia* 26.7; Athenagoras, *Legatio* 3.1ff.; 31-32; and Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9. Wilken, *The Christians*, 19-20, conjectures that such charges actually have some warrant and probably represent early Christian sects that did practice “clandestine rites” that gave rise to the accusation against all Christians. As evidence, he cites Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.2.10, who said the Carpocratians, a Gnostic sect, celebrated a “love-feast” in which participants had intercourse “whenever they will and with whom they will”; Justin, *1 Apologia* 26.7, who had heard stories of certain Christian groups who “upset the lamp” to engage in intercourse and partake of human flesh, as well as Epiphanius of Cyprus, *Panarion* 26.4-5, who claimed knowledge of the Phibionites who practiced ritual intercourse and eating of an unborn child.

⁵⁵¹ Celsus was believed to have written in the mid second century, but his works impacted later generations such as Origen through whom Celsus’ words survive.

much quicker. Most inhabitants of North Africa in the early period of Christianity, like the inhabitants of the empire on a whole, were largely uninterested in the activities of the Christians.⁵⁵² The views of non-Christian indigenous Africans begin to become perceptible, however, in the trials and persecutions of the Christian martyrs. In speaking of the masses outside of North Africa, Barnes comments,

After the first quarter of the third century, Christians were in practice rarely persecuted for their religion. Popular hostility toward them, however, may have continued to be widespread for a little longer. The attitudes of the inarticulate strata of any society are usually hard to measure, but the authentic Acts of the early martyrs provide an index of changing popular attitudes. In the second century, the crowd in the amphitheater at Smyrna demanded the arrest of Polycarp, asked the Asiarch Philippus to set a lion on him, settled for burning the bishop and finally constructed a pyre themselves, while popular agitation was behind the executions at Lyon.⁵⁵³

While nothing is reported about the crowd in the Scillitan passion, Barnes portrayal of the role of the “inarticulate strata” is reflected in the African indigenous populations present at the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions. The *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* reports, “At this [the martyrs’ words] the crowds became enraged and demanded that they be scourged.”⁵⁵⁴ As argued in chapter three, it is likely that the majority of the population of Carthaginian commoners – and even more so throughout the rest of North Africa – would have consisted of indigenous Africans, and

⁵⁵² See Barnes, “Pagan Perceptions,” 232, who says “Most inhabitants of the Roman Empire in A.D. 100 were either unaware of or uninterested in the Christians in their midst.” He then contrasts this to the “educated pagan attitudes” of Pliny the younger, Tacitus, and Suetonius.

⁵⁵³ Ibid, 237; ref. *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 3.2; 12-13, and Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.1.7ff.

⁵⁵⁴ PSPF 18.9: *ad hoc populus exasperatus flagellis eos uexari ... postulauit.*

therefore, the crowd's actions in the *passio* probably portray the views of many indigenous Africans at the time of its writing.

The "changing popular attitudes" to which Barnes refers becomes apparent in the trials of the African Christian martyrs in the mid to late third century. Raven observes, "The crowd which had watched St Perpetua and her companions die in the amphitheater at Carthage had been hostile to them. Half a century later, the crowd which escorted St Cyprian to the scene of his martyrdom outside the capital had almost rioted in support of their bishop."⁵⁵⁵ Although the picture of masses of indigenous Africans choking the streets of Carthage in support of the city's Christian bishop may be rhetorical exaggeration, the views of the masses of indigenous Africans does seem to have significantly shifted during this period.⁵⁵⁶ Raven cites the archeological evidence of the once numerous inscriptions in Punic to non-Christian gods which completely cease during the mid to latter half of the third century.⁵⁵⁷

The views and attitudes of the indigenous Africans in late antiquity largely continue in the trajectory outlined above. Because of the complication the Edict of Milan presents for interpreting Roman views of Christians in North Africa in late antiquity, this subject will be revisited after other theories have been discussed. The views of the new elites of North Africa, however, are more transparent in the three periods of ancient African Christian history.

⁵⁵⁵ *Rome*, 167.

⁵⁵⁶ Imagery drawn from the account of Pontius, *Vita Cypriani*.

⁵⁵⁷ *Rome*, 167. cf. Millar, "Local Cultures," 130-4, for Christian usage of Punic in Augustine's time.

4.2.1.3 *New Elites and Christians*

Because of the new elites' tenuous loyalties and varying modes of self-identification, no single stereotype of new elites in Africa towards Christians can represent the group on a whole. Those individuals who have more completely inserted themselves into the Roman system and mental framework most likely ascertained the same general stereotypes as many Roman colonizers. Specific views of African new elites on the other hand provide firsthand accounts of individuals who interact with groups capable of adopting both Roman and African social identities.

One example is Fronto, the new elite who has been shown to be fully conversant in the Roman system and yet still loyal and connected to the people of his hometown in North Africa. Minucius Felix, the Roman Christian apologist writing in the third century, claims to be quoting an anti-Christian treatise written by Fronto.⁵⁵⁸ Champlin argues for the reliability of Minucius Felix in reporting Fronto, saying that *Oct.* 9.6-7 is "certainly Frontonian."⁵⁵⁹ Champlin bases his arguments on the fact that Athenagoras and Eusebius both document the accusations against the martyrs of Lyon in terms of Oedipean intercourse and Thyestean banquets.⁵⁶⁰ Champlin states,

These precise references are something definitely and arrestingly novel in anti-Christian propaganda: they are a subtle refinement on the older and more simple standard allegations of cannibalism and sexual orgies. They may well suggest the influence of Fronto's anti-Christian remark, the invention of a practiced orator turning naturally to myth for a striking and appropriate image, and there is some confirmation.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁸ *Octavius* 9.5-7; see G.W. Clarke, *The Octavius of Marcus Minucius Felix*, (New York, 1974), 221ff., for a discussion of the passage.

⁵⁵⁹ Champlin, *Fronto*, 160 n.18.

⁵⁶⁰ Athenagoras, *Legatio* 3.1; Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.1.14.

⁵⁶¹ Champlin, *Fronto*, 160; cf. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 161, note 2, who believes Fronto did refer to Christians in a speech, but did not write an entire oration against the Christians.

The accusations of Fronto being more aggressive in his portrayal of Christian *flagitia*, as Champlin argued, seem to indicate a heightened aggression towards Christians by a new elite than the common stereotype of the Romans. Although such a conclusion is still tenuous at this point in that (1) Fronto could have been referring to Christians in Rome, and (2) his statements could merely represent the artistic exaggeration of a rhetorician, the plausibility remains that Fronto represents a new elite utilizing his education and skills to attack Christians.

Another new elite from the early period of African Christian history whose comments on Christians are extant is Apuleius. Barnes, like many scholars, reads Apuleius' account of a woman who practiced a private religion to be referring to a Christian.⁵⁶² Similarly, Birley thinks Apuleius is referring to Sicinius Aemilianus in his *Apologia* as a "secret Christian."⁵⁶³ Birley explains, "Apuleius describes Aemilianus' 'secluded way of life' with the word *lucifugus* – shunning the light of day – the very expression used about the Christians in the Octavius of Minucius Felix, where they are described as *latebrosa et lucifuga natio*. Besides this, the description in Minucius Felix of the Christians' refusal to pay their tribute to the shrines of the gods closely matches Apuleius' description of the behaviour of Aemilianus."⁵⁶⁴ Another scholar who has detected anti-Christian themes in Apuleius is P.G. Walsh,

⁵⁶² Tertullian, 60; ref. *Metamorphoses* 9.14: "...she used the false sacrilegious presumption of a god, whom she would call 'one and only,' to invent meaningless rites...." [*sacrilega praesumptione dei, quem praedicaret unicum, confictis obseruationibus*]. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 7, comes to the same conclusion and discusses the implications of this view of Christian women for the Roman household.

⁵⁶³ *The African Emperor*, 32; ref. *Apologia* 16, "...whereas you in turn are kept out of my sight by your lowly life that shuns the light" [*cum ipse humilitate abdita et lucifuga non sis mihi mutuo conspicuus*].

⁵⁶⁴ *The African Emperor*, 57-8; ref. *Octavius* 8.4.

who suggests that the African new elite wrote the *Metamorphoses* as

a counterblast to the meteoric spread of Christianity in Africa in the later second century. ... It seems probable that in Rome he encountered Christian apologies proliferating there; that composed by Marcianus Aristides contains a scathing attack on Isis, who by this date had been accepted as an honoured inmate in the *curia deorum*. His return to Carthage coincided with the extraordinary flowering of Christianity in North Africa. Madauros, Apuleius' own birthplace, is mentioned as the first focal point of Christian witness; more important, however, is evidence of Tertullian's Apology, which claims that the whole province of Africa was in ferment in the 190's because of the inroads made by Christianity.⁵⁶⁵

Given the fact that so many scholars read Apuleius to hold negative and even aggressive views towards Christians, one could deduce that he represents a common trend among the new elites of Africa. As with Fronto, Apuleius traveled widely and could be referring to Christians in other parts of the empire. Given Walsh's argument of chronological correlation coupled with the fact that Apuleius returned to Africa and claimed Carthaginian identity, however, the most likely conclusion is that Apuleius is referring to Christians in North Africa, against whom he aimed portions of his rhetorical vitriol.⁵⁶⁶

The views of Roman colonizers, African indigenous and new elites, while varying in intensity, reflect an overall pattern of suspicion. The level of intensity of animosity towards Christians in North Africa by new elites is notable when compared with the views of Roman Colonizers such as Pliny and with the indigenous Africans such as the fickle spectators of the Christian

⁵⁶⁵ *Apuleius: The Golden Ass*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), xxxviii. Also, see Walsh's comments (xxxviii) on Tertullian's discussion of an actor's portrayal of a Christian with an ass's ear and hoof; ref. *Apol.* 16; *Ad nat.* 14. cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.3, 28.7.

⁵⁶⁶ cf. *Flor.* 9.36-40, where Apuleius represents himself as a spokesman for the province of Africa, or at least the new elite of Africa, and *Flor.* 16 (esp. 16.35), where he appears to have regularly attended meetings of the Carthaginian senate.

persecutions.⁵⁶⁷ In order to supplement this understanding, the discussion will now turn to other anthropological categories of identity which aim to attain a more emic perspective of North African Christians' identities.

4.2.2 Kinship Identities and North African Christians

Few scholars have examined the North African Christians in terms of kinship, a fact largely due to the lack of extensive sources.⁵⁶⁸ One exception is Michael Penn's use of performance theory to examine the ritual of kissing among early Christians, including those in North Africa.⁵⁶⁹ Penn finds that Christians incorporated the kiss on the lips, an act performed between kin, in order to realign the group boundaries of its members, as shown by the many examples of converts who refused to kiss members of their own *domus* or *familia* after receiving the "kiss of peace."⁵⁷⁰ When examining the sources from North Africa, Penn notes that the familial kiss among Christians crossed class boundaries, as when Perpetua, "well-born" (*honeste nata*, PSPF 2.2) kisses other martyrs who are slaves.⁵⁷¹ This analysis of North African

⁵⁶⁷ Compare the emphasis on the *flagitia* by these new elites with the Roman emphasis on *superstitio*: Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44, for Christians as simply "a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition" [*genus hominum superstitionis nouae ac maleficae*]; and Suetonius, *Vita Neronis* 16.2, where accusation of *flagitia* is made by the *uulgus*, but the only crime of the Christians is a "pernicious superstition" [*exitabilis superstitio*.]

⁵⁶⁸ See for example, the study on North African Christian marriages by David G. Hunter, "Augustine and the Making of Marriage in Roman North Africa," *J ECS* 11 (1 2003): 63-8, who finds no specifically Christian form of marriage in North Africa from Tertullian through the time of Augustine. For studies of early Christian kinship, see Halvor Moxnes, ed., *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, (London: Routledge, 1997), incorporating anthropological theory; and Balch and Osick, eds., *Early Christian Families*, a dialogue of Christian origins and Roman scholars. For women's roles in early Christian communities, see MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, who employs anthropological theory.

⁵⁶⁹ "Performing Family: Ritual Kissing and the Construction of Early Christian Kinship," *J ECS* 10 (2 2002): 151-174.

⁵⁷⁰ Lucy Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity*, (London: Duckworth, 2004), 21 n.95, comments more generally on the imagery of "a world turned upside-down."

⁵⁷¹ "Performing Family," 162; ref. PSPF 21.7. For the slave designation as ambiguous, see Trevett, *Montanism*, 181; and Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 111. However, most scholars accept the slave status of the martyrs; e.g. Dunn, *Tertullian*, 16.

Christian practices in terms of kinship is one example of the insights gained from this approach.

The *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum* preserves little information on any level, including that of kinship. A more complex understanding of kinship which includes economic and religious aspects, however, assists in interpreting the account of the first known martyrs in Africa. The proconsul presiding over the trial specifies that the Christians should swear by the “genius” (*per genium*, 3 and 5) of the emperor and offer prayers for his health. Speratus and the others refuse with the cognizance that to swear by or offer sacrifices to someone’s *genius* is to acknowledge that person as a *dominus* in whose *domus* the sacrificer belongs.⁵⁷² The Christian spokesperson responds to the proconsul’s use of *domni* for the emperor (3 and 5), insisting that he obeys the governing official and even pays taxes, and he then adds, “I serve... my lord (*seruio... domnum meum*, 6).⁵⁷³ Although the Christian use of *dominus*, which could refer to God, is common among Christians – even biblical, the specific use of kinship terms and concepts by both proconsul and martyrs should be taken seriously and seen in light of other North African Christian sources, like the account of Perpetua and Felicitas.

The much more elaborate record of the *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* contains many terms and constructs of kinship, as illustrated in the opening address by the narrator, who speaks to “brethren and little children” (*fratres et filioli*, 1.6). Another possible kinship reference is when Felicitas is introduced as Revocatus’ *conserua* (2.1), a title often used to refer to slave kin

⁵⁷² Gardner and Weidemann, *The Roman Household*, 32; and discussion above, sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.5.

⁵⁷³ More on this exchange below, section 4.3.

or marriages, not formally recognized by Roman law.⁵⁷⁴ The most elaborate portrayal of kinship, however, is in reference to Perpetua.

Vibia Perpetua plays the leading role in the entire account of the *passio*, allowing various glimpses into her life, background and even her kinship network.⁵⁷⁵ She is “newly married” (*matronaliter nupta*, 2.1), has a nursing *filius*, a living *pater* and *mater*, two *fratres* (2.2) one of whom is a catechumen, and an aunt (*matertera*, 5.3).⁵⁷⁶ The mention of a *matertera* could simply be a close relationship with a cognate kin, a relationship Bettini argues was typical but which Saller challenges.⁵⁷⁷ The reference, however, could entail something more intrinsic to Perpetua’s kinship network in that

⁵⁷⁴ See discussion in section 3.2.2. However, Tilley, “The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity,” in *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 2: “A Feminist Commentary,” ed. Fiorenza, (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 847-8, highlights the ambiguity of Felicitas’ marital status.

⁵⁷⁵ This section does not address the charge of Bernadette Brooten, “Early Christian Women and Their Cultural Context: Issues of Method in Historical Reconstruction,” in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*, (ed. A.Y. Collins; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 65-91, who challenges scholars to examine women, and not just men’s attitude towards women. Suzanne Dixon, *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres, and Real Life*, (London: Duckworth, 2000), 25, questions whether this is even possible for Latin sources, stating, “The best we can hope for are flickering glimpses of women’s lives which (if we are honest with ourselves) leave us wondering if we really saw anything there at all.” For a review and discussion of attempts to reconstruct women’s contributions in early Christian history and approaches which expose the ideology inherent in ancient Christian sources which restricted women, see Elizabeth A. Castelli, “Heteroglossia, Hermeneutics, and History: A Review Essay of Recent Feminist Studies Of Early Christianity,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10 (Fall 1994), 93-7. For androcentrism in the study of Christian origins and Patristics, Fiorenza, “You are not to be Called Father.” Perhaps, this present section will further a discussion of how women shaped North African Christian writings and vice versa. Some, however, argue against such an endeavor: Daphne Hampson, “On Not Remembering Her,” *Feminist Theology* 19 (S 1998): 63-83. For examples of feminist readings of the *PSPF* in particular, see Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Heroines and Hysterics*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 53-8, originally as “Motivations for St. Perpetua’s Martyrdom,” *JAAR* 44 (1976): 417-21; Mieke Bal, “Perpetual Contest,” in *On Storytelling*, ed. David Jobling, (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1991), 227-41; Ross Shephard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women’s Religions Among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*, (OUP, 1992), 159-71, 179-80; Tilley, “The Passion”; and Trevett, *Montanism*, 176-84.

⁵⁷⁶ See also the vision of Dinocrates, her “brother according to the flesh” (*frater... carnalis*, 7.5) who died at age seven. Trevett, *Montanism*, 182, notes that these martyrs “were part of a family which was bound not by blood but by the Spirit. ...Felicitas’ natural family may indeed have been dead, or long separated from her....”

⁵⁷⁷ See section 3.2.2, n.362.

several points in the narrative place prominence on the cognate side, a feature atypical for Roman kinship.⁵⁷⁸

The husband, most conspicuously, is never mentioned in any explicit reference.⁵⁷⁹ Although the husband could be a non-Christian, absent on account of shame, he most certainly would have kept his heir, Perpetua's *filius*. Instead, Perpetua gives the infant to her *mater* and *frater* (3.8), and her *pater* later claims the child himself (6.7). Even if Perpetua's husband is dead or awaiting death – i.e. as a martyr, his *familia* would have the right to claim the *filius* for themselves, unless his entire paternal kinship network is also dead or absent.

Another element of the *passio* that highlights the maternal aspects of Perpetua's kinship identity is a title she bears. When Perpetua's brother suggests she solicit a vision from God, he begins, "Dear sister" (*Domina soror*, 4.1). While the use of *domina* could be a general appellation for a respectable woman – as Musurillo translates, the fact that the slave, Felicitas, receives no such honor implies that the designation refers to her role as a head of a *domus*.⁵⁸⁰ Later in the narrative, Perpetua's father pleads a second time for her to recant, after which Perpetua narrates, "...he no longer addressed me as his daughter but as a woman" (*me iam non filiam nominabat sed dominam*,

⁵⁷⁸ David M. Scholer, "'And I Was a Man': The Power and Problem of Perpetua," *Daughters of Sarah* 15 (September-October 1989), 11, cited in Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 16, suggests the editor of the *PSPF* to be a woman; Robeck believes that Scholer's suggestion "merits further consideration in light of the feminist concerns of Perpetua, the obvious leadership role she is granted in the vision of Saturus, and the redactor's own personal interest to convey the story of this young woman so vividly."

⁵⁷⁹ See, however, Osiek, "Perpetua's Husband," *J ECS* 10 (2 2002): 287-290, who argues that Saturus is not explicitly named as the husband because of some embarrassment over his absence in the initial arrest. Tilley, "The Passion," 844, conjectures that *matronaliter nupta* (2.1) should be interpreted in light of her title "wife of Christ" (*matrona Christi*, 18.2). Also, Lefkowitz, *Heroines*, 57, infers that Perpetua's father might also be the father of Perpetua's *filius*.

⁵⁸⁰ For the title as one of "utmost respect," see Tilley, "The Passion," 838.

5.5). Again, the title, *domina*, could merely be descriptive of honorable womanhood, but the potency of the *domus* and *dominus* in socio-political and theological senses suggests something more.

Like the Scillitan martyrs and Christians on a whole, Perpetua and her companions strongly resist any form of submission to the emperor as *dominus*. Although there is no explicit reference to the emperor's *genius* in this account, the procurator Hilarianus asks the Christians to "sacrifice" (*fac sacrum*, 6.3) to the emperors. Perpetua, again in accordance with the actions of the Scillitans, insists on referring to the emperor as *Caesar* (7.9) instead of *dominus*, a title reserved for the "Lord Jesus Christ" whose "throne" (*thronum*, 12.5) is housed in a "place whose walls seemed to be constructed of light" (*locum cuius loci parietes tales erant quasi de luce aedificati*, 12.1).⁵⁸¹ While Westerners typically understand "lordship" in socio-political or religious terms, those in the Roman Empire in Perpetua's time made no such distinction between politics, religion and kinship.

Other concepts often associated with the *domus* appear in the passage where Perpetua claims to be a *domina* (5.5, as mentioned above). First, she explains her father's behavior in terms of *pietas*, when commenting, "This was the way my father spoke out of love" (*haec dicebat quasi pater prope sua*

⁵⁸¹ For uses of *dominus*, see 1.4, 1.5, 1.6(2x), 3.4, 4.2, 7.2, 11.4, 11.10, 15.1, 15.4, 18.9 and 21.11(2x). cf. PSS 2-6, 8-9, and even in the New Testament: Matt. 22:21/Mk.12:17/Lu. 20:25, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's" [*ἀπόδοτε οὖν τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ* {*dicunt ei Caesaris tunc ait illis reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris Caesari et quae sunt Dei Deo*}]; and Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 12:3, "... no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" [*καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ* {... *et nemo potest dicere Dominus Iesus nisi in Spiritu Sancto.*}] cf. Jn. 19:15, where the Jewish leaders declare, "We have no king but the emperor" [*οὐκ ἔχομεν βασιλέα εἰ μὴ Καίσαρα* {*non habemus regem nisi Caesarem.*}]

pietate, 5.5). The notion of *pietas* encompassed the Augustan ideal of political and familial loyalty.⁵⁸² Another important element of the *domus* invoked by Perpetua is the rights of the father, or *patria potestas*. Perpetua explains to her father the change in her status: "...for you may be sure that we are not left to ourselves but are all in [God's] power" (...*scito enim nos non in nostra esse potestate constitutos, sed in Dei*, 5.6).⁵⁸³ The shift of *potestas* from Perpetua's earthly *pater* to God highlights the importance of kinship terminology in the *passio*.⁵⁸⁴

The most perplexing element in the *passio* in regards to Perpetua's kin is the statement Perpetua makes after her *pater* begs his daughter to recant. Perpetua states her compassion for her father, because "he alone of all my kin would be unhappy to see me suffer" (...*solus de passione mea gauisurus non esset de toto genere meo*, 5.6). The use of *genus* – which can mean race, kind, *familia*, etc. – is problematic, given the mention of Perpetua's other kin in the *Passio*; would not they also "be unhappy" to see her suffer?⁵⁸⁵ Who does Perpetua reference in this statement? The following represent some of the possibilities:

- 1) *genus* as "race," "kind" or "people" – This meaning would not account for Perpetua's mother and brothers, presumably of her own "kind." Earlier in the narrative, Perpetua states, "I spoke to my mother..., I tried to comfort my brother" (*adloquebar matrem et confortabam*

⁵⁸² See section 3.2.2.

⁵⁸³ For Tertullian's usage, see Rankin, "Tertullian's Use of the Word *Potestas*," *Journal of Religious History* 19 (1995): 1-9.

⁵⁸⁴ Tilley, "The Passion," 837, declares Perpetua "not an independent person.... She was *in patria potestate* legally and in fact." Tilley believes Perpetua would be subject either to her father or to her husband, citing the practice of *in manu mariti*. For the rarity of *in manu* marriages by this time, however, see chapter three. Also, Bal, "Perpetual Contest," 232, notes the importance of the presence/absence of Perpetua's father for the literary structure of her visions.

⁵⁸⁵ Amat, SC 417: "une exagération."

- fratrem*, 3.8).⁵⁸⁶ Moreover, surely some individuals in the amphitheatre in the final scenes would belong to Perpetua's "kind" – whatever "kind" she may be. Therefore, this definition seems implausible.
- 2) *genus* as "kind" in the sense of "class" – A similar objection could be made regarding Perpetua's mother and brother as in option one. However, one could understand Perpetua's *mater* to be a concubine of her *pater* and claim that Perpetua's brothers are half-brothers on her mother's side which would allow them to belong to a different class. Nevertheless, some members of the mob who witness Perpetua's "suffering" would almost certainly be *honeste nata*.⁵⁸⁷
 - 3) *genus* as *familia* – Because the legal definition of a *familia* is patrilineal, Perpetua's *mater* would be excluded. This explanation does not, however, account for her brothers. Again, it would have to be argued that her brothers are not "legal" brothers in some sense.
 - 4) *genus* as ancestral *familia* – Since scholars agree that the legal use of *familia* did not always reflect Roman kinship practices, Perpetua could be understood to employ a specialized understanding of a *familia* that would refer to one's ancestral line.⁵⁸⁸ However, because of her father's plea to "think of your mother and your aunt" (*aspice matrem tuam et materteram*, 5.2), the ancestral referent could only refer to the patrilineal kin and must exclude Perpetua's maternal kin, namely her *matertera*. This usage would, therefore, revert back to a legal understanding and would also ignore the matrilineal aspects of Perpetua's kinship.

In order, therefore, for *genus* to mean "kin" in any traditional Roman constructions of kinship, the following, it seems, would have to be true: (1) Perpetua's brothers would have to have been born to another man – their mother's first husband, and their father and all his *familia* would have to be dead and not have appointed a *tutor* to guard Perpetua's half-brothers and the estate, leaving them with their mother's, but not in Perpetua and her father's, *familia*; and (2) Perpetua's husband is either dead or a Christian in prison and

⁵⁸⁶ Note that the brother mentioned here, appears to be the catechumen who then suggests that she request a vision from God (4.1). Tilley, "The Passion," 838, notes this "brother" is "not necessarily a sibling from her earthly family."

⁵⁸⁷ e.g. the procurator (18.9), perhaps even the imperial family (16.3). However, Birley, *Septimius*, 221, believes, "The imperial party would have been otherwise occupied."

⁵⁸⁸ For instances of ambiguous usage of *familia*, see Saller, *Patriarchy*, 76-7, and section 3.2.2.

all of his *familia* is dead and unable to claim Perpetua's *filius* (3.8 and 6.7).

While such sets of phenomena are not impossible, the elaborate explanation leaves much to be desired.

Some of the confusion over Perpetua's statement that her father alone of all her *genere* "would be unhappy" to see her suffer lies with the assumption that the rejoicing would be done by non-Christians, like the crowd in the amphitheatre in the final scene of the *passio*, while her "kin" on the other hand would mourn Perpetua's suffering. This assumption, however, is incorrect.

The narration of the final scenes indicates that it is the Christians who rejoice, not the crowd. The only hint of the crowd's pleasure is when Saturus is so drenched in blood that the non-Christian spectators unanimously chant, "Well washed! Well washed!" (*Saluum lotum! Saluum lotum!*, 21.2), which gives the narrator opportunity to note the irony of this chant by commenting, "The mob roared in witness to his second baptism" (*populus... illi secundi baptismatis reclamauerit*, 21.2). Otherwise, no evidence is given in the entire account that the non-Christians rejoiced at the martyrs' deaths; it is only presumed by the modern reader.⁵⁸⁹

Instead, it is for the martyrs and for the Christian onlookers that "the day of their victory" (*dies uictoriae illorum*, 18.1) consists of numerous instances of rejoicing. As the martyrs enter the arena "with joy" (*gaudio*), Felicitas especially is said to be "glad" (*gaudens*, 18.3). When the martyrs

⁵⁸⁹ cf. the scoffer who is silenced by Felicitas (15.5-6). Also, cf. Tert., *Apol.* 50.3-4: "But we are overcome. Yes, when we have obtained our wishes. Therefore we conquer in dying; we go forth victorious at the very time we are subdued. ... Naturally enough, therefore, we do not please the vanquished" [*Sed obducimur. Certe, cum obtinuimus. Ergo uicimus, cum occidimur, denique euadimus, cum obducimur. ... Merito itaque uictis non placemus*].

receive scourges, “they rejoiced” (*gratulati sunt*, 18.9). Likewise, in the next paragraph, after Perpetua had been attacked by the cow, she reportedly had “to fasten her untidy hair... lest she might seem to be mourning” (*dispersos capillos infibulavit; ...ne... plangere uideretur*, 20.5). The martyrs’ joy is shared by all the Christians, as evidenced when Perpetua “in ecstasy” (*in extasi*, 20.8) told the catechumens and her “brother” (*fratrem*, 20.10), “You must all stand fast in the faith and love one another, and do not be weakened” (*In fide state et inuicem omnes diligite, et passionibus nostris ne scandalizemini*).⁵⁹⁰

The catechumens along with other Christians, perhaps perplexingly to modern presumptions, are in fact “happy” to see Perpetua suffer.⁵⁹¹ Recalling Penn’s conclusion that Christian’s performatively created new kinship ties with each other through ritual kissing, one can perceive the realignment of Perpetua’s kinship network in that her mother, brother and aunt all seem to be converted Christians who are “happy” to see Perpetua suffer.⁵⁹² While the rest of Perpetua’s kin are not said to be Christians explicitly, one of her two

⁵⁹⁰ cf. 1 Cor. 16:13; and Acts 14:22.

⁵⁹¹ Although perhaps not so perplexingly, given the words of Paul at the prospect of his own martyrdom (Philippians 2:17-8): “But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you—and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me” [*Ἀλλά εἰ καὶ σπένδομαι ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ καὶ λειτουργίᾳ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν, χαίρω καὶ συγχαίρω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν · τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ καὶ ὑμεῖς χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετέ μοι. {sed et si immolor supra sacrificium et obsequium fidei vestrae gaudeo et congratulor omnibus vobis. id ipsum autem et vos gaudete et congratulamini mihi}*]. Also, Amat comments on 5.6, “Cette joie à l’annonce du martyre est conforme à l’esprit de l’*Ad martyras*.”

⁵⁹² On kinship realignment from a different theoretical vantage point, Lefkowitz, *Heroines* 54, who concluded that the martyrdom represents a new religion which offers “encouragement to the convert to break traditional family patterns...”; Tilley, “The Passion,” 838, 841 and 843, for comments on the “confusion in familial relations”; and Susanna Elm, “*Virgins of God*”: *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 374, argues for this model in early monastic communities, esp. in the case of women. For non-Christian perspective on kinship realignment in Christianity, see Fronto *apud* Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9: “a promiscuous ‘brotherhood’ and ‘sisterhood’ by which ordinary fornication, under cover of a hallowed name, is converted to incest” [*ac se promisce appellant fratres et sorores, ut etiam non insolens stuprum intercessionem sacri nominis fiat incestum*].

brothers is listed as a “catechumen” (*catechumenum*, 2.1).⁵⁹³ Moreover, her mother, though not called a Christian, gains access by the deacons’ bribes (3.7-8). Even Dinocrates, Perpetua’s dead brother is envisioned as realigned to Christianity, postmortem (8).⁵⁹⁴ Perpetua’s father, however, is “angered by the word ‘Christian’” (...*Christiana. tunc pater motus hoc uerbo*, 3.2-3) after his “diabolical arguments” (*argumentis diaboli*) failed to persuade Perpetua to recant. Her father is the only member of Perpetua’s earthly “kin” (*genere*) who does not rejoice: “he alone of all my kin would be unhappy to see me suffer.”

With this understanding of who “would be unhappy,” one can readdress Perpetua’s kinship. Her choice of words can now be appreciated in that she is referencing a kinship network that would not be included in either the Roman terms *familia* (i.e. because *familia* would exclude her mother, who would be happy to see her suffer) or *domus* (i.e. because *domus* would likely exclude her *matertera* and *fratri*, who would be happy to see her suffer; moreover, she may be a *domina* herself). Perpetua references a notion of kin which cannot be encompassed by either of these Roman patterns.

In summary, the use of kinship theory highlights several themes in the *passio* of the martyrs that would otherwise go unnoticed:

- (1) The resistance of early African Christians to align themselves agnatically under the *domus* of the emperor, preferring the alternative title of *Caesar*, instead of *dominus*, which in the Roman context fell under the rubric of kinship and not exclusively religion or politics.
- (2) The realignment of the social universe – which even includes the constructions of kinship networks – that comes about by conversion to Christianity, as in the abolishment of class boundaries and the deconstructing, at least partially, of one’s *genus*.

⁵⁹³ Dunn, *Tertullian*, 16, doubts these kin to be Christian.

⁵⁹⁴ However, Trevett, *Montanism*, 182, refers to Perpetua’s “non-Christian family.”

- (3) The evidence of a non-Roman type of kinship network for Perpetua that defies categories such as *domus* and *familia*, evidencing, perhaps, indigenous forms of kinship networks.⁵⁹⁵

By demystifying western categories of “class,” “kin” and “ethnicity,” historical-theologians could understand the martyrs – both Scillitan and in Carthage – to resist aligning themselves within the *domus* of the emperor because they are Africans who retained non-Roman constructions of kinship networks and an African identity. This understanding of the social matrix of North Africa will now be furthered in an exploration of the class identities of North African Christians.

4.2.3 *Class Identities and North African Christians*

Scholarly debate regarding the issue of class in early Christianity is by no means new. Peter Brown summarizes the exasperation of many recent historians when he says, “There is little room for the myth ... which presents the advance of Christianity as due to the spread of a religion of mercy and equality among the underprivileged. Christianity was by no means the religion only of slaves and of simple folk. Rather, the third century was an age of surprising Christians, of whom the emperor Constantine was only the last.”⁵⁹⁶ Recent scholarship has called into question the understanding that early Christians were uneducated oppressed masses. Stark claims that the new

⁵⁹⁵ In the later Greek version the martyrs are arrested “In the city of Thurburbo Minus” [*Ἐν πόλει Θουρβιτάνων τῆ μικροτέρᾳ*, 2.1], present-day Tebourba, approximately 20 miles West of Tunis; likewise, probably in reliance on the Greek, some later manuscripts insert *in ciuitate Tuburbitan minore*, and the much later *Acta* 1.1, states that the arrest occurred *apud Africam in ciuitate Turbitanorum*. While debatable, this tradition at least suggests that successive African Christians understood these martyrs to be indigenous.

⁵⁹⁶ *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 63-4.

consensus among historians is that Christianity was based in the middle and upper classes, and he contributes to the discussion by comparing early Christian communities to demographic studies of cults and sects in the U.S.⁵⁹⁷ Stark recognizes the objection that his approach is valid only in contemporary Western society, and he responds that such an objection (1) ignores the principles recognized by any "competent social scientist," and (2) ignores the evidence laid out in his entire book.⁵⁹⁸ Whether or not one agrees with the applicability of Stark's "scientific" methodology in regards to ancient North Africa, it establishes a theory of class with which to compare the data available to the historian.

In the early period of African Christian history, the records suggest that both upper and lower class members of society existed within Christian communities. The Scillitan martyrs, although beheaded as if Roman citizens, are generally recognized as lower class members of society.⁵⁹⁹ In the *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, the narrator emphasizes Perpetua's social status, as if nobles among Christians were rare.⁶⁰⁰

Whether or not many Christians in Africa were of the noble classes, outsiders like Celsus perceived Christians only as uneducated working class peasants, according to Origen who claims,

⁵⁹⁷ *The Rise*, 31. Stark reflects earlier studies of Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: The Present State of Research," *NTS* 26 (1980): 164-78; and Robert M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society: Seven Studies*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 11.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁹⁹ Musurillo, *The Acts*, xxiii; Barnes, *Tertullian*, 63.

⁶⁰⁰ *PSPF* 2.1-2: "A number of young catechumens were arrested, Revocatus and his fellow slave Felicitas, Saturninus and Secundulus, and with them Vibia Perpetua, a newly married woman of good family and upbringing." [*Apprehensi sunt adolescentes catechumeni, Reuocatus et Felicitas, conserua eius, Saturninus et Secundulus. Inter hos et Vibia Perpetua, honeste nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta.*] cf. 6.1-2, where Perpetua seems to have been afforded some special distinction by the officials.

Celsus quotes what is entirely contrary to Jesus' teaching, and is maintained only by a few people who are supposed to be Christians, not, as he thinks, *by the more intelligent*, but by the most ignorant. He says: *Their injunctions are like this. "Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone educated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly."* By the fact that they themselves admit that these people are worthy of their God, who they show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women, and little children.⁶⁰¹

*...wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels, who would not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters. ...And if just as they are speaking they see one of the school-teachers coming, or some intelligent person, or even the father himself, the more cautious of them flee in all directions.*⁶⁰²

In response to Celsus' claim Origen does not deny the lower status class identity of most Christians, but compares this to the demographics of society in general: "However, it was inevitable that in the great number of people overcome by the work because there are many more *vulgar and illiterate* people than those who have been trained in rational thinking, the former class should far outnumber the more intelligent. But Celsus did not want to

⁶⁰¹ *apud Orig., Contra Celsum 3.44: Εἶθ' ἐξῆς τούτοις ὁ Κέλσος τὰ ὑπὸ ὀλίγων πάνυ παρὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν Ἰησοῦ λεγόμενα νομιζομένων Χριστιανῶν, οὐ φρονιμωτέρων ὡς (οἶται), ἀλλ' ἀμαθεστάτων, φέρων φησὶ τοιαῦτα ὑπ' αὐτῶν προστάσσεσθαι· Μηδεὶς προσίτω πεπαιδευμένος, μηδεὶς σοφός, μηδεὶς φρόνιμος (κακὰ γὰρ ταῦτα νομίζεται παρ' ἡμῖν) ἀλλ' εἴ τις ἀμαθής, εἴ τις ἀνόητος, εἴ τις ἀπαιδευτος, εἴ τις νῆπιος, θαρρῶν ἡκέτω. Τούτους γὰρ ἀξίους τοῦ σφετέρου θεοῦ αὐτόθεν ὁμολογούντες, δηλοῖ εἶσιν, ὅτι μόνους τοὺς ἡλιθίους καὶ ἀγαννεῖς καὶ ἀναισθητοὺς καὶ ἀνδράποδα καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ παιδάρια, πείθειν ἐθέλουσί τε καὶ δύνανται.*

⁶⁰² *apud Orig., Contra Celsum 3.55: Ορῶμεν δὴ καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας οἰκίας ἐπιουρούς καὶ σκυτοτομοὺς, καὶ κναφεῖς, καὶ τοὺς ἀπαιδευτοτάτους τε καὶ ἀγροικοτάτους ἐναντίον μὲν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ φρονιμωτέρων θεοποτῶν αὐδὲν φθέγγεσθαι τολμῶντας... εἰάν ἰδῶσί τινα παριόντα τῶν παιδείας διδασκάλων καὶ φρονιμοτέρων ἢ καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν πατέρα, οἱ μὲν ἐλαζέστεροι αὐτῶν διέτεσαν.*

recognize this fact.”⁶⁰³ While Origen does not give direct evidence for Africa Proconsularis, he does provide insight into the class makeup of Christianity contemporary to Tertullian and very similar in context.⁶⁰⁴ Fronto, moreover, alleged that Christians “collected from the lowest possible dregs of society the more ignorant fools together with gullible women.”⁶⁰⁵ Because Fronto spent much time in Rome, his account may not relate directly to North Africa, but it does align with other sources from neighboring regions and time periods, making its application to North Africa plausible.⁶⁰⁶

4.2.4 Ethnic Identities and North African Christians

In the early period of Christian history in ancient North Africa, it is unlikely that Christians understood themselves in terms of a new ethnic identity.⁶⁰⁷ Nevertheless, using anthropological theories of ethnic identity to

⁶⁰³ *apud* Orig., *Contra Celsum* 1.27: Ἀναγκᾶον δὲ ἦν ἐν πλήθει γρατουμένων ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου, ὡς πολλὰ πλασίους οἱ ἰδιῶται καὶ ἀγροικότεροι τῶν ἐν λόγοις γεγυμνασμένων, πολλὰ πλασίους γενέσθαι τοὺς ἰδιῶτας, καὶ ἀγροικότερους τῶν συνετῶρων. Ἀλλὰ μὴ βουληθεὶς ταῦτα ὁ Κέλσος κατανοῆσαι. This quote includes the variant readings on which the Chadwick’s translation relies.

⁶⁰⁴ cf. Pliny’s declaration of surprise at upper class Christians, *Epistula* 10.96.4: “...I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy ought not to go unpunished. There have been others similarly fanatical who are Roman citizens” [*Neque enim dubitatum, quaecumque esset quod daterentur, pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerunt alii similis amentiae, quos, quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos.*] See Braun, “Aux Origines,” 192, who contrasts the low class makeup of the Scillitan Christians with the community of Tertullian.

⁶⁰⁵ *apud* Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 8: *de ultima faece collectis imperitoribus et mulieribus credulis.*

⁶⁰⁶ For class, esp. lower classes, in Cyprian’s flock, see R.H. Weaver, “Wealth and Poverty in the Early Church,” *Interpretation* 41 no 4 (O 1997): 368-381; Friend, “The Early Christian Church in Carthage” in *Excavations at Carthage 1976*, vol. 3, ed. J.H. Humphrey, (The University of Michigan/Ann Arbor Press, 1977), 33. Similarly, with the Donatists, see Shaw, “African Christianity,” 29-30.

⁶⁰⁷ See, however, Rowan Williams, “Does it Make Sense to Speak of pre-Nicene Orthodoxy?” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams, (CUP, 1989), 10, who speaks of early Christian Orthodoxy as “the creation of a new *genos*”; and discussions in Lieu, “The Race of the God-Fearers,” *JTS* n.s. 46 (1995): 483-501; Lieu, *Christian Identity*, chapter 8, “The Christian Race”; Denise Kimber Buell, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition,” *HTR* 94 (4 2001): 461-62; and Buell, “Race and Universalism in Early Christianity,” *J ECS* 10 (2002): 429-68. Also, see the accusation answered by Tertullian, *Ad nat.* 1.8; 20.4; *Apol.* 8; *Scorp.* 10.10, where Christians are a *tertium genus*.

study early Christians, historical theologians can better appreciate the dynamics at play in extant Christian writings. As Johnson contends, “Awareness of one’s theoretical assumptions allows modern readers to better grasp and articulate the contours of ethnicity in the ancient Mediterranean world.”⁶⁰⁸ The previous chapter discussed the relationship between the language, customs, and other boundary markers of ethnicity from both Roman and African perspectives. This understanding will now inform the reading of the Christian data from ancient North Africa.

The reports of the earliest martyrs offer clues as to the ethnic identity of North African Christians. In relation to *patria*, Rives states, “The names of the martyrs [Scillitan], unlike that of their hometown, were recorded: Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Secunda, and Vestia. It is worth noting that several of these were typical African names: these people were not immigrants, but natives of the province who had converted to this new religion.”⁶⁰⁹ Similarly, Braun deduces from the Scillitans’ names that they were “d’origine punique.”⁶¹⁰

While similar assumptions could be based on the names of the martyrs associated with Perpetua, their account provides a specific indication in the narration of Felicity’s delivery of her child. The narrator reports, “Felicitas, glad that she had safely given birth so that now she could fight the beasts, going from one blood bath to another, from the midwife to the gladiator, ready to wash after childbirth in a second baptism.”⁶¹¹ Blake Leyerle sees in this

⁶⁰⁸ “Identity,” 29.

⁶⁰⁹ *Religion*, 223–4; likewise, Rankin, *Tertullian*, 11, affirms that the Scillitans come “from among the indigenous rural population”; cf. Tertullian *Ad. Scap.* 3.4.

⁶¹⁰ “Aux Orignes,” 190.

⁶¹¹ *PSPF* 18.3: *item Felicitas, saluam se peperisse gaudens ut ad bestias pugnaret, a sanguine ad sanguinem, ab obstetrice ad retiarium, lotura post partum baptismo secundo.*

account strong vestiges of a fertility symbolism – which he associates with Jewish rather than Punic tradition.⁶¹²

Another clue about the ethnic identity of the martyrs and Christians of this period is found in the office of elder in the North African churches. The vision of Saturninus reports that as the martyrs proceed through the heavenly city they see “before the gates Optatus the bishop on the right, and Aspasius the presbyter and teacher....”⁶¹³ This is one of the first extant references in African Christian history to a unique office of the elder.⁶¹⁴ Outside of Africa, the *presbuteroi* of the first century church became the priesthood – distinct from the African *seniores laici*.⁶¹⁵ Frend deduced that the phenomenon is attributable to Jewish origins of Christianity in North Africa.⁶¹⁶ Shaw posits an alternative view of the “peculiarity” of elders in North African Christian churches.⁶¹⁷

Elders had served as fundamental political institutions in the numerous societies of African towns and villages in the pre-Christian period. Shaw argues, “...the literary sources reveal that elders (also called *seniores*) who

⁶¹² “Blood is Seed,” 36; while Leyerle connects Judaic and Phoenician fertility language elsewhere in his article, he attributes this passage and others like it in *PSPF* (e.g. 21.2) and in Tertullian (*Apol.* 50.13) to connections with Judaism rather than to a Punic heritage. cf. Wright, “Tertullian,” 1029, on “Punic religion” and “the daring blood imagery” of *PSPF*.

⁶¹³ *PSPF* 13.1: “...ante fores Optatum episcopum ad dexteram et Aspasium presbyterum doctorem...” and the imagery in 12.

⁶¹⁴ Also, Tertullian, *Apol.* 39.3ff. Evans, “The *Seniores Laici* and the Origins of the Church in North Africa,” *JTS* n.s. 12 (1961), 280, states the role, as known during the Donatist controversy, “derived from a much earlier period.”

⁶¹⁵ Frend, “The Early,” 30.

⁶¹⁶ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 274-5, outright rejects Frend’s claim, especially in relation to Tert., *Apol.* 39.3ff., because he does not think lay elders could have presided over meetings and concludes that Tertullian’s *seniores* refers to priests. Shaw, “The Elders of Christian Africa,” in *Mélanges offerts à R.P. Etienne Gareau*, Numéro spéciale de cahiers des études anciennes, (Ottawa, Editions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1982), 209, reprinted in Shaw, *Rulers, Nomads, and Christians in Roman North Africa*, (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), challenges Barnes’ conclusion because Tertullian does not allude to them performing any sacerdotal functions.

⁶¹⁷ “The Elders,” 207-226.

functioned as an integral part of the structure of the Christian Church are to be found in North Africa alone. The coincidence is surely not fortuitous, though the argument for the continuity of the two institutions have been overlooked, deliberately ignored, contested or simply denied.”⁶¹⁸ Shaw believes the indigenous Africans of Libyo-Punic descent transferred the role of the local elder into the new Christian communities: “the Christianization of the African countryside signaled a religious revolution of considerable significance to individual attitudes, but not necessarily a radical change in social institutions.”⁶¹⁹ In the larger cities Shaw allows a distinction between the local governing body of *seniores* and those of the ecclesial title. He insists, however, that this is due to “an imposed Roman government.”⁶²⁰ Shaw also cites numerous examples throughout Cyprian’s lifetime and into the era of the Donatist controversy. The unique usage of the *seniores* in North African Christian churches suggests a movement consisting largely of indigenous Africans who naturally retained their ancestral customs and practices.⁶²¹ Such an understanding in no way portrays ethnic conflict as a factor in the

⁶¹⁸ Ibid, 207, see note 2 for a survey of the examples.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid, 223.

⁶²¹ For later African Christianity as largely indigenous, see Raven, *Rome*, 167; Markus, “Christianity,” 21-36; Shaw, “African Christianity,” who replaces “Donatist” with “African”; and Tilley, *The Bible*, 18, for the “remnants of Punic culture.” A.H.M. Jones, “Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?” *JTS* 10 (1959): 280-98, argues that heresies were not nationalistic, but “regional.” Jones’ definition of “national,” however, is rarely (if ever) proposed; instead, scholars such as Raven are cautious about labeling any form of Christianity as “nationalistic” or coterminous with an ethnic identity, but continue to recognize the trends of some sects in attracting certain people groups. Moreover, as Buell, “Race and Universalism,” 468, maintains, “Paying attention to ethnic reasoning helps us reconstruct the diversity among early Christian thinking and practices without recourse to problematic frameworks like orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy.” For responses to Jones, see Friend, “Heresy,” 39; Markus, “Christianity and Dissent,” 25-6; and Ramsay MacMullen, “Tertullian and ‘National God,’” *JTS* n.s. 26 (1975): 405-10.

persecutions of Christians or the conflict between Christian sects.⁶²² Ethnicity is a factor, however, in forming identity, and the identity of the African early Christians, while radically transformed by their new faith, retained a self-understanding of their heritage, their uniqueness and their non-Romanness, in other words, their African identities.

4.2.5 Religious Identities and North African Christians

In chapter three the discussion presented the role of religion in North Africa wherein the indigenous Africans were not “Romanized” in their religious practices. Instead, the new elites translated the indigenous gods into Roman terms so as to establish themselves in a special mediatory status in the eyes of both the Roman colonizers and the indigenous Africans.

Within the discussion, the relationship between religious identity and other forms of identity (ethnic, kinship, etc.) was restated as complex and interwoven. Once again, religious identity will be isolated for the sake of discussion, while simultaneously recognizing the various other factors at play within the positioning for identity and especially the religious constructions of insiders and outsiders.

With the introduction of the Christian faith, an untranslatable religion in Roman terms, the complexity increases regarding religious conflict and the formation of a new religious identity. Throughout the empire, Christians received the malignity of non-Christians; however, persecution and the role of martyrdom played a vital role in North African history in the formation of

⁶²² See, however, Christopher D. Stanley, “‘Neither Jew nor Greek’: Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 64 (D 1996): 101-124, for this phenomenon throughout the Roman Empire and its import for Paul’s writings.

Christians' self-understanding. In order to address this phenomenon the causes of Christian persecutions throughout the empire need delineating.

Scholars have offered a variety of theories to explain the persecution of Christians by Roman authorities. Many suggest some legal basis for the persecution, and, although none still upholds the former view that Nero enacted specific legislation against the Christians, scholars do surmise that Christians could be convicted on the basis of laws pertaining to *collegia* or *superstitio*.⁶²³ The majority of scholars, however, remain dissatisfied with legal explanations, because of the inconsistency of persecutions.⁶²⁴ Many, moreover, see in the Pliny/Trajan discourse a reflection on Nero's actions, and as a result the procedure of Pliny forms precedence for other provincial officers.⁶²⁵ G.E.M. de Ste. Croix argues that Pliny's actions did not establish precedence "absolutely," but instead provided the provincial governors with the model by which to work, a model applied with great variance.⁶²⁶

⁶²³ On *institutum Neronianum*, see discussions in Musurillo, *The Acts*, lix; and Barnes, "Pagan Perceptions," 233. cf. Tert., *Ad nat.* 1.7.9; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; and Suetonius, *Vita Neronis*, 16.2. For *collegia*, Wilken, *The Christians*, 34-5; ref. Tert., *Apol.* 39. For *superstitio*, L.F. Janssen, "'Superstitio' and Persecution," in *Church and State in the Early Church*, in the series *Studies in Early Christianity Series*, ed. Everett Ferguson, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 79-107, originally as "'Superstitio' and the Persecution of the Christians," *VC* 33 (1979): 131-59; and in North Africa, Andrzej Wypustek, "Magic, Montanism, Perpetua, and the Severan Persecution," *VC* 51 (3 1997): 276-97; Wypustek's arguments assume the *PSPF* to be Montanist; for a denial of Montanism in the *PSPF*, see William C. Weinrich, *Spirit and Martyrdom: A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Contexts of Persecution and Martyrdom in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), 227-36; Robeck, *Prophecy*, 13-6; Tilley, "The Passion," 835; and Rankin, *Tertullian*, 11, and esp. 44, where after arguing that only a "modified enthusaim" came to Africa under the heading of "the New Prophecy" and not a schismatic heresy known as "Montanism", Rankin asserts, "Given that the African religious style tended towards the severe, it is probable that Montanism found a congenial 'home' among sections of the population there"; Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 57-9, 117, concludes that it is "possible" only in a "pro-Montanist" sense, not in a schismatic one; in other words the martyrs "were not actually Montanists"; however, Trevett, *Montanism*, 70, claims the *passio* to be "Montanist-edited."

⁶²⁴ Janssen, "'Superstitio' and Persecution," 82.

⁶²⁵ Barnes, "Pagan Perceptions," 233; and Musurillo, *The Acts*, lxi-ii.

⁶²⁶ "Why were the Christians Persecuted?" in *Church and State in the Early Church*, ed. Ferguson, 24. Also, Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 12.

While disputes continue over the legal basis of Romans' actions toward Christians, most scholars recognize one factor that contributes to the inconsistent application of persecution: the demands of the local elites.⁶²⁷

Commenting on the Pliny/Trajan correspondence, Wilken observes,

Shortly after Pliny's arrival in the city, a group of local citizens approached him to complain about Christians living in the vicinity. What precisely the complaint was we do not know, but from several hints in the letter it is possible to infer that the charge was brought by local merchants, perhaps butchers and others engaged in the slaughter and sale of sacrificial meat. Business was poor because people were not making sacrifices. Towards the end of the letter, written after Pliny had dealt with the problem, he observed that the "flesh of sacrificial victims is on sale everywhere, though up till recently scarcely anyone could be found to buy it."⁶²⁸

It appears that Trajan's directive, *conquirendi non sunt*, was generally observed by provincial leaders, yet when the status quo of a certain demographic in the local population was challenged, as in the case of idols and sacrificial meat not selling, the Roman officials took action against the group causing the disturbance.⁶²⁹

In Africa where new elites mediated religion between the Roman colonizers and the indigenous Africans in order to establish themselves in a special status in the eyes of both groups, any disturbance of the practice of the Afro-Roman sacrifices and rituals would have greatly threatened their position. Can we assume that Christians were not "sought out" by the Roman colonizers themselves, but by the new elites defending their special status?

⁶²⁷ cf. Henrichs, "Pagan Ritual," 21, who stresses the role of the elites over the plebs. For North Africa, see Trevette, *Montanism*, 69-70.

⁶²⁸ Wilken, *The Christians*, 15; ref. Pliny, *Epistula* 10.96.10.

⁶²⁹ Musurillo, *The Acts*, lxi-lxii; who adds, "... this would be particularly hard on the *humiliores* and the non-citizen classes (to which most Christians belonged before the *Constitutio Antoniana* of A.D. 212.)" cf. Acts 19:23-41.

Could this explain the more violent tone of the attacks of the new elite such as Fronto and Apuleius on Christianity?⁶³⁰

In searching for indications of the cause of Christian persecution in North Africa, Musurillo warns scholars, "It is clear that such texts [the *acta*] can be used to support all theories or none at all."⁶³¹ Wypustek finds evidence of *superstitio* in the account of the Scillitan's trial: "If you return to your senses, you can obtain the pardon of our lord the emperor."⁶³² No mention, however, is made in the account of the Scillitan's trial of who brought the charges against the Christians. One clue may lie in the enigmatic exchange between the official and the Christian spokesperson:

[Proconsul] Cease to be of this persuasion.

[Speratus] It is an evil persuasion to commit murder, to bear false witness.⁶³³

How does Speratus' response answer the proconsul? Perhaps he declares that to deny being a Christian would "bear false witness." Yet, this does not explain what committing "murder" has to do with the line of questioning. The Scillitan Christian could have been indicating something about those who brought charges against him and the other Christians; that is, they are of the "evil persuasion to murder, to bear false witness" by alleging that the Christians were to blame for the decline in the worship of Roman-translated African gods.

⁶³⁰ See section 4.2.1.

⁶³¹ Musurillo, *The Acts*, lviii.

⁶³² Wypustek, "Magic," 277; ref. PSS 2: *Potestis indulgentiam domni nostri imperatoris promereri, si ad bonam mentem redeatis.*

⁶³³ PSS 7: *Saturninus proconsul dixit ceteris: Desinite huius esse persuasionis. Speratus dixit: Mala est persuasio homicidium facere, falsum testimonium dicere.*

Although the *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* tells that the new Christians *apprehensi sunt* (2.1), it does not report why or by whom. If one can assume that Trajan's instructions not to seek out the Christians were heeded by Roman provincial leaders, then one must conclude that someone brought the accusation before the Roman officials. The narrator reports that Perpetua and her companions were treated harshly "because from the intimations of certain deceitful men, [the tribune] feared lest they should be withdrawn from the prison by some sort of magic incantations."⁶³⁴ The label "deceitful men" echoes the denunciation of Speratus of those who "bear false witness," and strengthens the conclusion that the narrator is referring to those who "betrayed" (*tradiderat*, 4.5) the North African Christians to the Roman officials.⁶³⁵ Given that Perpetua's confrontation with the official in the next line calls into question the emperor himself, one wonders what part the most well-known and successful African new elite, Septimius Severus, played in the persecution of Christians.⁶³⁶

Many scholars recognize the numerous indicators of Septimius' views towards Christianity. Some have highlighted the outbreak of persecutions that followed the emperor's visit to Egypt and declared that Septimius produced an

⁶³⁴ *PSPF* 16.2-4: *quia ex admonitionibus hominum uanissimorum uerebatur ne subtraherentur de carcere incantationibus aliquibus magicis*. The English translation is that of R.E. Wallis, "The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas" in *ANF* 3, as opposed to Musurillo who translates *hominum uanissimorum* as "very foolish people" which neglects the self-serving and dishonest insinuations of the phrase in this context.

⁶³⁵ For the pattern of local elites sponsoring local festivals and games in order to establish their own political identity, see Onno Van Nijf, "Athletics, Festivals and Greek Identity in the Roman East," *PCPS* 45 (1999): 176-200.

⁶³⁶ *PSPF* 16.2-3: "Perpetua spoke to him directly. 'Why can you not even allow us to refresh ourselves properly? For we are the most distinguished of the condemned prisoners, seeing that we belong to the emperor; we are to fight on his very birthday. Would it not be to your credit if we were brought forth on the day in a healthier condition?'" [*In faciem ei Perpetua respondit: 3 Quid utique non permittis nobis refrigerare noxiis nobilissimis, Caesaris scilicet, et natali eiusdem pugnaturis? aut non tua gloria est, si pinguiores illo producamur?*] See discussion in W.H.C. Frend, "Open Questions Concerning the Christians and the Roman Empire in the Age of the Severi," *JTS* n.s. 25 (2 1974): 333-51.

edict launching an empire-wide persecution.⁶³⁷ The *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* refers to Severus' prohibition of Jewish and Christian proselytizing, and the issue has "become a matter of continuing dispute among scholars."⁶³⁸ Birley concludes that the passage is of a "fictional nature" and the correlation of the emperor's visit and the outbreak of persecution is mere coincidence.⁶³⁹ The coincidence is repeated, however, when the imperial family celebrates the birthday of Geta Severus, Septimius' son, in Carthage on the same day as the torture and execution of Perpetua and her fellow-martyrs.⁶⁴⁰

Moreover, beyond the chronological coincidence, historians have seen other factors that point towards the emperor's involvement in the persecution of Christians. Pointing to the Severan lawyer, Julius Paulus, who left an outline of legislation against the magicians, astrologers, and prophets, Wypustek argues that the law would have included Christians.⁶⁴¹ Another factor in interpreting the persecutions in North Africa that took place under Septimius' reign is the emperor's relationship to the new elite of Africa. Although in 197 Septimius executed twenty-nine senators with connections to North Africa upon the defeat of Albinus – a rival who was also from Africa, the emperor "also entrusted a high proportion of key provinces, with large

⁶³⁷ Birley, *The African Emperor*, 135, rejects such a conclusion.

⁶³⁸ Wypustek, "Magic," 285; *Scriptores historiae augustae, Seuerus*, 17.1: "He forbade conversion to Judaism under heavy penalties and enacted a similar law in regard to the Christians." [*Judaeos fieri sub graui poena uetuit. Idem etiam de Christianis sanxit.*] Frend, "Open Questions," 340, argues there was such an edict; Robeck, *Prophecy*, 11, concurs. cf. Tert., *Ad Scap.* 4.5-6.

⁶³⁹ *Septimius*, 210; cf. his deduction from the chronological coincidence in another instance (221): "... While the Emperor and his party were in Africa, the proconsul died. It may have been from natural causes. But the fact that Plautinus was there at the time makes one wonder."

⁶⁴⁰ *PSPF* 16.2-3; Birley, *Septimius*, 221, believes, "The imperial party would have been otherwise occupied."

⁶⁴¹ Wypustek, "Magic," 276; ref. Paulus, *Sententiae* 5.21.1-3, 5.23.

armies attached, to men of African origin or connection.”⁶⁴² Moreover, Raven notes that the indigenous African gods were prevalent during this time, even among the administration of the Roman armies.⁶⁴³ The new elites, placed into such close proximity in status with the Roman/African Emperor, could not afford to allow the religion which played such a key role in establishing themselves as mediators between Romans and indigenous Africans to decline because of a new secretive and seemingly subversive religion.

Whether or not historians will ever be able to agree on the cause or legal basis of Christian persecution in North Africa, the sources do suggest that new elites of Africa were threatened by the new religion. In the second period of African history, African Christians will continue to suffer at the hands of Roman officials, but this time the persecution will extend to Christians throughout the Roman Empire under Decius, and within the Christian religion, conflict would persist between the diocese of Rome and of Carthage.⁶⁴⁴

4.3 Conclusion

Having surveyed the North African Christian landscape, explored the stances of various social groups towards North African Christians and analyzed other aspects of North African Christian identities, one can ask about

⁶⁴² Rankin, “Tertullian and the Imperial Cult,” *SP* 34 (2001), 209; Rankin also discusses how “The author of the *Historia Augusta* even ventures that this ‘murderer (*interfactor*)’ of so many of high estate ‘was regarded by the Africans as a god’”; ref. *Scriptores historiae augustae, Seuerus*. 13.8-9: *ab Afris ut deus habetur*.

⁶⁴³ *Rome*, 145.

⁶⁴⁴ On Cyprian, see M. Bevenot, *The Tradition of Manuscripts: a Study in the Transmission of St. Cyprian's Treatises*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961); Burns, “On Rebaptism,” 377; von Campenhausen, *The Fathers*, 55; and Rankin, *Tertullian*, 14-15. On the Donatists, see Raven, *Rome*, 177; Shaw, “African Christianity,” 13; and Tilley, *The Bible*, 1-2.

how the Christians perceived, constructed and responded to the non-Christian “Other.” As Christian converts, Africans assimilated a new social identity into their former constructions of self. Moreover, many African Christians perceived that the threat to their existence came not only from members of other religions but specifically from Roman colonizers and the new elites loyal to them. In the context of North Africa where Christians are on trial or undergoing torture for their membership to the new religion, the “Other” is the non-Christian, or pagan, “world” who are understood to be allied with the devil. One complication, however, in identifying outsiders as such is the evidence that most Christians in North Africa were indigenous Africans and most persecutors were Roman colonizers.

In the *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum*, rather than preserving only the perspective of a Christian narrator or redactor, two parties have a voice: that of the proconsul Saturninus and of the Scillitans.⁶⁴⁵ The proconsul begins with an invitation to recant: “If you return to your senses, you can obtain the pardon of our lord the emperor” (*Potestis indulgentiam domni nostri imperatoris promereri, si ad bonam mentem redeatis*, 1.) The possessive pronoun, *nostri*, seems to be inclusive rather than exclusive, for two reasons.⁶⁴⁶ First, the proconsul invites the twelve individuals to “return,” not only to their “senses,” but to a previous state of allegiance. Second, any proconsul would have assumed that the reign of the emperor extended throughout Africa Proconsularis, Tripolitania, Numidia and Mauretania, making anyone in the provinces able to claim him as *domni nostri*. Therefore,

⁶⁴⁵ See above, section 3.1.1, for the reliability of this document and how it has been seen as reliant on official court transcripts.

⁶⁴⁶ cf. Tertullian, *Adu. Prax.* 11-12, and section 5.1 on attention to pronoun usage.

in the view of the proconsul "*nostrum*" includes all those faithful to the emperor.

The proconsul's words betray another indication of his inclusive social identity:

Saturninus the proconsul read his decision from a tablet:
"Whereas Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda and the others have confessed that they have been living in accordance with the rites of the Christians, and whereas though given the opportunity to return to the usage of *the Romans* they have persevered in their obstinacy, they are hereby condemned to be executed by the sword."⁶⁴⁷

Saturninus' construction of outsiders obviously includes the listing of the six who "have been living in accordance with the rites of Christianity." However, the phrase, "usage of the Romans," also signifies an identity which Saturninus does not, at least in this instance, place himself.⁶⁴⁸ The name of the proconsul also suggests African origin, and the use of the word *Romanorum* in outsider phraseology lends itself to the understanding that Saturninus was a new elite serving under the dual consulship of Praesens and Claudius. Although such a conclusion could be challenged, the use of social identity theory highlights the data in the text and provides a consistent methodology for interpreting the proconsul's construction of group identity.

The salient identity of the Scillitan Martyrs is repeatedly shown to be that of Christian, as seen in the repeated declarations of *Christiana(-us) sum* (9-13). The individuals involved construct their identity according to the

⁶⁴⁷ PSS 14: *Saturninus proconsul decretum ex tabella recitavit: Speratum, Nartzalum, Cittinum, Donatam, Vestiam, Secundam, et ceteros ritu Christiano se uiuere confessos, quoniam oblata sibi facultate ad Romanorum morem redeundi obstinanter perseuerauerunt, gladio animaduerti placet* (emphasis added.)

⁶⁴⁸ This reading is contrary to Musurillo's translation of section 3: "Saturninus the proconsul said: 'We too are a religious people, and our religion is a simple one....' [Saturninus proconsul dixit: *Et nos religiosi sumus et simplex est religio nostra....*] The use of "people" implies more than the Latin requires. Saturninus obviously wishes to place himself in the Roman group, i.e. the use of *nos*, but he does not claim to be of the same *homines, populus* or *gens*. Moreover, the two passages illustrate an identity Saturninus could possess or discard at will.

boundary between insiders and outsiders, being in this case the declaration of allegiance to Christ. Such a clear appreciation seems difficult, however, given the immediate reaction of Speratus to the proconsul's offer of a pardon from "our lord the emperor": "We have never done wrong... for we hold our own emperor in honour" (*Numquam malefecimus, ... propter quod imperatorem nostrum obseruamus*, 2.) One could interpret this statement as indicative of the Christian's acceptance of the "pagan" emperor. Perhaps, Speratus is reflecting the understanding that Christians are to submit to governing authorities as established by God.⁶⁴⁹ This approach does not seem to be primary in Speratus' reaction, however, given his later statement. When asked to swear "by the Genius of our lord the emperor" (*per genium domni nostri imperatoris*, 5), Speratus declares, "I do not recognize the empire of this world. ...for I acknowledge my lord who is the emperor of kings and of all nations" (*Ego imperium huius seculi non cognosco. ...quia cognosco domnum meum, imperatorem regum et omnium gentium*, 14).⁶⁵⁰ Speratus seems to have rejected Saturninus' attempt to apply an inclusive "our lord the emperor" to the Christians by responding with an exclusive "our own emperor."⁶⁵¹

When Saturninus missed this hint and continued to apply an inclusive first person plural a second time, Speratus explicitly clarifies the opposition between the two groups. A natural reading of the social identity for Speratus seems on the surface to highlight the contrast between the "lord" of the

⁶⁴⁹ e.g. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17. North African Christians could procure such a stance if they desired; e.g. Tertullian, *Ad Scap.* 1.3; *Apol.* 30.

⁶⁵⁰ Evans, *One and Holy*, 5, deems this response "a clearly revolutionary spirit." Similarly, Rankin, "Tertullian," 215. cf. 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; and Rev. 19:16.

⁶⁵¹ Musurillo evidently attempts to emphasize this aspect in Speratus' response by the translation "our own emperor" despite the absence of any emphasizing reflexive in the Latin.

Christians and the “lord” of the world. Such a conclusion, however, does not take into account the description Speratus gives of his lord as over *omnium gentium*, a phrase often used in ancient Latin to describe the non-Roman peoples.⁶⁵² As indigenous Africans who could take on the broad social identity of *omnium gentium*, the Scillitans also recognize the Romans and any supporters of Rome as outsiders in conflict with the African (Christian) collective.

A reading of the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions finds both similarities and differences with the account of the Scillitan martyrs. Like the earliest Christian martyrs, Perpetua, Felicitas and the other martyrs are characterized “as one against a single foe, the Devil, aided by his minions the Romans.”⁶⁵³ Moreover, in two sections the narrator gives voice to the martyrs themselves in what purports to be autobiographical accounts of imprisonment. Listening to the voice of the narrator involves more than a simple observation of pronoun use in order to determine the social identities of the martyrs, as when, for example, the narrator can speak of the martyrs in the third person and still claim that “they” are part of the

⁶⁵² e.g. Cic., *De diu.* 1.11, 1.12, 1.36, 1.46, 1.84, 1.95; *De haruspicum responso* 19; cited in Krostenko, “Beyond (Dis)belief,” 361. Similarly, in Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 6, Caecilianus declares the Romans worship the gods of *uniuersarum gentium*, and (8) *omnium gentium* are in agreement with Rome’s religious/military superiority. cf. Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.15.7, where *omne gente* is used in contrast with Rome. Also, *Apol.* 21.6, where in a chapter invoking explicitly Roman imagery, after mentioning Tiberius (21.1), Tertullian distinguishes how Christ choose “from every race, community and region” [*ex omni iam gente et populo et loco*]. Elsewhere, Tertullian characterizes his opponent’s argument, contrasting Rome (via Tiberius) and “all nations”: “Marcion lays it down that there is one Christ who in the time of Tiberius was revealed by a god formerly unknown, for the salvation of all the nations” [*Constituit Marcion alium esse Christum qui Tiberianis temporibus a deo quondam ignoto reuelatus sit in salutem omnium gentium, Adu. Marc.* 4.6.3]. cf. *Adu. Iud.* 7.4: “universal nations” [*uniuersae gentes*] in reference to the list from Acts 2:9-10 which includes “inhabiters of the region of Africa which is beyond Cyrene” [*regions Africae quae est trans Cyrenen inhabitans*] and “Romans” [*Romani*]. Tertullian can also use similar phraseology when distinguishing “all nations” from the Jews or Samaritans: *Adu. Iud.* 2.1; 9.20; and *Adu. Marc.* 4.16.11; 5.5.7.

⁶⁵³ Tilley, *The Bible*, 43.

shared Christian identity.⁶⁵⁴ The narrator's identity is primarily the Christian community who adhere to the same faith as the martyrs.⁶⁵⁵ Instances also arise, however, where the narrator indicates other social identities salient for the Christians.

The narrator's "Other" is evident in three passages of the account of the martyrs' trial and persecution. When the catechumens are confined to the dungeon, the narrator tells of the confrontation that occurred:

While they were treated with more severity by the tribune, because, from the intimations of certain deceitful men, he feared lest they should be withdrawn from the prison by some sort of magic incantations, Perpetua answered to his face, and said, "Why do you not at least permit us to be refreshed, being as we are objectionable to the most noble Caesar, and having to fight on his birth-day? Or is it not your glory if we are brought forward fatter on that occasion?"⁶⁵⁶

The "certain deceitful men" reference has been discussed previously, but the import for this section is the portrayal of outsiders. The narrator, via Perpetua, portrays those who are influencing the arrest and treatment of the Christians as not only devious but treacherously allied with the Roman officials. The sarcasm of *nobilissimus Caesaris* and *tua gloria* should not be missed in this passage. The account expresses more than the notions that non-Christians are outgroup members; the passage intonates animosity specifically towards individuals – be they new elites or colonizers – in allegiance with "Caesar" and Rome.

⁶⁵⁴ e.g. PSPF 1.6, and 16.2-4.

⁶⁵⁵ See esp. the final paragraph.

⁶⁵⁶ PSPF 16.2-3: *cum tribunus castigatus eos castigaret, quia ex admonitionibus hominum uanissimorum uerebatur ne subtraherentur de carcere incantationibus aliquibus magicis, in faciem ei Perpetua respondit: Quid utique non permittis nobis refrigerare noxiis nobilissimis, Caesaris scilicet, et natali eiusdem pugnaturis? aut non tua gloria est, si pinguiores illo producatur?* (trans. Wallis, see section 4.2.5 above.)

The very next paragraph of the *Passio* indicates further the social identity of the narrator by distinguishing a “We” from a “They.” When describing the “last supper” of the martyrs, the narrator insists on redefining Roman colonizer phraseology:

Moreover, on the day before, when in that last meal, which they call the free meal, they were partaking as far as they could, not of a free supper, but of an agape; with the same firmness they were uttering such words as these to the people, denouncing against them the judgment of the Lord, bearing witness to the felicity of their passion, laughing at the curiosity of the people who came together.⁶⁵⁷

What “they call” [*uocant*] the free meal, the narrator abrogates as an Agape feast, as if to say “in spite of the fact that it comes from the Romans.”⁶⁵⁸ The sentence resonates with the same tone towards the Romans as the previous paragraph for “they” does not simply mean the non-Christians, but suggests Roman colonizers who have imported foreign phrases and terms. In this instance, rather than “certain deceitful men” who must be new elites or Roman colonizers, the *populus* is portrayed as allied with the Romans, at least in the level of morbid curiosity. Later in the narrative, the crowd takes a clearer defined outsider role, especially in the final scenes.

During the account of the torture and killing of the Christians, the narrator again highlights the role of the *populus*. *Revocatus*, *Saturninus* and *Saturus* enter the arena preaching to the crowd about the judgement of God that is to come. Only after the Christians rebuke the Roman official, however,

⁶⁵⁷ PSPF 17.1: *Pridie quoque cum illam cenam ultimam quam liberam uocant, quantum in ipsis erat, non cenam liberam sed agapem cenarent, eadem constantia ad populum uerba iactabant, comminantes iudicium Dei, contestantes passionis suae felicitatem, inridentes concurrentium curiositatem.* (Wallis’ translation is again used over Musurillo, who translates *uocant*, “it is called.”)

⁶⁵⁸ It should be noted that the martyrs are in the Roman “military camp” [*castrensem*, 7.9-10.] On “abrogation” as a subversive strategy often utilized by indigenous writers under colonization, see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 38-9.

does the narrator state, "At this the crowds became enraged and demanded that they be scourged before a line of gladiators" (*ad hoc populus exasperatus flagellis eos uexari per ordinem uenatorum postulauit*, 18.7-9). In this scene, the narrator not only portrays the *populus* as non-Christian but as defenders of Roman colonizers.

Although the sources of the second and third period of Christian history in North Africa are too numerous for the present discussion, we can deduce from the outright disputation of Cyprian and the African bishops against the decisions of Stephen of Rome and the complete schism between the Donatists and the Catholics that anyone with connections to Rome were considered to be the "Other" for many African Christians.⁶⁵⁹ The history of Christianity in North Africa highlights the perennial recurrence of groups whose social identities include a posture of conflict with the powers of Rome.

From this analysis of African Christian social identities, one can inquire as to what factors constitute Tertullian's identity as an African Christian, and thereby, his theology. The following reading interprets Tertullian as a part of the Christian trend in ancient North Africa which perceives outsiders in terms of the "world" that has not accepted Christ as Lord, which simultaneously allows Tertullian to understand himself as an indigenous African rejecting the Roman colonizers as puppets of the devil as well as denouncing the pursuits of the new elite who supported them. The following chapters will explore some of Tertullian's writings applying the theories used in this and the previous chapter, showing him to be an African theologian.

⁶⁵⁹ Shaw, "African Christianity," 20.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND TERTULLIAN

From the survey of North Africa under Roman colonization, the resultant understanding is that of conflict between two social groups, Roman colonizers and indigenous Africans, with a third group, new elites, functioning as intermediaries in various ways. The new elites of North Africa represent the unclassifiable demographic in that those individuals' loyalties and identities depended on an array of factors. Correspondingly, an exploration of Christian sources from North Africa during Roman imperialism renders a reoccurring theme of conflict between North African Christians and Romans. New elites more invested in Roman colonization provide examples to the historian of vitriolic attacks on Christian communities which consisted largely, though not entirely, of indigenous Africans from the lower-classes. Tertullian wrote from within a community which understood itself to be at odds with the forces of the "world," typified by the Roman colonizers, but the question arises as to whether or not Tertullian should be classified as a Roman colonizer, an indigenous African or a new elite.

The previous two chapters (Roman Africa and Christians in Africa) presented themselves as "explorations" or "surveys" of the data as perceived through the lens of anthropological theories of identity. The current chapter, and those that follow, will now incorporate the previous material regarding Roman socio-political forces in order to view Tertullian as an individual with an African identity who in many instances exhibits an anti-Roman sentiment. Such an understanding is a theory; that is, Tertullian will not be "proven" to be

an African, but “read” as an African. This reading, it is suggested here, provides explicatory assistance for many aspects of Tertullian’s writings.

With no information about Tertullian’s birth or parentage, one could argue that he was just as likely to have been a Roman colonizer as any other classification of identity. At the least, with his high level of education, as indicated by his rhetorical skill, Tertullian would seem to belong to the category of the new elites. Moreover, he could have claimed for himself both a Roman and an African identity. Had Tertullian claimed the former, such a claim would in no way negate the possibility of the latter – although it seems telling he did not claim the former. A rereading of Tertullian in light of his context, however, could also interpret him as an indigenous African who entered for some time into the Roman system following the pursuits of the new elites, but he then either rejected or was rejected from the process of Romanization and became subversive to the socio-political forces in power during his lifetime. In order to present this understanding of Tertullian, the anthropological theories used in previous chapters will serve as hermeneutical devices for interpreting his writings, providing a different set of questions than those commonly asked by Tertullian scholars, beginning with the question of social identity.

Applying theories of social identity to Tertullian’s writings entails exploring some of the possible identities and personas the author could have inhabited. The aim of the following discussion is to allow the theoretical emphasis on difference to indicate who Tertullian considered to be his “Other” at any one time, thereby indicating his own various social identities. With subject material ranging from clothing to Christology and with genres

including apologetic, didactic and polemic Tertullian constructs various opponents and interlocutors correlating to his specific task in each treatise.⁶⁶⁰ For the present purposes two of his works, the *Ad nationes* (1 and 2) and the *Apologeticum*, will serve as case studies for his social identity.

A comparison of *Ad nationes* and *Apologeticum* provides especially helpful data for framing Tertullian's self-identity as contextually constructed. Although other comparisons could be made that would add to any understanding of Tertullian's identities, they would be less homologous in various ways and therefore not contribute the same dynamic as the selected treatises. For example, Tertullian's *Ad Scapulum* is close in genre, tone and material to *Ad nationes* and *Apologeticum*, but it is widely agreed to have been written much later and would entail other contextual issues. Other apologists, such as Minucius Felix, whose tract *Octavius* involves a dialogue explicitly invoking African referents, or Arnobius, an African whose work *Aduersus gentes* seems to betray little or no African identity, could also provide comparative material but would beg the question as to the African identities

⁶⁶⁰ e.g. Minge's division in the *PL* into "*Pars prima: Opera a Tertulliano catholico scripta continens*" and "*Pars secunda: Opera a Tertulliano montanista scripta continens*"; *CCSL* divides Tertullian's works into *Opera Catholica* and *Opera Montanista*; *CSEL* devotes vol. 69 to "*Tertulliani Apologeticum*," while vols. 70 and 76 are simply "*Tertulliani Opera*"; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 9, prefers categorizing by "genre," but still recognizes the problems with past examples such as Quasten's "apologetic, controversial and disciplinary/moral/ascetic"; Wright, "Tertullian," delineates, "Anti-heretical Writings" and "Apologetic Writings."

involved in those writers.⁶⁶¹ The following, therefore, will compare ways in which Tertullian constructs identities in two of his works, namely the identities of insiders and outsiders for himself and his audience.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶¹ e.g. Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 106, who emphasizes the indigenous consistency of early African Christianity, comments on one parallel passage (Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.1/Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 25.5): "In this instance, the attack may perhaps be discounted as formal polemic designed to discredit the argument that Rome had grown... strong through her loyalty to the worship of the pagan gods. It is, however, hard not to believe that deeper feelings inspired the denunciations of Cyprian and Tertullian." Comparing both of Tertullian's works to Minucius Felix has proved beneficial in the past. To do so here, however, would not contribute to the discussion of Tertullian's African identity. Since there is a literary relationship, the comparison of one over the other could be interpreted both ways. If Minucius Felix is prior (see below), Tertullian would still have adapted the material for his own purposes. Conversely, if *Ad nat./Apol.* are prior, as G.W. Clark, *The Octavius of Marcus Minucius Felix*, (New York: Newman Press, 1974), 7-8, states, the "Africanisms" in the *Octavius* can be attributed to a reliance on Tertullian. For priority of Tertullian's *Apologeticum*, see J. Beaujeu, *Minucius Felix: Octavius*, (Paris: Collection des Universités de France, 1964), liv-lxvii; Barnes, *Tertullian*, 192; Michael M. Sage, *Cyprian*, (Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), 53; George L. Carver, "Minucius Felix and Cyprian: The Question of Priority," *TAPA*, 108, (1978): 21-34, who even attributes Cyprian priority to the *Octavius*; and Wright, "Tertullian," 1030. Michael E. Hardwick, *Josephus as a historical source in Patristic literature through Eusebius*, (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989) 22, who claims, "The priority of Minucius Felix rests upon the coherence and style of his narrative while Tertullian's priority depends upon the assumption that his is the more vigorous and therefore more creative work. Both sides employ *a priori* considerations regarding what characterizes creativity. Therefore, the results are predetermined." Similarly, Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics," 112. Note that Bray, *Holiness*; Daley, *Tertullian*; Rankin, *Tertullian*; and Dunn, *Tertullian*, 10, make no comment on the matter. For bibliography of earlier discussions, Beaujeu, *Minucius Felix*, liv-lxvii; and Hardwick, *Josephus*, 20-2. On Arnobius, see Jer., *De uiris illustribus* 79, "Arnobius, under emperor Diocletian, famously taught rhetoric at Sicca in Africa" [*Arnobius sub Diocletiano principe Siccae apud Africam florentissime rhetoricam docuit*]; O.P. Nicholson, "The Date of Arnobius' *Adversus gentes*," in *SP* 15, (1984), 100-107; Mark Edwards, "The Flowering of Latin Apologetic: Lactantius and Arnobius," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire*, (OUP, 1999), 197-221.

⁶⁶² cf. Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 20, "Tertullien a écrit une œuvre qui est presque tout entière une œuvre de combat, où domine la polémique"; Nicola Denzey, "What did the Montanists Read?" *HTR* 94 (4 2001), 429, comments, "[Tertullian] did not refute movements *per se*, but rather theological opponents such as Marcion and Valentinus."; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 10, "In everything he wrote, however, there was some point in dispute, some quarrel to be had and some error to be corrected" and how Tertullian's debate "promotes the notion of 'us and them'"; and Wright, "Tertullian," 1035, declares him "combative by nature." Although Tertullian's works often address the "Other" implicitly, he was capable of expounding on the importance of an "Other" (*alius*) for one's identity explicitly, as in the case of the *Logos: Adu. Prax.* 21. On Tertullian's construction of his "Other" in relation to his use of pronouns and the third person, two things need to be said: (1) Close attention has been given in the past to Tertullian's pronoun usage as a means of interpreting his self-identity and his identification of outsiders (e.g. in regards to Montanism; see, as examples, Barnes, *Tertullian*, 43-4, Rankin, *Tertullian*, xv; and more generally (see following paragraphs); and (2) since individuals can refer to a group in the third person and yet understand themselves to belong to that group, the following section focuses on examples where Tertullian's references to groups in the third person can be compared with other usages of similar material as an attempt to contextualize his rhetorical aims. In this understanding, Tertullian can refer to groups such as "Believers," (*Ad ux.* 1.4.7) and "Phoenicians" (*Apol.* 19.5) in third person without necessarily excluding himself from those groups (see *De cor.* 7.2 and *De pall.* 2.1, respectively). This is not found to be the case, however, with the "Romans."

Introducing his work on philosophy in Tertullian, Osborn confesses, "Fifteen years ago, I wrote that Tertullian 'never stops to think what his opponent might mean.' Now I am mystified by the way in which he listens to what his opponent says."⁶⁶³ Many scholars such as Osborn recognize Tertullian's sensitivity to his audience as important in shaping both the tone and the content of his works.⁶⁶⁴ Tertullian's adaptability, according to Mark S. Burrows, is due to the fact that Tertullian uses propositions and authorities his interlocutors would have accepted as credible in order to strengthen his argument.⁶⁶⁵

Despite this general consensus on the importance of audience for Tertullian's method, there is little agreement on who the actual audience is for Tertullian's various works. In fact, the present discussion in no way intends to deny the possibility of multiple audiences (e.g. Christian and non-Christian) for any one work; instead, the idea is congruous with the possibility of multiple identities. When taking into account literary license and rhetorical device, the primary strength of exploring Tertullian's social identities is the

⁶⁶³ *Tertullian*, xvii; ref. to his work, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy*, (CUP, 1981), 272.

⁶⁶⁴ On his tone, for example, see Evans, "On the Problem of Church and Empire in Tertullian's *Apologeticum*," in *SP* 14 (1976), 25, says "...works intended for pagan readers have a less hostile attitude towards them than that found in works designed for Christian readers." Dunn, *Tertullian*, 8, concurs, saying, "In apologetic works written to imperial officials, he was not as critical of the Roman system..." and "...sometimes it is not a question of him changing his mind over time but of writing with particular readership in mind." On his content, Osborn, *Tertullian*, 194, not only believes Tertullian borrowed concepts and terms from Stoic philosophy, he even surmises that Tertullian borrowed many terms, including *persona*, *substantia* and *trinitas*, from the Valentinians. See Barnes, *Tertullian*, 45, for his content and rhetoric as determined by audience.

⁶⁶⁵ "Christianity," 222.

focus on stated insiders and outsiders, regardless of their status in relation to audience or authorial intent.⁶⁶⁶

5.1 Social Identities in *Ad nationes*

Ad nationes is widely accepted as prior to the *Apologeticum* in chronologies of Tertullian's writings.⁶⁶⁷ Various reasons are given for this order, usually having to do with the "remodeling" of the ideas in the former work which are "refined" for the *Apologeticum*.⁶⁶⁸ Because of the close relationship in form and content of these two works, both are generally considered to be addressed to the same audience. The following examination of the writer's social identities, however, reaches an alternative conclusion.⁶⁶⁹

Addressing the anxiety growing over "the increasing number of Christians" (*adolescentem numerum Christianorum*, 1.1.2), Tertullian speaks against the "ignorance" (*ignorantiae*, 1.1.1) of many people and the resulting injustice in the trials of Christians (1.2; see also 1.6-7). After addressing some of the accusations made against Christians (1.3-9), Tertullian turns each charge back on the accusers (1.10-19), and ends book one with an "imaginary confession" (*simulata confessio*, 1.20), mocking the accusers for being Christians themselves by being guilty of each accusation. In book two Tertullian shifts to offensive rhetoric, by attacking "natural" gods (2.2-6), gods

⁶⁶⁶ Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics: Minucius Felix, Tertullian and Cyprian," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire*, ed. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman and Price, (OUP, 1999), 105, claims, "The actual readership of the works is of course unknowable, but perhaps not crucial."

⁶⁶⁷ See Rankin, *Tertullian*, xvii, for a survey of this consensus.

⁶⁶⁸ e.g. von Campenhausen, *The Fathers*, 55; Barnes, *Tertullian*, 49; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 39; and Wright, "Tertullian," 1035.

⁶⁶⁹ cf. Justin's two original apologies, on which Tertullian relied, which are directed towards different audiences; see P. Lorraine Buck, "Justin Martyr's Apologies: Their Number, Destination and Form," *JTS* n.s. 54 (1 2003), 46.

of “myth” or “poetry” (2.7) and provincial gods (2.8), and he then devotes approximately half of book two to “Roman” gods (2.9-12) and “Roman” religion (2.13-17).

From the outset of *Ad nationes*, Tertullian addresses the audience in the second person and as outsiders. Speaking directly to the audience, he states, “You grieve over it as a calamity, that each sex, every age-in short, every rank, is passing over from you to us” (*omnem sexum, omnem aetatem, omnem denique dignitatem transgredi a uobis quasi detrimento doletis*,

1.2).⁶⁷⁰ Tertullian, it follows, perceives the declared audience as outside of his community or group, and, as would be expected in an apologetic work, the Other-ness of the audience is defined by its non-Christian constituency. The audience constructed by Tertullian can be further described, however, in that one can inquire as to the descriptions of the social identity Tertullian projected onto the outsider target group.⁶⁷¹ Did Tertullian perceive that he was writing

⁶⁷⁰ For the “métaphore militaire” in this sentence, see André Schneider, *Le premier livre Ad Nationes de Tertullien: introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire*, (Rome: Institut Suisse de Rome, 1968), 118.

⁶⁷¹ The “heathen” or non-Christian audience can not be deduced from the title, *Ad nationes*, alone for two reasons: (1) the title, according to Borleffs is not found in the *Codex Agobardinus*, the only surviving manuscript of *Ad nat.* Moreover, Jerome, *Epistula 70.5* refers to this treatise as *Contra gentes libri*; (2) scholars are not in agreement regarding Tertullian’s use of the term *nationes* in relation to *gens*, *gentilis*, and *ethnicus*; see the various translators and I.L.S. Balfour, “Tertullian’s Description of the Heathen,” in *Studia Patristica* 17, (2 1982): 785-789; and MacMullen, “Tertullian.” In *Ad nat.* Tertullian uses *natio* to refer a people group; e.g. as defined by language (1.8.2), in contrast to the whole human species (1.16.6), in specific examples of Parthians, Medes, Germans and others conquered by Rome (1.17.3), as well as non-designated “nations” (2.12.3; 2.17.18). Only in three instances can the word be read exclusively to mean “non-Christian” (1.7.29; 1.20.1; and 2.1.1); *contra* Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 108, who claims *natio* to be a “conveniently neutral (apolitical) term.” Tertullian is fully capable of blurring regional and religious categories (see esp. 1.8 and even 1.20.4). cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. *natio*, for its usual application in Cicero “to distant and barbarous people.” As for *gens*, the reference is explicitly and exclusively a regional, not religious, classification in this treatise. The same is true of *gentilis*, explicitly meaning “non-Roman” (2.1.10-11; 2.8.1; 2.9.1). Contrast this usage with the terms in *Apol.* where *natio*, *gens*, *genus* and *gentilis* are never designators of non-Christians, but instead indicate either the whole of humanity (19.2; 21.6; 25.8; 26.1; 27.1; 37.8; 37.10; 40.10; 41.3; 48.12), specific people groups contrasted with Rome (9.9; 9.17; 16.2; 18.6; 19.5; 21.4; 25.3-4; 26.3) or all people groups contrasted with Rome (21.29; 25.15; 32.2). Two variants include Romans as a “nation” (25.8) and the contrast between any one people group with Christians who inhabit the “whole world” (*totius orbis*, 37.4). *Ethnicus* is omitted in both works. This comparison

to a local or a foreign audience? Did he indicate whether he was writing to Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans or new elites?⁶⁷² Further examples of Tertullian's outsider language will help in suggesting answers to these questions.

Several passages in *Ad nationes* indicate that the audience is educated and therefore either Roman colonizers, new elites or a broader audience consisting of elites throughout the empire. Accusing the non-Christian audience with punishing Christians solely for bearing the name Christian, Tertullian ridicules the notion. For "unless indeed it has a barbarous sound" (*nisi cum quid aut barbarum sonat*), a name is harmless (1.3.7). The name only has a "barbarous sound" when "you call us 'Chrestians' (for you are not certain about even the sound of this noted name), you in fact lisp out the sense of pleasantness and goodness" (*cum corrupte a uobis Chrestiani pronuntiamur {nam ne nominis quidem ipsius liquido certi estis}, sic quoque de suavitate uel bonitate modulatum est*, 1.3.9). While many Romans could mock Christians with the name *chrestus*, a slave name, Tertullian's audience seem to be unaware of this, because Tertullian claims that they have ignorantly – not purposefully – mispronounced the appellation. To commit a "barbarism" would have been avoided by any educated individual in the

supports the conclusion, argued here, that Tertullian aims *Ad nat.* to provincials, namely of Africa Proconsularis, and *Apol.* to Romans; similarly, see Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics," 110. cf. Justin, *1 Apologia* 1, who somewhat ambiguously begins on behalf of the nations, but later explains to his audience what the Jews meant by "gentile" (53.) For the past view of *nationes* as "pagan" exclusively, which does not discuss the postcolonial context of Tertullian, see Schneider, *Le premier livre*, 10-5.

⁶⁷² Tabbernee, "To Pardon", 383, believes that Tertullian's works were intended to be read aloud for an oral society, and therefore, a local audience. If Tabbernee is correct, one need not assume an educated audience (i.e. Roman colonizers and/or new elites), but the declared audience could also include illiterate individuals (i.e. foreign or indigenous.)

Roman empire and especially by new elites seeking to acquire *romanitas*.⁶⁷³

Tertullian assumes this literate status, or at least the desire for literate status, of his audience throughout book two in referencing not only mythic legends of gods, but also quoting specific examples of “your literature” (*litteras uestras*, 2.12.26).⁶⁷⁴

Beyond the erudition of the audience, however, Tertullian directly indicates the non-Roman makeup of his audience by depicting Romans as the audience’s – and his own – “Other.” After mocking Diogenes’ treatment of the gods, he references “Varro, that Diogenes of the Roman cut” (*Romani stili Diogenes Varro*, 1.10.43).⁶⁷⁵ Throughout the tract, he speaks “of the Romans” (*de Romanis*) in the third person (esp. throughout 2.9) and of “their fond father Aeneas, in whom they believed” (*Patrem Diligentem Aenean*

⁶⁷³ See chapter three. cf. *Apol.* 3.5. On Tertullian’s defense of “Barbarian philosophy” [orig. emph.], i.e. Jewish teachings and the “‘Syriac’ content of the Gospcl,” see Bediako, *Theology*, 428-30. However, Tertullian can rhetorically attack Marcion as “barbarum” (e.g. *Adu. Marc.* 1.4) or claim “for Christ is also among the barbarians” [*apud barbaros enim Christus*, *De cor.* 12.4].

⁶⁷⁴ Tertullian is capable of distinguishing between Christian and “secular literature” (*litteras saeculares*, *Adu. Marc.* 5.19.7), but such a phrase, it seems, would exclude one of his present purposes. cf. *Adu. Marc.* 1.9.2, “Roman superstition” (*superstitio Romana*.)

⁶⁷⁵ On Tertullian’s use of Varro and his “focus on Rome,” see Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 124-9.

crediderunt, 2.9.12) – in other words, not “whom you believed.”⁶⁷⁶

Tertullian concludes his treatise with what seems to be the most shameful charge to both Tertullian and the audience: that the audience accepts the claim “that the Romans have become the lords and masters of the whole world, because by their religious offices they have merited this dominion” (*propterea scilicet Romanos totius orbis domin<us atque arbitros factos fuis> se, quod officiiis religionum meruerint dominatum orbis sic, ut nulli hostes eis praeualeant*, 2.17.2).⁶⁷⁷ To Tertullian, and to the audience he constructs in his works, Romans are outsiders, and Tertullian uses the embarrassing distinction to ridicule his audience who have a tenuous relationship with them. While Tertullian’s ridicule could apply to the empire at large – i.e. *nationes* other than Africa, Tertullian assumes his audience’s familiarity with information specific to Africa.

⁶⁷⁶ Where Holmes reads <di>igentem, Borleff suggests, <ind>igentem for the corrupted text. Also, note that Holmes inclusive language in 1.10.3, “the general charge of divorcing ourselves from the institutions of *our* forefathers” (emphasis added) is not required by the Latin: *in nos generali accusatione dirigitis, diuortium ab institutis maiorum*; nowhere in the tract does Tertullian claim his own group’s ancestors (i.e. “our”) worshiped Roman gods; similarly, see 2.1.7. Also, out of the six instances where Holmes translates “your ancestors/forefathers” (1.10.5, 1.10.6, 1.10.7, 1.10.8, 1.10.13, 1.10.19), only two instances contain the possessive pronoun “your” (*uestra/is*, 1.10.6, 1.10.19; note that 1.10.7 is corrupted in the manuscripts and may have contained the pronoun, but it would require a different word order.) Tertullian, however, does seem to connect his audience with Roman tradition (e.g. laws, 1.10.4; senate, 1.10.14, and Lares, 1.10.20), which could indicate a Roman audience, a mixed audience of Roman and new elite or simply a new elite audience who wished to construct for themselves a Roman identity. While it is tempting to delineate Roman/African as “either”/“or,” Tertullian indicates a more complex understanding of the relationship between a Roman identity and “the Romans.” In this instance, Tertullian identifies Aeneas as something peculiarly “Roman.” Elsewhere Tertullian both indicates that his new elite audience worship Roman gods (e.g. 1.10.20, 2.12.5) and cites gods who oversee daily tasks, explaining, “Although, it is true, the gods which we have enumerated are reckoned as Roman peculiarly, and as not easily recognised abroad” [*immo cum priuatim apud Romanos deputentur, quos supra signauimus*, 2.15.7].

⁶⁷⁷ See Borleff’s critical notes on this passage for the deteriorated condition of the only surviving manuscript, *Codex Agobardinus*, which requires an insertion (◊). Oehler’s text from which Holmes was translating is given here. In his 1625 edition Gothofredus counted less spacing, inserting “*domin<us factos fuis>se*.” Also, “*dominatum... hostes*” is a correction made by Gothofredus, followed by Oehler, on the original blotted out: “*diuturn<...> eis*.” Borleff is unconvinced and would prefer the reading “*diuturn<um regnum nec ulli pietate> eis*” based on *Apol.* 25.2 and Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 25.1.

The intensity of Tertullian's tone increases throughout *Ad nationes*, as does the specifically African rhetoric. The mask of objectivity falls from Tertullian at the end of book one, when he compares Egyptian and Athenian enemies of Rome who have, like Christians, endured "swords" (*gladios*, 1.17.2), "crosses" (*cruces*), "beasts" (*bestias*) and "torture" (*tormenta*). He then lists, among others, two of the greatest examples of anti-Romanism available to his audience: "the Carthaginian woman, who in the last extremity of her country was more courageous than her husband [Ha]sdrubal, only followed the example, set long before by Dido herself, of going through fire to her death" (*ignes post Carthaginensem feminam Asdrubale marito in extremis patriae constantiorem docuerat inuadere ipsa Dido*, 1.18.3).⁶⁷⁸ Tertullian highlights the examples of Hasdrubal's wife and Dido, two women said to have resisted Rome even unto death as types or *exempla* which may serve as common ground between Tertullian's Christian congregation, who are willing to die at the hand of Roman torturers, and Tertullian's African audience, many of whom would retain an anti-Roman sentiment to varying degrees.

In book two Tertullian regains his objective persona as though speaking to all the provinces, listing among other regional gods the "African Mopsus" (*Mopsus Africanus*, 2.7.1), the "African Caelestis" (*Caelestem Afrorum*, 2.8.5), and the man "whom not Egypt only, or Greece, but the whole world worships, and the Africans swear by" (*quem non iam Aegyptus aut*

⁶⁷⁸ When Carthage was burned and destroyed by Rome, Hasdrubal's wife – nameless in the historical accounts – rebuked her husband for surrendering before committing suicide by jumping from the city walls into the flames; the account is recorded by Appian, *Pun.* 131. On Dido, see discussion below, section 9.1. Tertullian often refers to this event as a model of chastity: *Ad nat.* 2.9.13; *Ad mart.* 4; *Apol.* 50.5; *De an.* 33.9; *De exh. chast.* 13.3; and *De mon.* 17.2. Note, however, that to the Romans, as Barbette Stanley Spaeth, *The Roman Goddess Ceres*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 115, notes, Dido is "the paradigm of the woman who abandons *castitas*." On other persons mentioned by Tertullian in this section, see the discussion below, section 9.1 on a parallel list in the *Ad mart.*

Graecia, uerum totus orbis colit et Afri iurant, 2.8.9).⁶⁷⁹ Towards the end of Tertullian's work, however, he allows more specifically African rhetoric to illustrate his point when he says, "The green fig of Africa nobody at Rome had heard of when Cato introduced it to the Senate, in order that he might show how near was that province of the enemy whose subjugation he was constantly urging" (*Ficum uiridem Romae nemo nouerat <Africanam, cu>m Cato senatui intulit, ut quam prope prouincia hostilis esset, cui subigendae semper instabat, exprimeret*, 2.16.4).⁶⁸⁰ Tertullian's talent and capability as a rhetorician allow him to use irony and insult pointedly, as in the case of reminding a Carthaginian audience of a Roman's repeated call for their city's destruction.⁶⁸¹

In both books of *Ad nationes* Tertullian constructs an audience which is different from his own social identity yet shares a common enemy, or "Other": the Roman colonizers. Tertullian can invoke politically charged imagery such as Dido and Hasdrubal's wife as positive examples of African

⁶⁷⁹ "Serapis" may be an allusion to Septimius Severus, who became devoted to the Egyptian god, and who is often portrayed, according to Birley, *Septimius Severus*, plate 11(a), with a "forked Serapis-style of beard and corkscrew curls." "Mopsus" is a correction agreed upon by all the editors of *Cod. Agobardinus*: "mox." While non-African religions could indicate a wider provincial audience, one could understand his inclusion of various provincial gods as indicating his awareness of various immigrant groups residing in Carthage. Moreover, residents of Africa Proconsularis could practice Eastern religions, another famous example being Apuleius' worship of Isis.

⁶⁸⁰ On the corrupted manuscript, Oehler and Borleff are substantiated in their restoration <*Africanam cu*>m by comparisons with other ancient accounts of Cato's speech in the senate: see Plutarch, *Marcus Cato*, 27, the "Libyan Fig" [σῦκα τῶν Λιβυκῶν]; and Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 15.20, "African fig" [*Africana*]; cf. in this passage Pliny's statements on how Carthage "was overthrown by a single fruit" [*unius pomi argumento euersam*], and "so much nearer did Cato bring Carthage to us by means of a single fruit!" [*tanto propius Carthaginem pomo Cato admouit*]. The scene Tertullian refers to is where Cato shows a green fig which everyone agrees is so ripe that it must have been picked within a day or two. He then declares it came from Carthage proving the proximity of Rome's rival city and inciting the Senate to declare the war which eventually resulted in Carthage's destruction.

⁶⁸¹ Cato allegedly ended every speech on the senate floor with this call; see Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 15.20, "Carthage must be destroyed" [*Carthaginem delendam*] and Plutarch, *Marcus Cato* 27, "In my opinion, Carthage must be destroyed" [Δοκεῖ δέ μοι καὶ Καρθηδόνα μὴ εἶναι.]

resistance to Rome, and he can provoke such sentiments by recalling Cato's perennial cry, "*Carthaginem delendam!*" The identification of Tertullian's stated audience as new elites becomes even more plausible for *Ad nationes* in comparison with his *Apologeticum*.

5.2 Social Identities in *Apologeticum*

Like *Ad nationes*, Tertullian begins his *Apologeticum* attacking the "ignorance" (1) about Christianity and questioning the legality of the Christian trials (2, see also 46 and 50).⁶⁸² He also mentions various accusations against Christians (2), addresses how the "name" of Christian itself is hated (3) and states his intent to turn each accusation against the accusers (4), but this time Tertullian inserts a longer discussion about law and justice (4-7). After doing so, he can speak to some of the accusations made against Christians (7-10; also 16) before attacking various aspects of non-Christian religions (11-6). Tertullian then explains a few beliefs of the Christian religion (17-21), including belief that non-Christian "gods" are actually "demons" (22-3), after which he turns to an extended engagement with Roman religion specifically (24-38), especially the Christian posture towards Caesar (28-37).⁶⁸³ In the latter chapters, Tertullian relates Christians to society in general, describing them as a college or club (39, 45), answering accusations that they cause catastrophic events (40-1) or economic recessions (42-4) and comparing them to philosophers (47-50).

⁶⁸² For possible revisions of the treatise by Tertullian, see Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics," 107-8.

⁶⁸³ Bediako, *Theology*, 430, comments, "Since all that was of the world (*saecularia*) was of demons, it followed that the entire outfit which sustained the cultural and political life of the Empire – in other words everything which lay outside of Christian self-consciousness and of the Christian community thus conceived – was to be rejected."

In the *Apologeticum*, Tertullian uses very similar material as in *Ad nationes* but employs it in much different ways. Scholars have investigated at great lengths the “forensic nature” of the work through rhetorical analysis.⁶⁸⁴ Barnes claims that Tertullian composed the Apology in 197 and that he “seeks throughout to make common cause with the cultured and educated classes of Carthage against the ignorant urban mob.”⁶⁸⁵ Such conclusions differ from the findings of Burrows who noticed aspects such as Tertullian’s reference to “your historians” (*commentarios uestros*, 5.3) who Burrows understands to be the Roman Tacitus.⁶⁸⁶ From such observations, Burrows concludes that a Roman audience was intended and he concludes,

Thus, Tertullian subtly inverts the argument against Christians by defining “justice” rather than blind obedience as the basis of Roman law. Unlike Justin’s argument, which contented itself with challenging the specific accusation against Christians, Tertullian answers the *nominis odium* (3.5) by launching his attack upon the very fiber of Roman legal practice insofar as it came to exert “...an unjust tyranny from the citadel” (4.4).⁶⁸⁷

Specific examples of Tertullian’s social identities and social identifications support Burrow’s findings.

Tertullian once again locates his rhetorical “Other” in the direct address to the audience. Unlike the *Ad nationes*, where only passing mention is made to the conductors of trials (1.2.2), the *Apologeticum* contains many addresses to “you, who are the governors of the Roman Empire” (*uobis*,

⁶⁸⁴ For recent survey of the arguments, see Dunn, “Rhetorical Structure,” 47-55, who agrees that the purpose of the work is the “cessation of persecution” (51); cf. Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 22-3, 34, and 37.

⁶⁸⁵ Barnes, “Pagan Perceptions,” 236.

⁶⁸⁶ “Christianity in the Roman Forum,” 215, ref. *Annals* 15.44. cf. Burrows comments (225) on *Apol.* 14.3 where Tertullian mocks Tacitus’ name.

⁶⁸⁷ “Christianity in the Roman Forum,” 217; ref. Justin, *1 Apologia* 3-4. cf. Burrows comments on the issue of the “mob” (n. 31): “We can only suggest at this point that Tertullian’s opposition to ‘the mob’ was one which struck at the heart of the Roman fear of anarchy, on any disintegration of the *stabilitas* which the law was meant to maintain”; ref. Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44, on “the crowd” and public affairs.

Romani imperii antistites, 1.1).⁶⁸⁸ Tertullian declares, “I shall first, in this matter of the laws grapple with you, as their chosen protectors” (*de legibus prius concurram uobiscum ut cum tutoribus legum*, 4.3, cf. 4.7-8), and he confronts directly “you [who] have restored... Serapis, now a Roman” and “...Bacchus, now an Italian” (*uos restititis... Serapidi iam Romano ...Baccho iam Italico*, 6.8-10).⁶⁸⁹ Whether Tertullian actually intended to speak directly to “ye excellent governors” (*boni praesides*, 30.7, 50.12) and to “ye who daily preside over the trials of prisoners” (*qui cottidie iudicandis custodiis praesidetis*, 44.2), or whether this is another rhetorical device which gives Tertullian a platform to defend his Christian community is disputable.⁶⁹⁰ More passages, however, strengthen the conclusion that Tertullian’s interlocutors are not only Roman officials in general, including provincial officials, but an audience located specifically in Rome.

Beyond the Roman officials addressed in the opening and closing of the treatise, Tertullian constructs the specific makeup of his audience as Roman throughout *Apologeticum*. As referenced above, he calls upon “your histories” (*commentarios uestros*, 5.3) and proceeds to explain: “Such as this have always been our persecutors – men unjust, impious and base, of whom even you yourselves have no good to say and the sufferers under whose sentences you have been wont to restore” (*Tales semper nobis insecutores*,

⁶⁸⁸ The translation is Souter’s; Thelwall translates the vocative without the pronoun of direct address: “Rulers of the Roman Empire.” cf. Justin, 2 *Apologia* 1, addressed to “Romans” [ὡς Ῥωμαῖοι {*Romani*}]. However, Wright, “Tertullian,” 1036, suggests “the magistrates of Carthage.”

⁶⁸⁹ In 4.3 *concurram* is in Oehler and the majority of manuscripts. Dekker’s follows the *Codex Fuldensis* to read *consistam*; see Dekker’s introduction for an explication of the different collections. The wording “now a Roman” is also from Souter; Thelwall misses Tertullian’s irony with “now a Roman diety... Bacchus, now a god of italy”; cf. Glover, “Serapis, Romanized... Bacchus, Italianate.”

⁶⁹⁰ Buck, “Justin Martyr’s Apologies,” 57, for homologous problem.

iniusti, impii, turpes, quos et ipsi damnare consuestis, a quibus damnatos restituere soliti estis, 5.4). After mocking the audience for not deifying Romans instead of Greeks (11.15-6), he claims, “you are the persons... who censured a certain Seneca” (*iidem estis, qui Senecam ...reprehendistis*, 12.6).⁶⁹¹ After making his case through various arguments, he declares, “I appeal to the inhabitants of Rome themselves, to the native population of the seven hills” (*Ipsos Quirites, ipsam uernaculam septem collium plebem comuenio*, 35.6). The stated audience, therefore, is depicted as non-Christian and, more specifically, Roman; something especially noteworthy when comparing this work with *Ad nationes*.

5.3 Social Identities in Comparison

Many passages provide examples where both works present similar arguments but the arrangement differs according to the stated audience. One such example is where Tertullian responds to the charge that Christians worship the sun. In *Ad nationes*, he turns the charge on his opponents, showing how their practices of taking a day of rest (*otium* 1.13.3) and celebrating purity (*cena pura*) are similar to Jewish rites (1.13.4). While mocking the audience’s gods (*diis uestris*, 1.13.4), Tertullian claims that “We are not far off from your Saturn and your days of rest” (*non longe a Saturno et sabbatis uestris sumus*, 1.13.5).⁶⁹² Tertullian makes no such application of

⁶⁹¹ The reading *reprehendistis* is from Oehler and the majority of manuscripts. Borleff, however, follows the *Codex Fuldensis* reading *probetis*.

⁶⁹² Note the importance of Saturn worship in the *interpretatio Romana* of indigenous gods by African new elites; see section 3.2.5, and Rives, *Religion*, 133. For commentary on this “mock-confession” contrasted with the same material in the *Apol.*, see John Nolland, “Do Romans observe Jewish customs, (Tertullian, *Ad nat* 1.13; *Apol.* 16),” *VC* 33 no 1 (1979), 1-11.

this practice in regards to his Roman outgroup in the *Apologeticum*. Instead, he assumes the outgroup would classify this practice as Persian (*ad Persas... deputabimur*, 16.9), and explains how there are some “who devote Saturday (Sabbath) to idleness and feasting, and who also deviate from the Jewish custom of which they are ignorant” (*qui diem Saturni otio et uictui decernunt exorbitantes et ipsi a Iudaico more, quem ignorant*, 16.11).⁶⁹³ Tertullian’s “Other” in *Apologeticum* requires a different presentation than the African new elites targeted in *Ad nationes*.

In the next paragraph of *Ad nationes*, Tertullian continues down the list of charges made against the Christians and answers the claim that Christians worship a donkey, an accusation discussed in chapter four as made by new elites of North Africa. In the *Ad nationes* Tertullian reminds the outgroup, “Not so long ago, a most abandoned wretch in that city of yours” (*Noua iam de deo nostro fama suggestit, et adeo nuper quidam perditissimus in ista ciuitate*, 1.14.1) mocked the Christians in a play. Carthage which is the new elite audience’s city (*ista ciuitate*) in this work, is described differently in the *Apologeticum*. There Tertullian gives a more elaborate explanation of the play to Romans who did not see the portrayal in “the city next to yours” (*in ista proxime ciuitate*, 16.12).⁶⁹⁴ The differing description of Carthage correlates to the “Other” constructed for each work: the *Ad nationes* addresses the new

⁶⁹³ The translation is Souter’s; Thelwall inserts: “those of you who devote...” which indicates a different “Other” than the Latin requires. For Roman awareness of the Sabbath, see Horace, *Satirae*. 1.9.69, “Today is the thirtieth Sabbath. Would you affront the circumcised Jew?” [*hodie tricesima sabbata: uin tu curtis Iudaeis oppedere?*]; Juvenal, *Satura*, “Some who have had a father who reveres the sabbath...” [*Quidam sortiti metuentem sabbata patrem*]; and Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 1.76, “...nor [let escape] the seventh day that the Syrian Jew holds sacred” [*Cultaque Iudaeo septima sacra Syro*].

⁶⁹⁴ Souter’s translation; Thelwall, “that great city”; cf. Glover, who only supplies “this city.” The word order in the manuscripts varies in the *Codex Fuldensis* which reads *ciuitate proxime*.

elites of Africa and the *Apologeticum* specifies a Roman audience.

Later in *Ad nationes* Tertullian answers the accusation of refusal to worship the emperor, which is said to make Christians “enemies of the people” (*hostes populi*, 1.17.3).⁶⁹⁵ Tertullian’s sardonic response declares, “Well, be it so; yet at the same time (it must not be forgotten, that) the emperors find enemies amongst you heathen” (*Ita uero sit, cum ex uobis nationibus*). Schneider comments on how the stated audience (*ex uobis*) remains the non-Christians, but more specifically, Tertullian uses *nationibus* in “ambivalence” in that his audience would likely have understood this in political – i.e. “provincials” – rather than religious – i.e. “heathens” – terms.⁶⁹⁶

Such an understanding of Tertullian’s response explains the next sentence, wherein Tertullian alludes to the emperors’ titles, such as *Parthicus*, *Medicus* and *Germanicus*, which are awarded to conquering emperors and by which, Tertullian explains, “the Roman people must see to it who they are amongst whom there still remain nations which are unsubdued and foreign to their rule” (*Romana gens uiderit, in quibus indomitae et extraneae nationes*).⁶⁹⁷ Before alluding to the revolt of Albinus, Tertullian then declares of the African new elites, “But, at all events, you are of us [i.e. “us Africans”], and yet you conspire against us [i.e. the same “us” who are also Christians]”

⁶⁹⁵ See discussion in Rankin, “Tertullian,” 204-16. Schneider, *Le premier livre*, 288, comments on how only the emperor or the senate could declare someone guilty of treason, a right Septimius Severus recently enacted at this time against his enemies; ref. Lact. *Mort.* 14.2.

⁶⁹⁶ Schneider, *Le premier livre*, 289, “Le sophisme du raisonnement (ou son habilité) consiste à confondre le point de vue national... et le point de vue religieux....”

⁶⁹⁷ For the title *Parthicus*, see *Scriptores historiae augustae, Seuerus*, 9, “For this exploit [against Pescennius], after [Septimius Severus] returned home, he was given a triumph and the names Arabicus, Adiabenicus and Parthicus. He refused the triumph, however, lest he seem to triumph for a victory over Romans; and he declined the name Parthicus lest he hurt the Parthians’ feelings.” [*atque ob hoc reuersus triumpho delato appellatus est Arabicus Adiabenicus Parthicus. Sed triumphum respuit, ne uideretur de ciuili triumphare uictoria. Excusauit et Parthicum nomen, ne Parthos lacesseret*].

(*Vos tamen de nostris aduersus nostros conspiratis!*, 1.17.4). This interpretation of Tertullian's argument finds support in the comparison with the parallel passage in the *Apologeticum*.

In the *Apologeticum* when Tertullian answers the charge that Christians are "public enemies" (*publici hostes*, 35.1) because they refuse to worship the emperor, he declares that the emperor's enemies – namely, supporters of Cassius, Niger and Albinus (*Cassii et Nigri et Albini*, 35.9) – "were Romans; that is they were not Christians" (*de Romanis... id est de non Christianis*).⁶⁹⁸ Here, Tertullian's audience is stated to be the Romans, and he responds with the same tactic as in the *Ad nationes* passage, to return the charge on those non-Christian outsiders, but in this instance outsiders are not African new elites (*nationibus*) who can be rhetorically incorporated under a different social identity; they are Romans.

Another example of Tertullian's tailoring his material to his audience is his treatment of Aeneas. In the second book of *Ad nationes* Tertullian ridicules the plethora of gods found among the Romans and alludes to the *fasces*, a symbol of Roman power, to attack the new elites' acceptance of Romanization: "another forest must be felled" (*immo silua caedenda*, 2.9.2).⁶⁹⁹ Tertullian then extends a long attack on the Roman progenitor,

⁶⁹⁸ Note how Tertullian is capable of identifying non-Christians specifically, calling into question the common translation of *nationibus* as "heathen." For the import of these references to Albinus and Niger for dating these works, see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 33.

⁶⁹⁹ The Roman *fasces* or bundle of rods with a protruding axe head symbolized the power and authority of the Roman officials; e.g. Tacitus, *Annals* 3.2, where the soldiers bore the ashes of the fallen Germanicus with *fasces* proceeding through every colony; and Livy 2.7.7, where a Roman official who had become suspect by the "mob" [*uolgi*] entered a council with "fasces lowered" [*submissis facibus*], to which Livy adds, "It was a welcome spectacle to the multitude when they beheld the emblems of authority there abased before them in acknowledgment that the people's majesty and power were superior to the consul's" [*Gratum id multitudini spectaculum fuit, submissa sibi esse imperii insignia confessionemque factam populi quam consulis maiestatem uimque maiorem esse*]. cf. *Apol.* 25.7, *De an.* 30.4 and *De cor.* 13.1-3, where the *fasces* are alluded to in anti-Roman rhetoric.

Their fond father Aeneas, in whom they believed, was never glorious, and was felled with a stone – a vulgar weapon, to pelt a dog withal, inflicting a wound no less ignoble! But this Aeneas turns out a traitor to his country; yes, quite as much as Antenor. And if they will not believe this to be true of him, he at any rate deserted his companions when his country was in flames, and must be held inferior to that woman of Carthage, who, when her husband Hasdrubal supplicated the enemy with the mild pusillanimity of our Aeneas, refused to accompany him, but hurrying her children along with her, disdained to take her beautiful self and father's noble heart into exile, but plunged into the flames of the burning Carthage, as if rushing into the embraces of her (dear but) ruined country. Is he "pious Aeneas" for (rescuing) his young only son and decrepit old father, but deserting Priam and Astyanax? But the Romans ought rather to detest him; for in defence of their princes and their royal house, they surrender even children and wives, and every dearest pledge.⁷⁰⁰

When Tertullian discusses the sacrificing of children among his own ingroup in *Apologeticum*, a charge often aimed at the Christians, Tertullian again alludes to Aeneas.

In the *Apologeticum*, Tertullian feels the need to explain to the audience facts about his own social context. "In Africa" (*Africam*) Tertullian reports, "the soldiers of our country still can testify (*teste militia patriae nostrae*, 9.2) that "babes were sacrificed publicly to Saturn" (*Infantes penes... Saturno immolabantur*).⁷⁰¹ After citing other non-Christian examples of child-sacrifice, Tertullian subtly returns the charge to the non-African audience, who live "in that most religious city of the pious descendants of

⁷⁰⁰ *Ad nat.* 2.9.12-4: *Patrem Indigentem Aenean crediderunt, militem numquam gloriosum, lapide debilitatum. Quod telum quantum uolgare atque caninum, tanto ignobile uolnus. Sed et proditor patriae Aeneas inuenitur, tam Aeneas quam Antenor. Ac si hoc uerum nolunt, Aeneas certe patria flagrante dereliquit socios, feminae Punicae subiciendus, quae maritum Hasdrubalem, Aeneae timiditate in his supplicansem hosti, non comitata, raptis secum filiis formam et patrem sibi habere non in fugam sapit, sed in ignes ardentis Carthaginis ut in amplexus patriae pereuntis incubuit. Pius Aeneas ob unicum puerum et decrepitem senem Priamo et Astyanacte destitutus? Atquin Romanis magis detestandus, qui pro salute principum et domus eorum aduersus liberos et coniuges et omne pignus suum deierant.* For more on Hasdrubal's wife, another symbolic heroine of Carthaginian resistance to Rome, see section 9.2.

⁷⁰¹ For the textual variants, see the discussion in section 1.2.3.

Aeneas" (*in illa religiosissima urbe Aeneadarum piorum*, 9.5).⁷⁰² In this openly sardonic reference to Aeneas, there is no extended ridicule of his character like that found in *Ad nationes* because the difference in audience inhibits the jest in the *Apologeticum* wherein the audience would not laugh along with Tertullian, as would the African new elites addressed in *Ad nationes*.

One more example of contrasting usage of similar material in both *Ad nationes* and *Apologeticum* is found in Tertullian's treatment of the origin of the gods, starting with Saturn. In a long explanation of the legend of Saturn's origin, Tertullian explains in *Ad nationes* part of the local confusion regarding how "they suppose" (*deducunt*) Saturn is known as both Time (*Χρονος*) and Crop-bearer (*sationibus* as a cognate of *Saturnus*, 2.12.17-8). In mocking disbelief at the new elites, he retorts, "I wish that you would explain this metaphorical statement" (*Quae, oro, huius translationis ratio? Nempe uelim exponas*, 2.12.20). Tertullian then cites accounts of Saturn settling on the hill in Italy which came to be called by his name, as did all of Italy, adding, "Such is the testimony derived from that country which is now the mistress of the world" (*tali teste terra, quae nunc dominatur orbi*, 2.12.29). No such reference is given to Italy in the *Apologeticum* where Tertullian also explains Saturn's origin (10.6-8). There, the account repeats almost verbatim, but without the sentence quoted above. Instead, Tertullian argues in categories of binary opposition natural to Roman thinking: "Shall I now, therefore, go over [the gods] one by one, so numerous and so various as they are, new and old, barbarian and Graecian, Roman and foreign, captive and adopted, private and

⁷⁰² See Rives, "Tertullian."

common, male and female, rural and urban, naval and military?" (*Nunc ergo per singulos decurram, tot ac tantos, novos ueteres, barbaros Graecos, Romanos peregrinos, captiuos adoptiuos, proprios communes, masculos feminas, rusticos urbanos, nauticos militares?*, 10.5).⁷⁰³ In an earlier section of *Ad nationes*, Tertullian supplies a similar list, but for a non-Roman context:

For how many, and indeed what, gods shall I bring forward? Shall it be the greater ones, or the lesser? The old ones, or the novel? The male, or the female? The unmarried, or such as are joined in wedlock? The clever, or the unskilful? The rustic or the town ones? The national or the foreign? For the truth is, there are so many families, so many nations, which require a catalogue (of gods), that they cannot possibly be examined, or distinguished, or described.⁷⁰⁴

Tertullian shaped his rhetoric specifically for the target audience in each treatise so as to be more palatable and persuasive.

Focusing on social identities in the two examples of Tertullian's works explored above illustrates some of the possible identities from which he can write. In both instances the author writes predominantly from the perspective of a Christian. The differing aims and audiences of the two treatises, however, indicate more specifically how Tertullian perceives himself and outsiders. In *Ad nationes* Tertullian writes to new elites of North Africa, thereby placing himself in a distinct group. By comparing the work with his *Apologeticum*, in which Tertullian constructs his identity as separate from Romans and as one

⁷⁰³ Thelwall's commas have been modified for consistency: whereas he only place "and" between four comparisons ("new and old, ... male and female, rural and urban, naval and military"), Dekker's punctuations indicate the binary nature of each comparison in the text. On "captive and adopted," which refer to provincial gods legally incorporated by Rome, see Georg Wissowa, "The Historical Development of Roman Religion: An Overview," in *Roman Religion*, ed. Ando, trans. Christopher Barnes, 337-8; originally published as *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, 2nd ed., (Munich: Beck, [1912]1971); Tertullian refers to such phenomenon elsewhere: *Adu. Marc.* 1.18; *Ad nat.* 1.10; and *Apol.* 5.1.

⁷⁰⁴ 2.12.2-3: *Quot deos et quos utique producam? Maiores an et mi<nores? uel>eres an et nouicios? mares an et feminas? caelibes an et le<gitime nupto>s? artifices an et inertes? rusticos an et urbanos? ciues an et pe<regri>nos? Tot enim familiae, tot nationes census bona fide quaerunt, ut dispici et distingui describique non possint.*

who claimed Africa as his homeland (*patria*), one can understand Tertullian to retain for himself multiple identities, including Christian, non-Roman and African. Tertullian, furthermore, can be interpreted from this initial analysis as one who had the education and ability to be considered a new elite but preferred, at least in these two examples, to be classified in a separate category. While some would insist on Tertullian's Christian identity as primary, it is suggested here that identities are fluid, discursive and manifold, and therefore there is an encounter in him of Africinity and Christianity.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁵ As Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 481, finds in Tertullian "la rencontre, en lui, de l'Antiquité et du christianisme."

CHAPTER SIX

KINSHIP IDENTITIES AND TERTULLIAN

Although Tertullian leaves few indications about his own kin, his relationship to his wife provides material for two of his works, *Ad uxorem* 1 and 2. In reviewing the argument of the two works, one notes the predominance of not only the subject of marriage and widowhood but also the multiplicity of kinship terminology used throughout the tracts. *Ad uxorem* 1 and 2 provide, therefore, a case study for kinship in Tertullian in which one can explore – at least partially – his understanding of kin and kinship networks.

6.1 Kinship in *Ad uxorem* 1

From the initial sentence of *Ad uxorem* 1 Tertullian portrays the discussion in terms of a last will and testament to his wife which is written “to provide for the course which you must pursue after my departure from the world, if I shall be called before you; (and) to entrust to your honour the observance of the provision” (*quid tibi sectandum sit post discessum de saeculo meum, si prior te fuero uocatus, iam hinc prouidere, ut prouisum obserues, mandare fidei tuae*, 1.1.1). The direct address to his *conserui* (1.1.1; cf. 2.1.1), however, seems to be a rhetorical device, one which Tertullian uses to speak to “posterity” (*posteritati*, 1.1.2), which does not seem to imply physical children (1.5), but, as Tertullian concedes, could apply to “you, or to any other woman whatever who pertains to God” (*tibi uel cuicumque alii*

feminae ad Deum pertinenti, 1.1.6).⁷⁰⁶ The specific content of his will is the desire that his “wife” (audience?) “after our departure, renounce nuptials” (*post excessum nostrum renunties nuptiis*, 1.1.4). Once the premise has been set forth, Tertullian supplements his will with arguments for why women should value the practice of *uniuira* (1.7.4).

Tertullian first clarifies that his request, *renunties nuptiis*, has no benefit for him personally, for “no restoration of marriage is promised in the day of the resurrection” (*nulla restitutio nuptiarum in diem resurrectionis repromittitur*, 1.1.4; ref. Lu. 20:36). He then gives a biblical-historical account of marriage first in Adam and Eve (1.2.1), followed by polygamy in the patriarchs (1.2.2), which was superceded by the Law (1.2.3), which in turn was “lopped off” (*amputari*) in Christ’s “spiritual circumcision” (*circumcisionem ...spiritalem*). This line of reasoning sets up Tertullian’s next (chrono-)logical step of agreeing with the Apostle Paul “who permits marrying indeed, but prefers abstinence” (*permittente quidem nubere, sed abstinentiam praeferente*, 1.3.2, ref. 1 Cor. 7). From this biblical account of marriage, Tertullian defends the ideals of virginity and *uniuira*.⁷⁰⁷

Several objections face Tertullian’s argument, and he, therefore, meets each of them so as to convince his wife/audience not to remarry. Among these

⁷⁰⁶ Dunn, *Tertullian*, 4. However, Hoffman, *The Status*, 161, assumes the letter is simply to his wife. Additionally, Tertullian implies that he is writing from an early period in their marriage (*iam hinc*, 1.1.1, 1.8.5). On *conserui*, which “within slave society the terms ‘conservus’ and ‘collibertus’ undoubtedly had all the force of kinship designations,” see Flory, “Family in *Familia*,” 89, and discussion above; Nathan, *The Family*, 46, interprets Tertullian’s use of this title to indicate that “a wife’s function was to serve her husband to the best of her ability, preferably in his attempt to uphold the tenets of their faith. The husband’s rule, it may be inferred, was final, both in the matters of the marriage itself and as it pertained to the rest of the family.”

⁷⁰⁷ These ideals do not seem to be identical with the “celibacy” Montanus, Prisc(ill)a and Maximilla were accused. Trevett, “Gender,” 16, claims Eusebius (ref. *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.18.3) documents how Prisc(ill)a and Maximilla left their husbands and rejects the testimony (*Historia ecclesiastica* 5.18.2) that Montanus sanctioned marriage annulment.

objections are the claims that “the flesh is weak” (*carnem ... infirmam*, 1.4.1; ref. Mt. 26:41), that is a “fleshly concupiscence” (*concupiscentia carnis*, 1.4.2; cf. 1.4.3-5), and in turn a “worldly concupiscence” (*concupiscentia saeculi*, 1.4.2; cf. 1.4.6-7). After answering each of these objections, Tertullian provides examples from non-Christian religious practice where virgins and widows enact the ideals of continence (*continentia*, 1.6.5). Finally, Tertullian argues that *uniuira* is the “will of God” (*Dei uoluntate*, 1.7.1), “even if you do not ‘sin’ in re-marrying” (*etsi non delinquas remubendo*, 1.7.3), because of the “the honours which widowhood enjoys in the sight of God” (*de uiduitatis honoribus apud Deum*, 1.8.1, ref. Is. 1:17-18).⁷⁰⁸

In book one, Tertullian writes didactically, arguing for the proper course of action for a Christian widow. He gives no indication that there is a person or party with whom he is disputing. Instead, Tertullian contrasts the Christian understanding of *uniuira* with the ideals of “the world” (*saecula*). The first sense in which Tertullian employs the concept refers to the sphere of departure for the Christians. He explains what his wife should do after his “departure from the world” (*discessum de saeculo meum* (1.1.1), which applies to all “Christians, after their departure from the world” (*Christianis saeculo digressis*, 1.1.4; cf. 1.7.1). The term has both spatial and temporal meanings, thus Tertullian speaks of the “age of ages” (*saecula saeculorum*, 1.1.3) and “the last days of the (Jewish) age” (*in extremitatibus saeculi*, 1.2.4).

For Tertullian the spatio-temporal *saecula* generally includes the realm of ungodliness taken from biblical usage (e.g. 1.5.4; ref. 1 Cor. 10:11). Thus, he descriptively deems it “this most wicked world” (*iniquissimo isto saeculo*,

⁷⁰⁸ cf. 1.7.1-4; ref. 1 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:6; and 1 Tim. 5:9-10.

1.5.1), which marks a turn in the usage of *saeculo* in this treatise: from merely the sphere of departure and from the stronger, yet still non-specific, adjective, such as “worldly concupiscence” (*saecularis concupiscentia*, 1.4.2, 1.4.6, 1.5.3, 1.5.4), to the realm of wickedness explicitly ruled by Satan (*satanae*, 1.6.3) himself. The contrast between the Christian understanding of *uniuira* and that of the *saecula* invokes specific examples from “numbers of Gentile women” (*pleraeque gentilium feminarum*, 1.6.1; cf. 1.5.2, 1.6.3), namely,

At Rome, for instance, they who have to do with the type of that “inextinguishable fire,” keeping watch over the omens of their own (future) penalty, in company with the (old) dragon himself, are appointed on the ground of *virginity*. To the Achaean Juno, at the town Aegium, a *virgin* is allotted; and the (priestesses) who rave at Delphi know not marriage. Moreover, we know that widows minister to the African Ceres.⁷⁰⁹

Although Tertullian lists examples from Greece and Africa to illustrate the practice among many “gentiles,” his Roman example seems to be the most important, for he returns to the capitol for further elaboration claiming that in Rome “the king of heathendom, the chief pontiff” (*Regem saeculi, pontificem maximum*, 1.7.5) reigns.⁷¹⁰

By interpreting Tertullian’s contrast of Christian *uniuira* with non-Christian or “gentile” practice as a contrast with Roman practice specifically one can better appreciate his comments on “worldly concupiscence”

⁷⁰⁹ 1.6.3-4: *Romae quidem quae ignis illius inextinguibilis imaginem tractant, auspicia poenae suae cum ipso dracone curantes, de uirginitate censentur. Achaicae Junoni apud Aegium oppidum uirgo sortitur, et quae Delphis insaniunt nubere nesciunt. Ceterum uiduas Africanae Cereri adsistere scimus.* On the rest of this quote, where the “widows” are said to “withdraw from their still living husbands” (*in uita uiris ... decedunt*), see Charlotte Methuen, “The ‘Virgin Widow’: A Problematic Social Role for the Early Church?” *HTR* 90 (3 1997), 286; cf. Tertullian’s rebuke of a “virgin widow” (*uirgo uidua*) in *De uirg. uel.* 9.

⁷¹⁰ Note that Tertullian seems to be distinguishing the “Achaean Juno” from the Carthaginian goddess. Moreover, by emphasizing “African Ceres” his audience may understand the Libyan goddess which has undergone *interpretatio Romana*.

(*saecularis concupiscentia*).⁷¹¹ Tertullian describes it as “anxiety for posterity, and the bitter, bitter pleasure of children” (*sollicitudine posteritatis et liberorum amarissima uoluptate*, 1.5.1), both of which are values of the Roman *familia*.⁷¹² On this passage Nathan comments, “Tertullian was the first to thoroughly castigate the Roman ideal of wedded unions as a means to produce children. He rejected the notion of posterity and worldly ambitions as reasons for begetting offspring. ...This was the clearest rejection of traditional Roman marriages that had yet been voiced. ...A second marriage was tantamount to adultery, since it was, in Tertullian’s eyes, associated with attraction of a worldly sort.”⁷¹³ Tertullian elaborates on the motive to remarry, namely “glory, cupidity, ambition, want of sufficiency” (*gloriam, cupiditatem, ambitionem, insufficientiam*, 1.4.6), which “trumps up the ‘necessity’ for marrying” (*necessitatem nubendi subornat*). In other words, the Christian understanding of *uniuira* stands in opposition to the Roman values of *familia*.

Although *uniuira* can be found among “Gentile” religions, even Roman priests and priestesses, this is from

⁷¹¹ See Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 130, for some of these themes in the classical rhetorical schools.

⁷¹² Dunn, *Tertullian*, 5, doubts this to be hyperbolic. cf. Tertullian’s comments in *De mon.* 16.5-6, “What if a man thinks on posterity, with thoughts like the eyes of Lot’s wife; so that a man is to make the fact that from his former marriage he has had no children a reason for repeating marriage? A Christian, forsooth, will seek heirs, disinherited as he is from the entire world! He has ‘brethren’; he has the Church as his mother. The case is different if men believe that, at the bar of Christ as well (as of Rome), action is taken on the principle of the Julian laws; and imagine that the unmarried and childless cannot receive their portion in full, in accordance with the testament of God” [*Quid, si de posteritate quis cogitet isdem animis quibus oculis uxor Loth, ut ideo quis repetat matrimonium, quia de priore liberos non habuit? Heredes scilicet Christianus quaeret, saeculi totius exheres: habet fratres, habet ecclesiam matrem. Aliud est, si et apud Christum legibus Iulii agi credunt et existimant caelibes et orbos ex testamento dei solidum capere non posse.*] Tertullian’s discussion of children is understood to be in response to the Roman ideal of children more than simply a “Judeo-Christian tradition”; however, see Suzanne Heine, *Women and Early Christianity*, (London: SCM Press, 1987), 29.

⁷¹³ *The Family*, 44.

the devil given to his servants, and he is heard! He challenges, forsooth, God's servants, by the continence of his own, as if on equal terms! Continent are even the priests of hell! For he has found a way to ruin men, even in good pursuits; and with him it makes no difference to slay some by voluptuousness, some by continence.⁷¹⁴

The Christian, according to Tertullian, must reject such understandings of *familia* and marriage, and she must embrace the practice "which scorns the world" (*quae saeculum spernit*, 1.8.3). Tertullian's use of kinship, especially marriage, in book one of *Ad uxorem* illustrates the centrality in his thought of Rome as symbolizing all things "gentile" which the "believers" (*fidelibus*, 1.4.7) of his Carthaginian congregation must reject.

Beyond epitomizing Rome as the realm of iniquity, Tertullian's use of kinship also presupposes an inherent connection between his understandings of kinship and class. In book one Tertullian connects widow's "marriage" to the Lord (*dominus*, 1.4.4, *passim*) with the economic implications of marriage in society at large. Christian widows are "wedded to God" (*Deo nubere*, 1.4.4), and, to continue the analogy, to God "they assign their prayers as dowries" (*Orationes suas uelut dotes ... assignant*), and in so doing, they "are already counted as belonging to the angelic family" (*de familia angelica deputantur*).

The image of Christian widows transferring "dowries" to their new *dominus* stands in stark contrast to those of the "world" (*saeculorum*, 1.4.6) motivated by *gloriam* and *ambitionem* (1.4.6), who, upon entering into second marriages, wish "to lord it, (namely,) in another's family; to roost on another's wealth; to extort splendour

⁷¹⁴ 1.6.5: *diabolus suis praecipit, et auditur. Prouocat nimirum Dei seruos continentia suorum quasi ex aequo: continent etiam gehennae sacerdotes. Nam inuenit,*

from another's store, to lavish expenditure which you do not feel!" (*dominari in aliena familia, alienis opibus incubare, cultum de alieno extorquere, sumptum quem non sentias, caedere*). Moreover, God provides for the needs of "his servants" (*seruorum suorum*, 1.4.7), who do not desire "ponderous necklaces, not burdensome garments, not Gallic mules nor German bearers, which all add lustre to the glory of nuptial" (*monilium pondera, non uestium taedia, non Gallicos mulos, nec Germanicos baiulos, quae nuptiarum gloriam accendant*). As recent anthropologists such as Schneider have found, isolating kinship from economics and other analytical categories artificially separates the informants' categories of meaning. In Tertullian, kinship and class coexist in thought and practice, because marriage includes dowries, wealth and the inheritance of one's *familia*.

6.2 Kinship in *Ad uxorem 2*

In book two, which Tertullian apparently wrote soon (*proxime*, 2.1.1) after *Ad uxorem 1*, the voice of the author again speaks directly to his "best beloved" (*dilectissima*) wife. Although Tertullian still emphasizes the preference for *uniuira* (2.1.2), he now "turns to the next best advice" (*ad secunda consilia*, 2.1.1): remarriage "in the Lord" (*in Domino*, 2.1.1), as opposed to, what Nathan called, "mixed marriages."⁷¹⁵ Allegedly, "in these days a certain woman" (*quaedam istis diebus*, 2.2.1) has married outside of the faith; therefore, in order that none may "deny that any formal warning has been given them" (*negabunt sibi ...demuntiatum*, 2.8.2) the author expositis

quomodo homines etiam in boni sectationibus perderet, et nihil apud eum refert, alios luxuria alios continentia occidere.

“that utterance of the Apostle” (*apostoli uox illa*, 2.8.9) from 1 Corinthians chapter seven in fuller detail.⁷¹⁶

The argument throughout book two deals with the problems of marrying a non-Christian, and so Tertullian begins by clarifying the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthian congregation, saying that “there is no scripture which holds forth a licence of this deed” (*nulla scriptura eius facti licentiam profert*, 2.2.1). Theologically, such marriages harm, not only the body of the woman, but the flesh and “blood of God. In hurting this flesh of ours, therefore, we hurt Him directly” (*sanguine Dei. Laedentes igitur carnem istam, eum laedimus de proximo*, 2.3.1). Spiritually, such marriages harm one’s own “faith [which] undergoes a daily process of obliteration by unbelieving intercourse” (*obliterari quotidie fidem commercio infideli*, 2.3.3). Practically, the Christian would be unable to “discharge her duties” (*officia pendat*, 2.4.1) both to her husband and to God. Even tolerant husbands cause problems for the Christian woman eventually because of the suspicion and secrecy between the Christian and non-Christian (2.5). Ritually, “on all the memorial days of demons, [and] at all solemnities of kings” (*illos omnibus honoribus daemonum, omnibus sollempnibus regum*, 2.6.1) the spouse of a non-Christian will participate in idolatry, and in so doing she will “recognize a prejudgment of her own damnation” (*praeiudicium damnationis suae agnoscet*).⁷¹⁷ Therefore, the Apostle Paul correctly distinguishes between

⁷¹⁵ *The Family*, 145.

⁷¹⁶ However, *Ad ux.* 2.3.2 could be read to indicate that at least one man was either marrying a non-Christian woman or supporting such marriages: “What did that man mean who said that ‘to wed a “stranger” was indeed a sin, but a very small one?’” [*Quid sibi uoluit ille, qui dixit delictum quidem esse extraneo nubere, sed minimum... ?*]

⁷¹⁷ Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity*, 145, says this is because the Christian wife “inevitably becomes a slave of her husband and thus must act as a pagan to be an obedient wife.”

those already married before conversion and Christians who marry outside of the faith (2.7). The final point of his argument, wherein Tertullian contrasts Christian marriage practices with those of non-Christian (2.8.1-5), concludes that the latter cannot compare to “the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements” (*felicitatem eius matrimonii, quod ecclesia conciliat*, 2.8.6).⁷¹⁸

In book two of *Ad uxorem* a polemic replaces the didactic nature of book one, and, moreover, where the argument juxtaposed the *familia* of God with that of the *saecula* in book one, here Tertullian must speak more in terms of Christians and gentiles. The sixteen times Tertullian refers to “gentile matrimony” (*matrimonio gentili*) or some variant, such as a gentile husband, in contrast to the twice used *saecula* in book two, in that marriage to “unbelievers” (*infidelibus*, 2.2.2) is problematic “to a Christian” (*Christiano*), indicates the importance of the term.⁷¹⁹

When Tertullian does invoke *saecula* in book two, however, he again indicates no disconnect between kinship and class. The spiritual harm arising from Christians marrying gentiles includes the *concupiscentia saeculorum* referenced in book one: “For in obeying a Gentile she will carry out Gentile practices – personal attractiveness, dressing of the head, worldly elegancies, baser blandishments” (*Gentilem enim obseruando gentilia exhibebit: formam, extructionem, munditias saeculares, blanditias turpiores*, 2.3.4). In his final

⁷¹⁸ On the bishop’s role in blessing a marriage, see Tert., *De mon.* 11.1; and *De pud.* 4.4.

⁷¹⁹ For *gentilium* and variants in book two, see 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.6, 2.2.7(2x), 2.2.9, 2.3.1, 2.3.4(3x), 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.7.1, 2.7.2(2x), 2.8.2 and 2.8.4. Compare this usage with book one, where *gentilium* only occurs in 1.5.2, 1.6.1 and 1.6.3, but *saecula* occurs sixteen times: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 (2x), 1.1.4, 1.2.1, 1.2.4, 1.4.2, 1.4.6, 1.5.1, 1.5.3, 1.5.4 (2x), 1.7.1, 1.7.5 and 1.8.3. *Nationes* occurs only once in each work (1.7.5 and 2.8.1).

remarks, Tertullian returns to this theme accusing any who marry gentiles as seeking “the concupiscences of worldly joys” (*concupiscentias saecularium gaudiorum*, 2.8.2), which, he explains,

is chiefly found among the wealthier; for the more any is rich, and inflated with the name of “matron,” the more capacious house does she require for her burdens, as it were a field wherein ambition may run its course. ... [From where can such a one seek] a husband apt for maintaining their sedan, and their mules, and their hair-curlers of outlandish stature?⁷²⁰

The salience of the kinship/status connection in Tertullian becomes especially observable when taking account of his use of kinship imagery.⁷²¹

Even apart from the use of *concupiscentia saeculorum*, Tertullian often attacks wealth. As proof that non-Christian husbands disrupt the practices of the Christian wife, Tertullian argues that when the woman wishes to be “visiting the brethren” (*uisitandorum fratrum*, 2.4.1-2) the husband insists on taking care of “family business” (*familiae occupatio*), especially when the visitation involves crossing lines of class or status, that is “indeed to all the poorer cottages” (*quidem pauperiora quaeque tuguria*).⁷²² Tertullian’s framework is the clash between the Christian *domus*, wherein the “Lord’s Supper” (*conuiuium dominicum*, 2.4.2) is celebrated and “brethren” (*fratrum*, 2.4.3) may “kiss” (*osculum*), and the “alien home” (*aliena domo*, 2.4.3), which

⁷²⁰ 2.8.2: *quidem plurimum in lautioribus deprehensum est. Nam quanto diues aliqua est et matronae nomine inflata, tanto capaciorem domum oneribus suis requirit, ut campum in quo ambitio decurrat, ... maritum petant idoneum exhibendae sellae et mulabus et cinerariis peregrinae proceritatis.*

⁷²¹ MacDonald, “The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity,” in *Early Christian Families in Context*, ed. Balch and Osiek, 179.

⁷²² For *frater* in *Ad ux.*, see 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 2.4.2(2x), 2.4.3, 2.8.7, where the usage seems to be borrowed from the Apostle Paul (see esp. 1 Cor. 7:24). Contrast this usage with the single occurrence in book one, where the “seven brothers” (*septem fratribus*, 1.1.5) who married one woman of Lu. 20:27-40 are referenced.

has no “guestchamber” (*hospitium*) for a “brother” (*frater*).⁷²³ Therefore, Tertullian elevates the risks of *matrimonium gentilie* by suggesting that the husband may use the “dowries” (*dotes*, 1.5.4) as blackmail, resulting in either “the extortion of their property, or else by the loss of their faith” (*aut re excruciatam aut fide perditam*). In discussing “marriage of this kind” (*huiusmodi matrimonium*, 2.7.3), which “can in no case be carried to a prosperous end” (*qua non dubites nullum ... prospere decurri*), Tertullian transitions to his final point of comparison between Christian and non-Christian households.

In the closing lines of book two Tertullian explicates the comparisons of *domus* that will culminate all he has said heretofore.⁷²⁴ He describes how “even among the nations” (*etiam penes nationes*, 2.8.1) the heads of house, or “strictest lords” (*seuerissimi ... domini*), prohibit “their own slaves from marrying out of their house” (*seruis suis foras nubere*) as a means of protecting the household “goods” (*dominica*). Moreover, Tertullian invokes the right of the *dominus* to sell “such women” (*quae*) at large, for they “may be claimed as slaves” (*seruituti uindicandas*). The practice correlates, according to Tertullian, with Christian servants who “conjoin themselves with

⁷²³ For comments on the familial kiss mentioned here by Tertullian, see Penn, “Performing Family,” 156 and 162; cf. Penn’s comments (159) on how husbands kissed their wives to check their breath for wine, a practice mocked by Tertullian, *Apol.* 6.4: “Under Romulus indeed one who had touched wine was put to death with impunity by her husband Metennius. For the same reason they were also even obliged to offer kisses to their kinsfolk, that they might be judged by their breath. Where is now that happiness of married life so successful in point of morals at any rate, the result of which was that for about six hundred years after the foundation of Rome a writing of divorce was unknown? But now in the case of women every part of the body is weighted with gold, no kiss is free owing to wine, and divorce is now the object of prayer, as the natural fruit of marriage” [*sub Romulo vero quae vinum attigerat impune a Metennio marito trucidata sit. Idcirco et oscula propinquis offerre etiam necessitas erat, ut spiritu iudicarentur. Ubi est illa felicitas matrimoniorum de moribus utique prosperata, qua[e] per annos ferme sescentos ab urbe condita nulla repudium domus scripsit? At nunc in feminis prae auro nullum leve est membrum, prae vino nullum liberum est osculum, repudium vero iam et votum est, quasi matrimonii fructus*]. cf. Tert., *De prae. haer.* 41, where only the baptized kiss.

⁷²⁴ A slightly different understanding from Nathan, *The Family*, 46, who says, “But Tertullian was not concerned with the *domus*. He was concerned with fidelity and conduct.”

the devil's slaves" (*diaboli seruos sibi coniugant*, 2.8.2).⁷²⁵ Likewise, in reference to the *concupiscentia saeculorum* and those seeking *ambitio*, "the churches look paltry" (*sordent ... ecclesia*, 2.8.3) and no "rich man" (*diues*) is available in the "house of God" (*domo Dei*) but one may only be attained "from the devil" (*a diabolo*).

Tertullian counters such motives – ironically – with some of "the examples of Gentiles" (*gentilium exempla*, 2.8.4) who are not ashamed to marry "the ignoble and the mean" (*ignobilibus et mediocribus*) including "their own slaves and freedmen" (*libere et seruis suis*).

Spiritually/economically/domestically, marriages to "the poor whose is the kingdom of heaven" (*pauperum sunt regna caelorum*, 2.8.5) benefit the woman, for "she will be dowried" (*dotabitur*) – ultimately – by "God" (*in Deo*). The analogy is then completed with the imagery of a wedding ceremony:

Whence are we to find (words) enough fully to tell the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements, and the oblation confirms, and the benediction signs and seals; (which) angels carry back the news of (to heaven), (which) the Father holds for ratified? For even on earth children do not rightly and lawfully wed without their fathers' consent.⁷²⁶

Regarding this passage – one of the first references to any formal ceremony in

⁷²⁵ cf. a non-Christian husband as a "servant of the devil" [*diaboli seruum*, 2.4.1]. For Christians as *serui* of God, see 1.4.2, 1.4.7, 1.5.1, 1.5.3, 1.6.5 and 2.8.7; cf. the Christian spouse as a *conserua*, in 1.1.1, 1.8.5, 2.1.1 and 2.8.7; for the verb, see 1.7.2, 2.1.2 and the quotation, "serve two lords" [*duobus dominis seruire*, 2.3.4]; ref. Mt. 6:24/Lu. 16:13. In addition, a Christian woman is to be a "handmaid of God" [*Dei ancilla*, 2.6.1]. On *serui* and *conserui*, see Flory, "Family in familia," 89.

⁷²⁶ 2.8.6: *Vnde sufficiamus ad enarrandam felicitatem eius matrimonii, quod ecclesia conciliat et confirmat oblatio et obsignat benedictio, angeli renuntiant, pater rato habet? Nam nec in terris filii sine consensu patrum rite et iure nubunt.* For other mentions of the ceremony by Tertullian, see *De idol.* 16.3, for the wedding ring; *De cor.* 13.4, for the prohibition to wear crowns during the ceremony; *De uirg. uel.* 12.1 and *De or.* 22.4, for the kiss of the bride and groom – which Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 147–53, disputes as a common practice. cf. discussion in Hunter, "Augustine," 89; and *Ad ux.* 2.3.1 and *De uirg. uel.* 12.1 for the marriage contract.

Christian writing, David G. Hunter warns, “We should not assume that the parallels Tertullian drew between Roman and Christian marriage practices should be taken literally. In *Ad uxorem* 2.8 Tertullian certainly wished to contrast a marriage between Christians with a marriage between a Christian and a pagan, but it is far from clear that he was describing a specifically Christian ritual of marriage.”⁷²⁷ Tertullian allows Christian marriages to be analogous to “gentile,” or Roman, marriages, but simultaneously stresses the dissimilarity.

The North African theologian enconces his argument of marriage within the wider discourse on the *domus*, which permeate familial, economic, religious and political spheres. In order to further explore Tertullian’s understanding of his identities and the identities of his community, the discussion will now turn to another tract which speaks to class, status and wealth as aspects of Tertullian’s class identity.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁷ Hunter, “Augustine,” 70.

⁷²⁸ F. Forrester Church, “Sex and Salvation in Tertullian,” *Harvard Theological Review* 68 (1975): 83-101, discusses several of these passages to argue that wealth was rejected by Tertullian for soteriological reasons (99); Church is an example of a historical theologian who omits socio-economic factors.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CLASS IDENTITIES AND TERTULLIAN

To which class of Roman society was Tertullian born? His skill as a trained orator and his education indicated in his writings seem sufficient to surmise that Tertullian came from or rose to a high level of status or class. Perhaps a more pertinent question, however, and one that can be explored in Tertullian's own works, is with which class did Tertullian identify himself, or how did Tertullian construct and depict his own class identity. Despite the propaganda from non-Christian Romans and new elites, many Christians came from noble ranks in North Africa.⁷²⁹ The vast majority of Christians, however, were plebs with little or no claim to status as defined by Roman social norms. In order to investigate with which end of the social spectrum Tertullian expressed solidarity the following section will analyze his works *De cultu feminarum* 1 and 2.

7.1 Class in *De cultu feminarum* 1

In the two volume work *De cultu feminarum*, Tertullian offers no specific historical data by which to date the treatise, which has led to a wide range of scholarly opinions regarding the treatise's *sitz im leben*. Braun argues that the passage in 1.4.1-2 is a thesis of Tertullian's subject indicating books one and two as parts of a unified work.⁷³⁰ Barnes, concurring with the earlier research of G. Säflund, believes book two is an independent sermon written

⁷²⁹ See chapter four.

⁷³⁰ "Le problème des deux livres du *De Cultu feminarum*," *SP* 7 (1966): 133-42; Braun, *Deus Christianorum*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962), 571; in *CCSL* and Turcan the first tract is entitled *De habitu muliebri*, based on manuscript evidence.

ten years prior to book one.⁷³¹ A third possibility, offered by Church, is that Tertullian consolidated two addresses into a single tractate.⁷³² While most studies investigate Tertullian's stance towards women as a stylistic criterion for understanding the works and any development of thought between them, the following discussion will take an alternate approach.⁷³³

Regarding Tertullian's claim in *Apologeticum* (37.4) that even the noble classes consist of Christians, Barnes observes, "In 197 he gave that boast no specific content, but fifteen years later his open letter to the proconsul Scapula reels off a list of senators, governors and imperial freedmen who are either Christians or sympathetic to Christianity."⁷³⁴ A closer examination of Tertullian's stance on class issues and social organization, undertaken by Dennis E. Groh, contributes valuable insights to recognizing the importance of class, rank and wealth in Tertullian's writings.⁷³⁵ Groh finds Tertullian to protest against *ambitio* and *gloria*, saying each "has a negative sense and occurs frequently in conjunction with wealth or riches."⁷³⁶ The following analysis of *De cultu feminarum* finds two different emphases regarding wealth, thus implying that they are two separate works.

In book one of *De cultu feminarum* Tertullian concerns himself with wealth in regards to the Christian women (*sorores dilectissimae*, 1.1.1) of his

⁷³¹ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55, and 137, dating *De cult. fem.* 2 in 196/7, and 1 in 205/6; ref. G. Säflund, *De Pallio und die stilistische Entwicklung Tertullians*, (Lund: 1955), 106ff. In *Tertullian*, rev. ed., (1985), 325-6, Barnes reiterates his arguments.

⁷³² "Sex," 92, n. 38; Church does not believe the consolidation to have been from tracts ten years apart as Barnes proposes, but much closer.

⁷³³ For a review of feminist readings of Tertullian, see below, section 9.1.

⁷³⁴ Barnes, "Pagan Perceptions," 236; ref. *Ad Scap.* 4.1-4, 5.1-3.

⁷³⁵ "Tertullian's Polemic Against Social Co-optation," *Church History* 40 (1971): 7-14.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9; ref. *De pal.* 5.5; *Ad nat.* 2.4.15-16; *De mon.* 7.5; and *Ad ux.* 2.3.1.

congregation.⁷³⁷ Throughout the work, he writes against outlandish examples of misused riches:

From the smallest caskets is produced an ample patrimony. On a single thread is suspended a million of sesterces. One delicate neck carries about it forests and islands. The slender lobes of the ears exhaust a fortune; and the left hand, with its every finger, sports with a several money-bag. Such is the strength of ambition – (equal) to bearing on one small body, and that a woman's, the product of so copious wealth.⁷³⁸

The temptations of wealth, especially such lavish examples of its misuses, should not be heeded according to Tertullian. He warns the sisters not to fall into the same trap of vanity as Eve (1.1.3). He encourages them to resist the temptations offered by the fallen angels before the days of Noah (1.2.4), and regarding the legend that precious jewels come from dragons (*draconum*, 1.6.3), Tertullian deduces that women should avoid them as though from that “Serpent” (*serpente*), the Devil (*diaboli*).⁷³⁹ Book one offers warnings only; Tertullian never rebukes or chastises the sisters for actually succumbing to wealth nor implies that any member of his audience belong to the upper classes.

The only non-biblical example of someone who has fallen into the temptation of wealth is found “at Rome” (*Romae*, 1.7.2) where provincials’ wealth causes noble women (*matronis*) embarrassment.⁷⁴⁰ Tertullian expounds on the “Tyrian” (*Tyriis*) lack of appreciation for Roman wealth,

⁷³⁷ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 117ff., believed this work to be a homily.

⁷³⁸ 1.9.3: *De breuissimis loculis patrimonium grande profertur; uno lino decies sestertium inseritur; saltus et insulas tenera ceruix circumfert; graciles aurium cutes kalendarium expendant et sinistra per singulos digitos de saccis singulis ludit. Hae sunt uires ambitionis tantarum usurarum substantiam uno et muliebri corpusculo baiulari.*

⁷³⁹ For the “days of Noah” see Gen. 6:1-4 and 1 Enoch 7-8. Marie Turcan, “Être femme selon Tertullien,” *Vita Latina* 119 (September 1990), 15, believes this alludes to Pliny, *Naturalis historia*.

⁷⁴⁰ Although Tertullian states he has seen (*uidimus*) this event, Turcan takes the statement rhetorically.

stating, “Purple with them is more paltry than red ochre” (*Vilior est apud illos purpura quam rubrica*, 1.8.1).⁷⁴¹ While on the subject, Tertullian declares that God could have made “sheep to be born with purple and sky-blue fleeces” (*purpureas et aerinas oues nasci*, 1.8.2) but did not, and therefore any such perversions “are understood to be from the devil” (*a diabolo esse intelleguntur*, 1.8.2), or more specifically “the devil and his angels” (*diabolum et angelos eius*, 1.8.3) who have imported “worldly shows” (*spectaculorum saecularium*, 1.8.4), “frenzies of the racecourse, or the atrocities of the arena, or the turpitudes of the stage” (*circi furoribus aut arenae atrocitatibus aut scenae turpitudinibus*, 1.8.5), all of which belong solely to those who seek after “worldly glory” (*gloriae saeculum*, 1.8.6).⁷⁴² Tertullian’s sisters, however, never appear within the wealthier classes; instead, he warns them to resist the “Devil” and the temptation to participate with those seeking *gloria*.

7.2 Class in *De cultu feminarum* 2

Book two begins with a similar address to Tertullian’s “fellow-servants and handmaids” (*conseruae et sorores*, 2.1.1), but the specification follows that this discourse is “not... of affection, but paving the way for affection in the cause of your salvation” (*non... affectationis sed affectioni procurans in causa uestrae salutis*).⁷⁴³ The different tone between the two volumes stems

⁷⁴¹ cf. the passage referenced earlier in Tacitus, *An.* 3.2, where the soldiers bore the ashes of the fallen Germanicus with *fascēs* proceeding through every colony; he adds that for this occasion “the commons [were] in black, the knights in purple” [*atrata plebes, trabeati equites*].

⁷⁴² Given this blatant antagonism toward the Roman imperial presence, a postcolonial read could interpret Tertullian’s use of gold and iron (1.5) as subversively analogous to foreign/indigenous or Roman/African.

⁷⁴³ Turcan prefers the variant *affectationi* to the genitive of Oehler’s text; the confrontational tone, however, in Tertullian remains in either rendering. Therefore, it is surprising in her comments (*Tertullien*, 21) that she does not elaborate on why she considers book one to be “oratoire et vengeur” but book two to be “humble et suppliant.”

from the fact that many of the sisters actually have participated in the extravagancies of wealth, whereas Tertullian only warns against such wealth in book one. Tertullian seeks to persuade those who already exhibit “licentious extravagances of dress” (*in habitus ... licentia*, 2.1.3), “who rub their skin with medicaments, stain their cheeks with rouge, make their eyes prominent with antimony” (*quae cutem medicaminibus urgent, genas rubore maculant, oculos fuligine porrigunt*, 2.5.2), who own “servants” (*serui*, 2.5.4), who “turn [the colour of] their hair with saffron” (*capillum croco uertere*, 2.6.1) and even men who have succumbed to all and more of these excesses (2.8).⁷⁴⁴

As Tertullian develops his argument against, “your riches and elegancies” (*diuitiarum uestrarum uel elegantiarum*, 2.9.5) rhetoric emerges indicating that the recipients of his rebukes are wealthy converts. He proposes, “When (once) the knowledge of God has put an end to all wish to please by means of voluptuous attraction, all these things are rejected as frivolous, as hostile to modesty” (*cum tamen, cognito Deo, adempta placendi uoluntate, per luxuriae occasionem omnia illa ut otiosa ut hostilia pudicitiae recusantur*, 2.8.2).⁷⁴⁵ Again, he questions why any would return to pre-conversion habits and asks, “Moreover, what causes have you for appearing in

⁷⁴⁴ Comp. 2.5.2 with *De paen.* 11. Regarding *nostris serui* (2.5.4), Tertullian’s usage seems to be a rhetorical means of saying *uestri serui*, given the context and overall tone of the treatise; in this paragraph Tertullian compares his audience with “soldiers” (*milites*) who take gifts from “foes” (*ab hostis*), and then returns to his typical usage when he attacks “your schoolings and professions” (*uestris disciplinis et professionibus*, 2.5.5). Moreover, Harrill, “The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms,” in *Early Christian Families*, ed. Balch and Osiek, 242-6, illustrates how Tertullian can rhetorically construct “slaves” for the purpose of his argument. Turcan underscores Tertullian’s familiarity with military imagery, comparing this reference with *De cor.* 11.3-4; *De spect.* 24.4; and *De prae. haer.* 12.2. The last two, like here in *De cult. fem.*, compare military mutiny with the behaviour under review; the first, however, explicitly declares service to the emperor in the army to be a betrayal by the Christian.

⁷⁴⁵ Oehler’s text for *occasionem* in keeping with Thelwall’s translation; Turcan reads *uacationem*.

public in excessive grandeur, removed as you are from the occasions which call for such exhibitions?" (*Quae autem uobis causa extructius prodeundi cum remotae sitis ab his quae talium indigent?*, 2.11.1).⁷⁴⁶ The true motivation, Tertullian adds, is for "seeing and being seen" (*uidere ac uideri*) in the various displays of wealth in "public" (*publicum*) and for the purpose "of inflating glory" (*gloria insolescat*). The audience should resist "if the requirements of Gentile friendships and of kindly offices call you" (*si necessitas amicitiarum officiorumque gentilium uos uocat*, 2.11.2), and they ought to take pride to "walk in poorer garb" (*pauperius incedit*, 2.11.3) so as not to appear as prostitutes who imitate "the most honourable women" (*honestissimis... feminis*, 2.12.1).

While on the subject of prostitutes in the guise of nobility, Tertullian makes reference to Rome: "That powerful state which presides over the seven mountains and very many waters, has merited from the Lord the appellation of a prostitute" (*Illa ciuitas ualida quae super montes septem et plurimas aquas praesidet, cum prostitutae appellationem a domino meruisset*, 2.12.2).⁷⁴⁷ He then expounds, "She sits, to be sure, 'in purple, and scarlet, and gold, and precious stone.'" (*Sedet certe in purpura et coccino et auro et lapide pretioso*, 2.12.2). Less overt references to Rome and its influences such as "purple and

⁷⁴⁶ The singular *causa* found by Turcan to be more plausible is a plural, *causae*, in Oehler.

⁷⁴⁷ ref. Revelations 17:1-10; cf. *Adu. Iud.* 9.15 and *Adu. Marc.* 3.13.10.

scarlet sheep” (*purpureas et coccineas oues*, 2.10.1; cf. 2.10.4), and the “public shows” (*spectacula*, 2.11.1), arise in Tertullian’s arguments as well.⁷⁴⁸

From this comparison of the two volumes of *De cultu feminarum*, several observations can be made regarding Tertullian’s discourse on class. The books represent two different occasions when Tertullian speaks about the parameters of a Christian woman’s (and man’s, 2.8) wardrobe. In book one, he warns the audience against the temptations of wealth and of the pursuits of *gloria*, but he makes no mention of any Christians who have actually participated in such activities. The second book, however, indicates that Tertullian has witnessed Christians who belong to or have the means of belonging to the upper classes and who display their wealth gratuitously, an option unacceptable to the African theologian. He argues that a convert must reject the immodest and licentious uses of riches and therein reject the upper classes whose lifestyle is entangled in such behaviour. Tertullian, moreover, understands the abusive use of wealth, as typified in the noble classes, attributable to Roman influence. It seems that, to Tertullian, the rejection of upper class identity by the Christian likewise requires a rejection of the Roman system that furthers systemic social stratification among the *nationes* (2.6.1).

⁷⁴⁸ Tertullian also insists, “You ought to hate what ruined your fathers (figuratively, Israel)” [*Odisse debetis quod Iudaeos perdidit*, 2.13.6]. Instead, they should adorn “the purple of modesty” [*purpura pudicitiae*, 2.13.7]. Regarding *purpureas et coccineas*, Turcan only notes that the latter is “un symbole de luxe et de richesse.” Other possible subversive references to Rome in *De cult. fem.* include 2.2 where, like the analogy of iron/gold to Africans/Romans in 1.5, Tertullian’s example of Sarah taken from Abraham by the Egyptians could be understood as representing the faithful and the Romans, given Tertullian’s concern for women’s at risk of rape by persecutors (see below, section 8.1).

CHAPTER EIGHT

ETHNIC IDENTITIES AND TERTULLIAN

The indigenous Africans under Rome belonged to an ethnic category distinct from the Roman colonizers. The colonization of North Africa began a phenomenon of conflict between these two categories of peoples resulting in, among other responses, a solidified understanding of the non-Roman-ness of some of the indigenous population. As the Christian communities in North Africa incorporated a growing majority of indigenous Africans into its membership, ethnic factors began to influence the practices and self-identities of said congregations. Tertullian's constructions of ethnic boundaries such as customs and appearance will now be discussed in order to explore his distinctions between certain people groups.⁷⁴⁹ The following section assumes the tension in his construction of ethnic boundary markers which should be seen in light of his Christian identity (see below).

8.1 Ethnicity and Tertullian's Ethnic Boundaries

Did Tertullian explicitly discuss his ethnic identity or that of the Christian community to which he belonged?⁷⁵⁰ Leyerle says that Tertullian

⁷⁴⁹ The lack of data regarding Tertullian's native language requires the subject to be omitted from the present discussion. See, however, H. Hoppe (1932), cited by Altaner, Berthold, *Patrology*, (1960), 166, who states, "Tertullian formed 509 new nouns, 284 new adjectives, 28 new adverbs and 161 new verbs...." Although the notion of an "African dialect" of Latin has found little support in contemporary scholarship – see generally, Hilton, Introduction by John Hilton to Florida in Apuleius," 133-4; and for Tertullian's Latin, René Braun, "Tertullien et le renouvellement du latin," in *Pères de l'Église au XXe siècle*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf 1997), 265-274, Tertullian's adaptation of Latin raises questions as to whether or not it was his native language. Regarding Greek, he seems to exclude it as his *sermo*: *Adv. Marc.* 3.22.6.

⁷⁵⁰ Patristic scholars can allude to Tertullian's ethnicity: e.g. Altaner, *Patrology*, 167, "He combined Punic fervour with Roman practical sense."

understood Christians, like Jews with circumcision, to have a “shared ethnic identity” and this new identity angered the Graeco-Romans.⁷⁵¹ While Leyerle focuses on Tertullian’s usage of ethnic categories for the new Christian community, the following discussion will present evidence of Tertullian’s usage of ethnic categories more generally, showing his awareness of such distinctions and their importance. Another discussion of Tertullian’s ethnicity is found in Braun’s article, “Aux Origines de la Chrétienté d’Afrique: un Homme de Combat, Tertullien.” Because of Tertullian’s anti-Roman statements in *De pallio* (see below) and elsewhere, Braun argues, “All of this could even make one think more precisely of a Punic origin [for Tertullian]. It is difficult to decide, however, because the entire heritage of Carthage and its glory had become common to the many African Berbers on whom the large city had for many centuries already made a significant impact.”⁷⁵² Braun proceeds to declare that Tertullian was Punic based on certain parallels between the Punic religion and the unique traits of North African Christianity.⁷⁵³ Braun’s approach contributes little more than points of comparison between North African Christianity and the Libyo-Punic ethnic groups as seen by one scholar. His study does illustrate, however, the need to further investigate Tertullian’s own usage and discussion of ethnic indicators in order to better understand the conflict found in much of the North African’s writings.

⁷⁵¹ “Blood is Seed,” 42.

⁷⁵² “Aux Origines,” 194: *Tout cela pourrait même faire penser plus précisément à une origine punique; mais il est difficile de se prononcer, car depuis plusieurs siècles déjà tout le patrimoine des gloires carthaginoises était devenu commun aux Africains berbères sur qui s’était marquée profondément l’empreinte de la grande cité.*

⁷⁵³ Also, Wright, “Tertullian,” 1029, surmises, “Although its earliest roots in Carthaginian society remain hotly contested more than one aspect of Tertullianic Christianity may well reflect the residual influence of the grim child-sacrificing Punic religion of pre-Roman Carthage.”

As shown above, Tertullian claimed Africa as his *patria*, and since a homeland has been delineated as a common concept in forming ethnic categories, Tertullian's own understanding of his ethnicity comes into question. Another important indicator of ethnic identity for recent anthropological studies is that of dress.⁷⁵⁴ Dress must be understood as more than simply garments, but rather as any modifications of appearance including hair, makeup, accessories, scents and tattooing.⁷⁵⁵ More pertinent to this discussion is the function of dress as a boundary marker between ethnic groups.

Dress, according to Eicher, is a "coded sensory system" which links ethnicity and ethnic identity on the part of the individual wearing the dress and the outsider viewing the individual.⁷⁵⁶ A community can utilize this symbolic nature of dress to construct its own identity with traditional attire and accessories. "In other words," Eicher argues, "...Ethnicity embraces ideas of group cohesion, of insiders versus outsiders, with boundaries that separate outsiders and insiders and symbols that identify members of a group as being distinct from other groups."⁷⁵⁷ While some recent studies view ethnic groups'

⁷⁵⁴ See M.E. Roach and Joanne. B. Eicher, *Dress, Adornment and the Social Order*, (New York: John Wiley, 1965); Roach and Eicher, *The Visible Self: Perspectives on Dress*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1973); Roach and Eicher, "The Language of Personal Adornment," in *The Fabric of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, eds. Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz, (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 7-22; Eicher, "Introduction: Dress as Expression of Ethnic Identity," in *Dress and Ethnicity: Change Across Space and Time*, ed. Eicher, (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 1-5.

⁷⁵⁵ Roach-Higgins and Eicher, "Dress and Identity," 1-8, cited in Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*, (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 55.

⁷⁵⁶ "Introduction: Dress as Expression of Ethnic Identity," 1.

⁷⁵⁷ Eicher and Barbara Sumberg, "World Fashion, Ethnic and National Dress," in *Dress and Ethnicity*, ed. Eicher, 301.

use of dress as a reaction to modernism, many scholars view dress in terms of postcolonial response.⁷⁵⁸

One postcolonial perspective on dress and ethnicity is Fadwa El Guindi's explication of the veil in his work, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*. Following a diachronic approach, Guindi begins in the ancient world, explaining the various uses of the veil and its developing importance as "a symbol ideologically fundamental to the Christian, and particularly the Catholic, vision of womanhood and piety, and a vehicle for resistance in Islamic societies."⁷⁵⁹ While ancient uses of dress informed Guindi's research, it is argued here that the converse is also true in the hermeneutical spiral of interpretation, and Guindi's understanding can in turn inform a reading of Tertullian's works. As Ann Bridgewood has argued, "Dress is *never* value-free; there is no style which does not carry some connotation of, for example, imperialism, oppression or liberation."⁷⁶⁰ Other approaches have likewise found the category of ethnic dress valuable for the discussion of late antiquity.

In the ancient world dress, including hair and accessories, served to delineate certain people groups from others. Pohl's study of ethnicity in the Roman empire finds more ancient sources relying on dress as ethnic indicators

⁷⁵⁸ For the modernism explanation, see Malcolm Chapman, "Freezing the Frame: Dress and Ethnicity in Brittany and Gaelic Scotland," in *Dress and Ethnicity*, ed. Eicher, 7-28, and Ann Bridgewood, "Dancing the Jar: Girls' Dress at Turkish Cypriot Weddings," in *Dress and Ethnicity*, ed. Eicher, 29-49. In contrast to the modernity explanation, however, see Elisha P. Renne, "Becoming a Bunu Bride: Bunu Ethnic Identity and Traditional Marriage Dress," in *Dress and Ethnicity*, ed. Eicher, 117-37; and Eicher and Tonye V. Erekosima, "Why do They Call it Kalabari? Cultural Authentication and the Demarcation of Ethnic Identity," in *Dress and Ethnicity*, ed. Eicher, 139-164.

⁷⁵⁹ *Veil*, xii. It should be noted that a "veil" refers to any form of covering the head, face and/or neck and shoulders in anthropological terms. This coincides with the usage found in Tertullian; see *De uirg. uel.* Additionally, Charles-Picard and Charles Picard, *Daily Life*, 136, claim that head gear was common garb in Carthage. Also note the gender identity concurrently invoked in such a discussion.

⁷⁶⁰ "Dancing the Jar," 48.

than any other signifier.⁷⁶¹ He notes specifically hair as a sign used by Roman writers to separate themselves from all “barbarians.”⁷⁶² Several ancient authors comment on the trend for Roman women to bleach their hair blond or dye it red to imitate the northern Germanic and Gaulic peoples.⁷⁶³ Tertullian, when rebuking women who have dyed their hair, declares, “They are ashamed even of their own nation, (ashamed) that their procreation did not assign them to Germany and to Gaul” (*Pudet eas etiam nationis suae quod non Germaniae atque Galliae sint procreatae, De cult. fem. 2.6.1*).⁷⁶⁴ Tertullian understood appearance as a boundary which separated one people group from another, and, when he addresses the hairstyles of Christian women, he emphasizes the

⁷⁶¹ “Telling the Difference,” see his section on “Hairstyles and Body Signs,” 51-61. For a North African Christian example, see Tilley, “The Passion,” 849, who comments on the Perpetua and her fellow martyrs’ command to wear the garb of Roman cults, deeming “Clothing as an extension of the body and thus as an expression of identity....”

⁷⁶² Pohl, “Telling the Difference,” 54; ref. Seneca, *Epistula* 124.22, “Why dress your hair with such unending attention? Though you let it down in Parthian fashion, or tie it up in the Germans style, or, as the Scythians do, let it flow wild” [*Quid capillum ingenti diligentia comis? Cum illum uel effunderis more Parthorum vel Germanorum modo uinxeris uel, ut Scythiae solent, sparseris*].

⁷⁶³ See Thompson, *Blacks*, 131ff. for discussion; one example suffices: Propertius 2.18d, “Do you still in your madness imitate the painted Britons and play the wanton with foreign dyes upon your cheeks? All beauty is best as nature made it: Belgian rouge is shameful on a Roman face. If some woman has stained her forehead with azure dye, is azure beauty on that account to be desired? In hell below may many an ill befall that girl who stupidly dyes her hair with a false colour!” [*Nunc etiam infectos demens imitare Britannos, ludis et externo tincta nitore aput? Ut natura dedit, sic omnis recta figuasti turpis Romano Belgicus ore color. An si caeruleo quaedam sua tempora fucō tinxerit, idcirco caerulea forma bonast? Illi sub terris fiant mala multa puellae, quae mentita suas uertit inepta comas!*]

⁷⁶⁴ Thompson, *Blacks*, 132, comments on this passage, attributing Tertullian’s stance to the audience’s “inferiority complex about their ethnic identity.” Although Tertullian himself makes little use of physical characteristics as an ethnic boundary marker (in fact, in *De an.* 25.6-8 he seems to refute the three-tiered model of climate-derived somatic types discussed in chapter three), it is interesting to compare the way scholars have portrayed him: e.g. J. D. Woodbridge, ed., *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 49, depicts him as an elite Roman; whereas, more recently, Dunn, *Tertullian*, has on his cover, the mosaic of the personified Africa from El Djem Museum (this image is discussed in section 3.2.4). Additionally, Dunn, *Tertullian*, 6, ventures to “hazard a guess” that Tertullian was bearded; ref. *De spect.* 23.3.

importance of distinction not only between Christians and non-Christians, but between specific ethnic groups as well.⁷⁶⁵

In his treatise, *De uirginibus uelands*, Tertullian also comments on many aspects of women's fashion, including how women "dye their hair; and fasten their hair with more wanton pin, ... they consult the looking-glass to aid their beauty, and thin down their over-exacting face with washing, perhaps withal vamp it up with cosmetics, toss their mantle about them with an air, fit tightly the multiform shoe, carry down more ample appliances to the baths."⁷⁶⁶ Tertullian speaks of the women's dress within a polemic of whether or not virgins should be veiled in the church service. He argues in favor of the practice, and in doing so laments over the tragic happenings to his religious community of North Africa:

O sacrilegious hands, which have had the hardihood to drag off a dress dedicated to God! What worse could any persecutor have done, if he had known that this (garb) had been chosen by a virgin? You have denuded a maiden in regard of her head, and forthwith she wholly ceases to be a virgin to herself; she has undergone a change!⁷⁶⁷

While one reading of this passage could understand Tertullian's cry figuratively, from a postcolonial interpretation a more serious concern is also possible in these words.

⁷⁶⁵ Given the antipathy towards Romans in *De cult. fem.*, Tertullian likely attacks wealthy women who, like Romans, mimic the hair of the Germans and Gauls. For a discussion of women's hairstyles in Rome at this time, see Mary G. Houston, *Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Costume and Decoration*, 2nd ed., (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1947), 116, where she illustrates several examples of hairstyles which "give an idea of the enormous importance of coiffure in the otherwise very simple and almost unchangeable costume of the Roman lady during the first two centuries of the Christian Era."

⁷⁶⁶ *De uirg. uel.* 12.3-4: *uertunt capillum et acu lasciuiore comam sibi inferunt... consilium formae a speculo petunt et faciem morosiore lauacro macerant, forsitan et aliquo eam medicamine interpolent, pallium extrinsecus lactant, calceum stipant multiformem, plus instrumenti ad balneas deferunt.*

⁷⁶⁷ *De uirg. uel.* 3.8: *O sacrilegae manus, quae dicatum deo habitum detrahere potuerunt! Quid peius aliquis persecutor fecisset, si hoc a uirgine electum agnouisset? Denudasti puellam a capite et nota iam sibi uirgo non est, alia est facta.*

In his section “The Resistance of the Veil” in which he analyzes Frantz Fanon’s understanding of the French “unveiling” of Algeria, Guindi says that the French colonial attempts “to modernize” Algeria were actually anti-nationalistic tactics, and the “Algerians saw among settler Europeans a hidden desire to rape, literally and figuratively” by unveiling the women.⁷⁶⁸

Tertullian understands the “world” in opposition to his Christian community, and one means of protecting the boundary between themselves and foreigners involves more than a Christian/non-Christian distinction, but it requires an establishment of an ethnic boundary by means of dress.

In seeking to understand Tertullian’s passages, Pohl’s warning is pertinent regarding the complexity involved in the ancient society: often dress was more a sign of social status than ethnic identity.⁷⁶⁹ To this complexity

⁷⁶⁸ *Veil*, 170ff., ref. *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier, (New York: Grove Press, 1967). cf. Tertullian’s statement (*De pud.* 1.13-14), where he reminds fellow-Christians, “Heathendom itself bears such emphatic witness, that it strives to punish that discipline in the persons of our females rather by defilements of the flesh than tortures; wishing to wrest from them that which they hold dearer than life!” [*ipsum quoque saeculum usque adeo testatur, ut, si quando, eam in feminis nostris inquinamentis potius carnis quam tormentis punire contendat id uolens eripere quod uitae anteponunt*]; and *Apol.* 50.12 (Souter): “For quite recently by condemning a Christian woman to the lust of man rather than to a lion, you confessed that the stain upon chastity is reckoned more heinous among us than any punishment and any death” [*Nam et proxime ad leonem damnando Christianam potius quam ad leonem, confessi estis labem pudicitiae apud nos atrociolem omni poena et omni morte reputari*]. cf. Arnobius, 1.64; 2.1; and 2.45.2. See also the accusation against Severus’ army by Herodian 3.9, “Falling upon the barbarians unawares, the Romans slaughtered any they met and plundered the whole area of the city, making prisoners of all the women and children” [*προσπεσόντες δὲ οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι, ἀπαρασκευαίως, τοῖς βαρβάροισι, πάντα τε τὸν ἐμπύπτοντα ἐφόνευσαν καὶ διήπασσαν τὰ ἐν τῇ πόλει, πάντας τε παιδας καὶ γυναῖκας αἰχμαλώτους ἔλαβον*]. In addition, see S.R. Joshel, “The Body Female and the Body Politic: Livy’s Lucretia and Verginia – Source: Livy, ‘On the Founding of Rome’ 1.57.6-59.6,” *Sexuality and Gender* (2002), 177, who argues that Livy’s account of Lucretia’s rape by the last Roman prince is an attack on “what Roman ‘soldier males’ do to the conquered”; Cherry, “The Marriage of Equestrian Officers in the Post-Severan Army,” *Historia* 46 (1997), 113, who argues that the law (ref. *Digesta* 23.2.63) prohibiting soldiers from marrying provincials “was probably meant to protect provincial women from being forced into marriage”; J. Evans-Grubbs, “Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: A Law of Constantine (CTh IX.24.1) and Its Social Context,” *JRS* 79 (1989): 59-83, who argues that Constantine’s edict against marriages by abduction, formally recognized a practice that had taken place for centuries; and Lefkowitz, *Heroines*, 57, who speculates that Perpetua was raped by her father. For Tertullian’s use of Lucretia as a positive example to female Christians awaiting torture and execution, see *Ad mart.* 4; and below, section 9.2.

⁷⁶⁹ Pohl, “Telling the Difference,” 40-51.

could be added religion, clan, gender and many other factors. Pohl does, however, proceed to give several examples where ancient accounts of dress signify ethnic identities, indicating the need for careful examination of the textual witness when determining its usage. On certain occasions, Tertullian's concern with outsider influence on his (predominantly African) Christian community recognizes in dress a means of stating ethnic identity; this is most evident in his work *De pallio*.⁷⁷⁰

8.2 Ethnicity in *De pallio*

Tertullian's treatise, *De pallio*, addresses the criticism made by some against Tertullian's setting aside the toga in favor of wearing a *pallium*.

Tertullian describes the characteristics of this garb himself in his treatise after introducing his work by saying,

Men of Carthage, ever princes of Africa, ennobled by ancient memories, blest with modern felicities, I rejoice that times are so prosperous with you that you have leisure to spend and pleasure to find in criticising dress. These are the "piping times of peace" and plenty. Blessings rain from the empire and from the sky.⁷⁷¹

In these opening lines, Tertullian sets the tone for the treatise as one of bitter

⁷⁷⁰ For another instance where Tertullian explains how ethnic groups such as the Garamantes, Germans, Athenians and Britons can be distinguished by dress in *De uirg. uel.*, see 10.1-2; note the correlation between Tertullian's examples and the directional perspective of both Rome and Carthage (respectively, South, North, West and East.) This perspective especially seems to point to a Roman centre, given the fact that each group represents some form of resistance to the Romans. For an example of a surviving Mosaic where Rome is depicted as central, personified and surrounded by personified provinces: M. Blanchard-Lemée, M. Ennaifer, H. Slim and L. Slim, *Mosaics of Roman Africa [Sols de l'Afrique romaine]*, trans. K.D. Whitehead, (London : British Museum Press, [1995]1996), 18-34.

⁷⁷¹ *De pall.* 1.1: *Principes semper Africae, uiri Carthaginenses, uetustate nobiles, nouitate felices, gaudeo uos tam prosperos temporum, cum ita uacat ac iuuat habitus denotare: pacis haec et annonae et otia: ab imperio et a caelo bene est.* Note that after *uiri* Bulhart inserts *Affricae* on the bases of one of the older manuscripts.

sarcasm, reacting to both those “criticising dress” and those who receive the blessings “from the empire.”

Commenting on this tone, Groh asserts that Tertullian’s understanding of the Christian life requires a correlation between inner virtue and outer reality: “This is why Tertullian gives so much attention to disciplinary matters, even matters of dress, in his treatises.”⁷⁷² Groh continues by correlating Tertullian’s Christianity with his subversive tendencies, stating,

The *pallium* employed in this way represents a divine dress donned to express values opposed to those of societal man in his craving for public dignity and glory, symbolized by the toga. Tertullian’s *pallium*, like the clothes of the contemporary counter culture, was the announcement of a socio-political revolution in values based on an understanding of life at fundamental odds with the mainstream of society.⁷⁷³

If Tertullian suddenly dons the *pallium* refusing to wear the Roman toga, then Pohl’s claim that “innovation in dress often expresses more fundamental changes in society, and usually goes along with actual or intended social advancement of new groups,” becomes pertinent.⁷⁷⁴ Ancient historians disagree in their understanding of the *pallium*: historians of Rome can claim Tertullian refers to Greek attire while historians of Carthage can argue for a traditional African referent.⁷⁷⁵ The following analysis of *De pallio* agrees

⁷⁷² Groh, “Tertullian’s Polemic,” 14.

⁷⁷³ Ibid; cf. his note 57 on sources for the *pallium* as a rejection of pagan Rome; another review is in Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 446-7; Fredouille, however, rejects these scholars’ findings (448): “...un tel changement vestimentaire était-il susceptible de provoquer un <<scandale>> quelconque à Carthage, au temps des Sévères? A priori, non.” For recent scholarship that suggests otherwise, see above, chapter three.

⁷⁷⁴ “Telling the Difference,” 49.

⁷⁷⁵ e.g. Houston, *Ancient Greek*, 96-99; and Gilbert and Colette Charles-Picard, *Daily Life in Carthage at the Time of Hannibal*, trans. A.E. Foster, (London: Ruskin House, 1961), 135, respectively. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 85, 210, can assume both without further elaboration. Likewise, Dunn, *Tertullian*, 6, 33, 41, says the *pallium* belonged to “the custom of the local population”; deemed it “the Greek/Punic *pallium*” (ultimately concluding its symbolism to be bound to philosophy), and described it as the “more native dress.” In the present discussion, suggesting the *pallium* an African garb is not meant to “essentialize” the physical referent. Rather, it is argued here, that Tertullian could have construed the *pallium* to suit his needs.

with the latter, understanding Tertullian's use of dress as a boundary marker of ethnic identity.

There is an ambiguity in Tertullian's *De pallio* as to whether or not Tertullian refers to a philosopher's cloak or a traditional African outfit.⁷⁷⁶ Several passages suggest the former in Tertullian's thought, such as when he admits, "this Mantle, albeit it is more Greek" (*hoc pallium, etsi Graecum magis*, 3.7).⁷⁷⁷ He later defends the cloak, countering that "you are nevertheless Greek to a degree" (*admodum Graeci*, 4.1), and proceeds to explain, "A philosopher, in fact, is heard so long as he is seen. My very sight puts vices to the blush" (*sic denique auditur philosophus, dum uidetur: de occurso meo uitia suffundo*, 6.1).⁷⁷⁸ Clearly, these passages indicate that the Greek form of a philosopher's cloak is represented in Tertullian's treatise.⁷⁷⁹ However, would Tertullian condone wearing a Philosopher's cloak, when philosophers are excluded from persecution (*Apol.* 46; *Ad. nat.* 1.4) and evading persecution is a sin (*De iei.* 12; *De fug.*)? While many other such objections could be made against exclusively associating Tertullian's pallium

⁷⁷⁶ Price, "Latin Christian Apologetics," 110-1, allows for both. Tertullian seems to take his cue from Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo* 1-2. One should also note, however, that Justin neither confirms nor denies Trypho's assumption that his cloak is a philosopher's. Rather, Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo* 8, uses the opportunity to delineate truth from philosophical conjecture, finding the prophets' and apostles' "philosophy alone to be safe and profitable. Thus, and for this reason, I am a philosopher" [*ταύτην μόνην εὕρισκον φιλοσοφίαν ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ σύμφορον. Οὕτως δὴ καὶ διὰ ταῦτα φιλόσοφος ἔγω*]. Moreover, Justin applies this device in a dialogue with a Jew who is learning philosophy, not in his writings to Romans or Greeks (*1-2 Apologia*) The following section suggests that Tertullian accommodated Justin's actions for his own purposes.

⁷⁷⁷ In favor of the philosopher's cloak as a referent, Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 120; Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 107, relying on Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 448; and Wright, "Tertullian," 1039.

⁷⁷⁸ The text of 4.1 is Oehler's in agreement with most early editions; Bulhart rendered, *modis ad Graios estis* over still other variants, including, *modis ad gratos* and *admodum gratios*. See textual notes in A. Gerlo, *CCSL* 2.

⁷⁷⁹ Houston, *Ancient Greek*, 99, describes the *pallium* as "identical to the Greek *himation*," which is in fact simply a cloth "of great size so that it covered the figure to the feet. ... This cloak is simply thrown over the shoulders and either hangs loose or is held by the hands in front" (68).

with the Greek philosopher's cloak, the most illuminating data comes from other arguments in *De pallio*.

Tertullian's use of dress involves a complex rhetorical aim, allowing ambiguity in certain passages for the sake of persuasion. Preceding any philosophical descriptions of the *pallium* in Tertullian's treatise are several lines that indicate an African origin and form of the garb as prominent in the author's argument. Tertullian reminds the audience, "Still, you too of old time wore your garments--your tunics--of another shape" (*Tamen et uobis habitus aliter olim, tunicae fuere*, 1.1), and he then contrasts the toga with the "mantle... which used to be worn by all ranks and conditions among you, you not only are unmindful of, but even deride" (*et si quid praeterea condicio uel dignitas uel temporalitas uestit; pallium tamen generaliter, uestrum immemores, etiam denotatis*, 1.3). The apologist continues his defense by reminding the Carthaginian audience of how the battering ram was invented by Carthage – and he adds that it was used by Rome to destroy Carthage – but has been forgotten by the Carthaginians; likewise, the *pallium*, which was the traditional and ancient dress, is now unrecognized (1.3).⁷⁸⁰ Given the duplicitous usage in Tertullian, how should one interpret his construction of the *pallium*?

Other examples exist in the treatise where Tertullian speaks of the *pallium* with still differing referents, as neither African nor Greek. Referring to the public priests and religious officials, he observes that they wear "the Mantle, above all the garments in which you array your gods and goddesses, an august robe; and, above all the caps and tufts of your Salii and Flamines, [it

⁷⁸⁰ ref. Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.14, 3.415. Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 120, understands Tertullian to be writing to a Christian audience.

is] a sacerdotal attire" (*pallium super omnes exuias et peplos augusta uestis superque omnes apices et titulos sacerdos suggestus*, 4.10).⁷⁸¹ In other words, the robe Tertullian dons is similar enough in appearance with both the sacerdotal garments of many cults and the philosopher's cloak worn by many throughout the Roman empire for the apologist to claim them as one and the same *pallium* for the sake of argument. Such an understanding explains Tertullian's statement about the pragmatic benefits of his outfit: "But, than the Mantle nothing is more expedite, even if it be double, like that of Crates" (*At enim pallio nihil expeditius, etiam si duplex, quod Cratetis*, 5.3). Tertullian compares the *pallium* to the Cynic's attire, insinuating that the former is *like* the latter but not actually equal to it.

The *pallium* worn by Tertullian coincides with the traditional manner of dress referred to in the opening paragraph of the treatise. The differing explanations and comparisons, such as philosophers' and priests' wardrobes, derive from Tertullian's deliberate shift in argument found in the second paragraph. After alluding to Rome's destruction of Carthage, and quoting its celebration by Virgil (ref. *Aen.* 1.3), Tertullian agrees to abate the intensity of his rhetoric: "Draw we now our material from some other source, lest Punichood either blush or else grieve in the midst of Romans" (*Sit nunc aliunde res, ne Poenicum inter Romanos aut erubescat aut doleat*, 2.1).⁷⁸² In so doing, Tertullian proceeds to illustrate his defense with non-African examples of attire, so as to make his argument more palatable to his audience.

⁷⁸¹ Bulhart replaces *titulos* with *tutulos* on the witness of the 1622 edition of Claudius Salmasius who reviewed manuscripts no longer extant.

⁷⁸² This and other passages, lead L.E. Elliot-Binns, *The Beginnings of Western Christendom*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), 151, to conclude, "In [Tertullian] the characteristics of the African Church and of the Phoenician people, of whom he was so proud, are combined."

The audience, as addressed in the opening to the *principes semper Africae, uiri Carthaginienses*, consists of the new elite of Africa.⁷⁸³ They themselves represent and mimic the many who have followed Rome, especially “in the way of dress ... precocious in Romanizing” (*de habitu... Romanum praecoca*, 1.2).⁷⁸⁴ Moreover, Tertullian’s new elite audience become embarrassed by the type of individuals who also wear the toga, such as “branded slaves” (*dediticios*), the “notoriously infamous” (*subuerbustos*), “clowns” (*rupices*), “buffoons” (*scurras*), “rustics” (*paganos*), the “corpse-bearer” (*uespillo*), the “pimp” (*leno*) and the “gladiator-trainer” (*lanista*, 4.8).

Before discussing the practicality of the *pallium*, Tertullian subtly retorts, “Did Anacharsis change otherwise, when to the royalty of Scythia he preferred philosophy? Grant that there be no (miraculous) signs in proof of your transformation for the better: there is somewhat which this your garb can do” (*An aliter mutauit Anacharsis, cum regno Scythiae philosophiam praeuertit? Nulla in melius transgressi sint digna: est habitus iste, quid faciat*, 5.1).⁷⁸⁵ As shown in chapters three and four, Anacharsis served as proof for many African new elites that their “barbaric” identity was surmountable. Tertullian’s remark suggests an audience of new elites who would have recoiled at his distinction. Groh understands Tertullian to be subversive, stating, “To wear the *pallium* cut at the roots of social co-optation by

⁷⁸³ cf. Apuleius, *Flor.* 16.1, “chief citizens of Africa” [*principes Africae uiri*]; and where Apuleius represents himself as the spokesperson for the entire province of Africa: *Flor.* 9.36-40.

⁷⁸⁴ For the toga as a common symbol of Roman power, see Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.282, “...The Romans, lords of the world, and the nation of the toga” [*Romanos, rerum dominus, gentemque togatam*]. This passage is quoted by Martial in his allusion to Domitian: *Epigrammaton* 14.124, “He that gave the stars to his great father makes the Romans lords of the world and people of the gown” [*Romanos rerum dominos gentemque togatam ille facit, magno qui dedit astra patri*].

⁷⁸⁵ Oehler’s text reads *signa* for *digna*.

proclaiming a renunciation of the pursuit of public office and social rank.”⁷⁸⁶

By suggesting through attire a renunciation of such pursuits, Tertullian aims at the vulnerability of the African new elite.

The ancestral attire serves as an ethnic boundary marker in *De pallio* which separates Africans from Romans, a distinction many new elites sought to overcome. Conversely, Tertullian sees the toga as the boundary marker established by Romans in Romanization; he sardonically comments, “from the shoulders of the sublimer people [the toga] should descend to embrace Carthaginians” (*ut ab humeris sublimioris populi Carthaginienses complecteretur!* 1.2). Exposing the posture of new elites towards Rome, Tertullian reframes the assumptions regarding Rome’s beneficence towards the provinces, and his “tone is unmistakably sarcastic”:

How large a portion of our orb has the present age reformed!
how many cities has the triple power of our existing empire
either produced, or else augmented, or else restored! While
God favours so many Augusti unitedly, how many populations
have been transferred to other localities! how many peoples
reduced! how many orders restored to their ancient splendour!
how many barbarians baffled! In truth, our orb is the
admirably cultivated estate of this empire.⁷⁸⁷

The new elites, however, consider Tertullian’s proposal that they should reclaim their African ethnic identity by reappropriating the *pallium* unacceptable. He, therefore, turns the argument to show that many of their acculturated customs, such as athletic games, derive originally from Greece, not from Rome.

⁷⁸⁶ Groh, “Tertullian’s Polemic,” 14.

⁷⁸⁷ “tone...”: Birley, *The African Emperor*, 198. *De pall.* 2.7: *quantum urbium aut produxit aut auxit aut reddidit praesentis imperii triplex uirtus! Deo tot Augustis in unum fauente quot census transcripti, quot populi repurgati, quot ordines illustrati, quot barbari exclusi! Reuera orbis cultissimum huius imperii rus est.* The phrase “triple power” refers to Septimius and his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, whom he had elevated in office; see Barnes, *Tertullian*, rev. ed., 329.

The question, then, arises, “Why, now, if the Roman fashion is (social) salvation to every one, are you nevertheless Greek to a degree, even in points not honourable? (*Quid nunc, si est Romanitas omni salus, nec honestis tamen modis ad Graecos estis?*, 4.1). Pressing the issue of the African and Roman ethnicity boundary by juxtaposing a third Hellenistic grouping, Tertullian demands, “What hast thou, Libya, and thou, Europe, to do with athletic refinements, which thou knowest not how to dress?” (*Quid tibi Libya, et Europa, cum xysticis munditiis, quas uestire non nosti?*, 4.1). The new elite should remember what happened to Alexander the Great, who although he conquered Media, he “was conquered by Median garb” (*uictus est Medica ueste*, 4.6). In rejecting the trappings of the toga, the new elite, according to Tertullian, have the ability to reclaim their heritage and their ethnic identity.

Tertullian alternates between presenting the negative aspects of the toga and the positive role of the *pallium*. His explication of the inconvenience of the toga seems to be coded language meaning both the Roman costume and Roman dominion:

In short, I will persistently ask your own conscience, What is your first sensation in wearing your gown? Do you feel yourself clad, or laded? wearing a garment, or carrying it? If you shall answer negatively, I will follow you home; I will see what you hasten to do immediately after crossing your threshold.⁷⁸⁸

Tertullian offers the Africans, whom he believes to be “laded” with Rome’s presence, the benefits of the *pallium*:

These (pleas I advance) for the Mantle in the meantime, insofar as you have defamed it by name. Now, however, it challenges you on the score of its function withal. “I,” it says, “owe no

⁷⁸⁸ *De pall.* 5.2: *Conscientiam denique tuam perrogabo, quid te prius in toga sentias, indutumne an onustum, habere uestem an baiulare. Si negabis, domum consequar, uidebo, quid statim a limine properes: nullius profecto alterius indumenti expositio quam togae gratulatur.*

duty to the forum, the election-ground, or the senate-house.”
...But you will decry me as indolent. Forsooth, “we are to live
for our country, and empire and estate.” Such used, of old, to
be the sentiment. None is born for another, being destined to
die for himself.⁷⁸⁹

For Tertullian, the clothes one wears signify not only class and status, but one’s loyalties to certain ethnic groups. In resistance to the toga he offers the *pallium*, and yet, Tertullian’s argument defies oversimplification of categories as evidenced by his conclusion.

When the apologist completes his case for choosing between the dichotomy of toga and *pallium*, that is between Roman and African, he then transcends the distinction with a new category, that of Christian. His conclusion states, “Joy, Mantle, and exult! A better philosophy has now deigned to honour thee, ever since thou hast begun to be a Christian’s vesture!” (*Gaude, pallium, et exsulta! Melior iam te philosophia dignata est, ex quo Christianum uestire coepisti*, 6.4). Because Tertullian has not mentioned Christianity nor made a Christian/non-Christian distinction in the work previously, “*De pallio* stands out as an oddity, so much so that some have even claimed that it antedates Tertullian’s conversion. This, however, is unlikely.”⁷⁹⁰ What is evident in this work is the complexity involved in speaking of ethnicity in the ancient world which did not always separate issues such as class and religion. If Tertullian originally wrote *De pallio* from a Christian perspective, he suppresses this identity until his conclusion in order

⁷⁸⁹ *De pall.* 5.4: *Haec pro pallio interim, quantum nomine comitiasti; iam uero et de negotio prouocat. ‘Ego’ iniquit ‘nihil foro, nihil campo, nihil curiae debeo... Sed ignauam infamabis, scilicet: Patriae et imperio reique uiuendum est; erat olim ista sententia: ‘Nemo alii nascitur moriturus sibi.’*”

⁷⁹⁰ Bray, *Holiness*, 8.

to speak as an African to Africans about their need to distinguish themselves from another ethnic group, the Romans.

CHAPTER NINE

RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES AND TERTULLIAN

The landscape of ancient North African religion includes a wide array of interactions between various cults and religious practices. In one sense scholars could not elaborate on Tertullian's writings outside of the category of religion in that every treatise of his is written from a Christian perspective and within religious dialogue. Such an oversimplification of Tertullian's works, however, should not negate the interwoven aspects of social identities, kinship, class, ethnicity and other elements which also permeate his writings. The web of complexity in his construction of a social universe actually provides the scholar with the ability to view any one work or subject in Tertullian's writings from many different approaches asking a variety of questions. One such question is regarding Tertullian's religious opponents and dialogical counterparts. Because so much of his work is either apologetic or polemic, a focus on those whom Tertullian challenged, both Christians and non-Christians, offers insights into his arguments, identity and theology.

9.1 African Christian and Roman Non-Christian Religious Identities

As discussed in chapter four Roman persecution of Christians significantly affected the self-understanding of many North African Christian communities. During one of the outbreaks of persecution against Tertullian's congregation, he produced *Ad martyras*, a tract written to encourage and edify those awaiting torture and death in prison. Although the letter published under its current form at a later date, it betrays no signs of having been written to a

wider audience than the martyrs themselves and does not explicitly reference any concern for a wider audience.⁷⁹¹ Whether Tertullian speaks in a pseudo-correspondence for rhetorical effect or whether the treatise represents an actual epistle to specific individuals can likely never be demonstrated conclusively.⁷⁹² Tertullian's work does indicate, however, a clear conflict between his religious community and that of non-Christians, a fact unreservedly accepted among scholars. The following analysis of *Ad martyras* seeks to further this understanding by exploring the textual construction of that religious conflict as directed against not only non-Christians generally, but more specifically, as conflict with non-Christian Romans.

In establishing the Christians' opponent in *Ad martyras*, Tertullian specifies that the true persecutors of those awaiting torture are not merely the human agents, but the cosmic forces opposed to the Christian God at work in those humans. Tertullian celebrates with the martyrs that their imprisonment has separated them "from the world" (*a mundo*, 2.1) so they no longer have to look on "strange gods" (*alienos deos*, 2.7). Such an understanding of martyrdom should come as no surprise to Tertullian's audience, as indicated in his reminder, "We were called to the warfare of the living God in our very response to the sacramental words" (*uocati ad militiam sumus Dei uiui iam tunc, cum in sacramenti uerba respondemus*, 3.1). In other words the Christians' baptismal confession included a rejection of idolatry and a pledge

⁷⁹¹ cf. *Ad ux.* Similarly, Tertullian can speak directly to heretics rhetorically, but still address a wider readership (e.g. *Adu. Marc.*, *Adu. Prax.*, *Adu. Val.*, etc.)

⁷⁹² Schlegel, "The *Ad martyras*," 125-128, argues for the latter.

to do battle with the devil.⁷⁹³ More can be said, however, about Tertullian's precision in describing religious oppressors in terms beyond an exclusively Christian/non-Christian dichotomy.

Nowhere in *Ad martyras* does Tertullian make reference to any provincial gods or cults, African or otherwise; instead, he repeatedly alludes to Rome as "the world" (*saeculum*) and the challenges it represents to the Christians.⁷⁹⁴ Moreover, Tertullian develops his discourse with a Rome/Carthage dichotomy in terms largely encoded for insiders. He describes the Roman prison in which the martyrs are held as "the devil's house" (*Domus... diaboli est*, 1.4) and challenges the Christians to defeat the devil in "his own kingdom" (*in suo regno*, 1.5) by being "armed and fortified with concord" (*munitos et concordia armatos*, 1.5). The use of "Concord," part of the complete title given to the reconstructed city of Carthage – COLONIA IULIA CONCORDIA KARTHAGO – would have been recognized by any inhabitant of the city.⁷⁹⁵ Tertullian then declares that this "world," not the martyrs, is actually awaiting judgement, and that "not of the proconsul, but of God" (*non proconsulis, sed Dei*, 2.3).

At the end of his treatise, he supplies another subtle attack on Rome by comparing the worthy purpose of Christian martyrdom with the many who supported the emperor, alluding sardonically to the many who died for a

⁷⁹³ Harrill, "The Influence," 275-82, sees in Tertullian's words (and Cyprian, *Epistulae* 69.7.1-2; 70.2.1; 73.4.2) influence of Roman contract law, that was a practice common to the everyday experience of those in the Roman empire at this time.

⁷⁹⁴ *saeculum* is used nine instances (counting *saecula saeculorum*, 3.3 as twice, in which case it is the Christian age to come), seven of which are in chapter two.

⁷⁹⁵ Rives, *Religion*, 44. Tertullian elsewhere references *Concordia* as symbolic of Carthage (*De pall.* 1.2; in fact, it is specifically in contrast to the toga as a symbol of Rome); see comments in Barnes, *Tertullian*, 85.

“mere human being’s cause” (*hominis causa*, 6.2).⁷⁹⁶ While the identification of Rome as the enemy would be natural for Christians under persecution (e.g. the New Testament book of *Revelation*), Tertullian formulates his religious “Other” precisely in Roman/African terms.⁷⁹⁷ The language is not limited to merely Christian and non-Christian terminology, but instead includes political/regional references that one would expect to find in a postcolonial treatise.⁷⁹⁸ One passage in the *Ad martyras* expressly evidences the subversive tone Tertullian applies to the social context of the martyrs.

As part of his exhortation to faithfulness, Tertullian provides those awaiting martyrdom with a long series of examples (4.4-7). Gerald Bray in his book, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian*, notes the peculiarity of this list, observing, “The ‘martyrs’ whom he celebrates are not even Christians – a highly revealing fact. All of them without exception are figures drawn from pagan history and mythology. Obviously, fidelity to Christ was not the most important element in Tertullian’s definition of a martyr!”⁷⁹⁹ What, then, was the “most important element” in Tertullian’s definition of a martyr? One might suspect that Tertullian is limited by a lack of Christian examples of martyrdom available at the time, and he must, therefore, draw from non-Christian heroes to present

⁷⁹⁶ For a discussion of this reference to Septimius Severus’ rise to power and suppression of rivals, see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 32-3; this reference to Severus’ defeat of Albinus in 197 leads Barnes to date *Ad martyras* in the latter part of that year. For the ancient witnesses, see Dio Cassius 75.8, 76.4; and Herodian 3.8.12. On the ironic, *hominis causa*, cf. *Scriptores historiae augustae, Seuerus*, 11, where Septimius deified Commodus in response to the Senate’s alleged support of Albinus.

⁷⁹⁷ Tertullian explicitly does so, citing the NT book of Revelations in *De res. car.* 24-5.

⁷⁹⁸ Altaner, *Patrology*, 167, says Tertullian “attacked and ridiculed the pagan religion in general.” When one examines *Ad martyras* (and his writings on a whole), however, many passages indicate specific opponents, not merely “pagan religion in general” as found in previous apologists.

⁷⁹⁹ Bray, *Holiness*, 45.

acts of bravery in the face of torture and death.⁸⁰⁰ Does Tertullian not know of the Scillitan martyrs who died in North Africa around 180, or about Perpetua, Felicitas and their fellow-martyrs who died in 203?⁸⁰¹ If he is writing before these events, surely he does know about the beheading of Paul, the martyrdom of Peter, the stoning of Stephen or the crucifixion of Jesus. None of these men, however, are offered as examples to the martyrs. Perhaps, given the socio-political landscape of his time, elaboration can be made on the “martyrs” Tertullian does list.

The complete list of *exempla* include Lucretia’s suicide after being raped, Mucius’ burning of his hand before his captors, Heraclitus’ suffocating himself in overheated dung, Empedocles’ casting himself into the volcano, Peregrinus’ immolating himself at the Olympic games, Dido’s suicide in her pyre, Hasdrubal’s wife’s suicide in the burning of Carthage, Regulus’ refusal to negotiate resulting in his death by multiple stab wounds, Cleopatra’s suicide by viper and Leena’s biting off of her own tongue.⁸⁰² Could these “martyrs” signify anything to Tertullian’s audience other than commendable suffering?

Although Dido is portrayed by Virgil as a “furious” or, one could arguably translate, “hysterical” (e.g. *‘furens,’ Aen.* 4.69 and *furibunda,* 4.446) woman who immolated herself after being abandoned by Aeneas, the pious founder of Rome, she often appears in Tertullian’s works, along with Hasdrubaal’s nameless – in the historical witnesses – wife, as an archetype of chastity and moral fortitude because she refused to marry a Roman, which

⁸⁰⁰ Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 117-8; and Tilley, “The Passion,” 845.

⁸⁰¹ In *Ad Scap.* 3.4, Tertullian names the proconsul under whom the Scillitans were persecuted. In *De an.* 55, he names Perpetua. Both are typically dated later than *Ad mart.*

⁸⁰² Note that Tertullian then turns from specific persons who have suffered to various forms of suffering; e.g. 4.9: “the sword, the fire, the cross, the wild beasts, the torture” [*ut gladium, ignem, crucem, bestias, tormenta*].

leads several commentators to deduce that Tertullian salvages an indigenous account of Dido's death.⁸⁰³ In contrast to these two Carthaginian references, however, the Roman heroes Mucius and Regulus appear.⁸⁰⁴ Moreover, provincial examples like Heraclitus, a Sicilian, Empedocles of Greece, Cleopatra of Egypt and Leena from ancient Attica also occur.⁸⁰⁵ One natural read is to agree with the assumption that the list signifies historical acts of bravery which carry neither negative nor positive political symbolism.⁸⁰⁶ Against such a view, however, one finds certain pointers of Tertullian in the surrounding passages of *Ad martyras*.

Before he lists examples of those who have undergone torture and

⁸⁰³ On this translation as "hysterical," see below. For Dido, see Virgil, *Aeneid* 4 and Ovid, *Heroides* 7. cf. Tert. *Ad nat.* 1.18.3; 2.9.13; *Apol.* 50.5; *De an.* 33.9; *De exh. chast.* 13.3; *De mon.* 17.2. For "indigenous account," see Church, "Sex and Salvation," 97 n. 59; and Thelwall in his notes on *De ex. chast.* 13.3. As cited above, Spaeth, *The Roman Goddess Ceres*, 115, states Dido to be "the paradigm of the woman who abandons *castitas*."

⁸⁰⁴ Livy 2.12, presents Gaius Mucius Scaevola as both courageous and ingenious in his loyalty to Rome; Horace, *Carmina* 3.5, eulogized Marcus Atilius Regulus who was killed by Carthaginians, saying, "To shame ye are but adding loss; the wool with purple dyed never regains the hue it once has lost nor does true manhood, when once it has vanished, care to be restored to degenerate breasts" [*flagitio additis damnum neque amissos colores lana refert medicata fuco, nec uirtus, cum semel excidit, curat reponi deterioribus*].

⁸⁰⁵ For Heraclitus, see Diogenes 9.2-4; for Empedocles, see Diogenes 8.67-75; for Cleopatra, see Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, *Ant.* 54, 86; for Leena, see Pausanias 1.23; and Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 7.23.

⁸⁰⁶ Hoffman, *The Status of Women*, 169.

death, Tertullian clarifies that he is encouraging women specifically.⁸⁰⁷ He introduces the selection of names by stating that suffering can be found “not only in the case of men, but of women too, that you, O holy women, may be worthy of your sex. It would take me too long to enumerate one by one the men who at their own self-impulse have put an end to themselves. As to women, there is a famous case at hand...” (*nec a uiris tantum, sed etiam a feminis, ut uos quoque, benedictae, sexui uestro respondeatis. Longum est, si enumerem singulos, qui se gladio confecerint, animo suo ducti. De feminis ad manum...*, 4.3-4). In light of his words, it is perplexing that Tertullian does give a list of men as well as women. More telling, the list includes five women and five men, whose deeds fall into ideologically distinct categories.

⁸⁰⁷ Church, “Sex and Salvation,” 97, notes that half of the examples are women, only commenting that this challenges “the assumption that martyrdom may be too much to ask of women....” Schlegel, “The *Ad martyras*,” 127 n. 2, believes the tract addressed men and women because of the use of *benedicti* (1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 3.1, 3.3, 5.2) more often than *benedictae* (4.3). The use of *benedicti* is understood here as Tertullian’s gloss for the martyrs in male gender but neuter referent, a gloss he corrects in 4.3 where the martyrs’ gender is explicitly addressed. If *benedictae* is taken to indicate male martyrs are also addressed, then it is quite remarkable that Tertullian constructs all of the martyrs’ gender as female in this section of the treatise. For feminists critiques of Tertullian, see the examples of E. Schüssler Fiorenza, “You are not to be Called Father,” 311; Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 55; Miles, “Patriarchy as Political Theology: The Establishment of North African Christianity,” in *Civil Religion and Political Theology*, ed. Leroy S. Rouner, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 172-7; and Kraemer, *Her Share*, 162, for Tertullian as “almost viciously misogynist.” For a defense of Tertullian against these charges, see Church, “Sex and Salvation,” 83-101, who concludes that women were theologically equal to men in Tertullian’s wider writings; Elizabeth A. Clark, *Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*, (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 1986), 23-60, who discusses both negative and positive treatment of women by early Christian writers, yet only uses negative examples from Tertullian; Heine, *Women*, 28, states, “Different audiences lead to different kinds of arguments” when it comes to his treatment of women; Karen Jo Torjesen, “Tertullian’s ‘Political Ecclesiology’ and Women’s Leadership,” *SP* 21 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989): 277-282, attributes Tertullian’s stance against women in clerical roles and functions to his modeling the church after a Roman *societas*; Elizabeth Carnelly, “Tertullian and Feminism,” *Theology* 92 (Ja 1989): 31-35, who argues that “misogynist”/“feminist” labels are anachronistic; and Hoffman, *The Status*, 148, who suggests, “...when considered within his own cultural and theological context, [Tertullian’s statements] were not unusually negative, but were relatively positive.” For a general introduction to feminist readings of Christian origins up to this period, see Castelli, “Heteroglossia,” 73-98. It is interesting to note how the premodern editors Rhenanus, Mesnartius and Gelenius changed the title as found in the manuscripts, *Ad martyras*, to *Ad martyres*.

One category, that of the heroines, consists of women whose holiness (*benedictae*, 4.3) entails not submission but subversion. Lucretia was raped by the last prince of Rome, and her suicide brought about the end of the Roman monarchy. Dido and Hasdrubal's wife were both famous Carthaginian heroines whose acts have been discussed above. Cleopatra, Tertullian says, died "that she might not fall into the hands of her enemy" (*ne in manus inimici perueniret*, 4.6) – the "enemy" of course, being Octavian, soon to be "Augustus," the archetypal Roman. Leena is said to have chewed off her own tongue, denying the possibility of betraying her "confederates" (*coniuratos*, 4.7). All five of these heroines represent acts of solidarity against "tyranny," and all but Leena's act were in direct resistance to Rome.⁸⁰⁸

The men, on the other hand, symbolically illustrate insanity or, in Tertullian's words, "a mere vanity you find among men – in fact, a sort of mental disease" (*apud homines affectatio quoque et morbus quidam animi*, 5.1). In broader academic discussions, feminist scholars widely acknowledge the motif of the "hysterical" woman, wherein any woman, seen by men as acting "out of place" is described as "frantic," "frenzied" and psycho-

⁸⁰⁸ On Lucretia, see Ovid, *Fasti* 2.807, where Sextus Tarquinius is portrayed as saying, "Resistance is vain... I'll rob thee of honour and life" [*nil agis eripiam... per crimina vitam*]; also, see Ovid's retort (2.811-2), "Why victor dost thou joy? This victory will ruin thee. Alack, how dear a single night did cost thy kingdom!" [*quid, uictor, gaudes? haec te uictoria perdet. heu quanto regnis nox stetit una tuis!*] The incident is credited with the establishment of the Republic. Dixon, *Reading Roman Women*, 46, describes Lucretia as "the embodiment of the prime virtues of the Roman matron...." Additionally, Spaeth, *The Roman Goddess*, 115, says Lucretia was the Roman heroine antithetical to Dido because of her chastity. As for Cleopatra, the claim she resisted Rome is somewhat dubious given her allegiance to Anthony; it is a distinction, however, that Tertullian the rhetorician did not need to acknowledge. For "tyranny," see the account of Leena by Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 7.23, where Leena "refused to betray tyrannicides" [*non indicauit tyrannicides*].

somatically unstable.⁸⁰⁹ It is, therefore, surprising to find in the infamously misogynistic writings of Tertullian an inversion of this motif; it is the men who are unstable, insane and, one could translate, “hysterical.”⁸¹⁰

Tertullian invokes politically charged language and imagery to contrast instances of impetuous suffering by men with cases of laudable martyrdom by women; he asks, “If the bit of glass is so precious, what must the true pearl be worth?” (*Si tanti uitreum, quanti uerum margaritum?* 4.9). By interpreting Tertullian’s *Ad martyras* as politicized, his rhetoric also can be understood as gendered and feminized. Tertullian’s list of martyrs is antagonistic towards Rome in that it glorifies women who have subverted Rome’s oppression and who are, therefore, positive examples of martyrdom. Tertullian displays these women in contrast to the “hysterical men” who died for *gloria* which gives this “religious” tract a political element which is contextually charged for Carthaginian women awaiting persecution.⁸¹¹

Many scholars see in Tertullian’s writings a sharp antagonism towards “paganism” generally and therefore towards Roman religion only implicitly.⁸¹² In *Ad martyras*, however, Tertullian is explicitly antagonistic towards Rome, writing from within the context of religion and religious conflict, wherein many not only resisted Romanization on a “purely” religious level – as if there

⁸⁰⁹ For the term in early Christian studies, see Lefkowitz, *Heroines*; and MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*. For a review of early Christian literature wherein “Montanist” women of Tertullian’s era are hysterical, “raving,” and “insane,” see Trevett, “Gender, Authority and Church History: A Case Study of Montanism,” *Feminist Theology* 17 (Ja 1998): 9-24.

⁸¹⁰ Similarly, Bal, “Perpetual Contest,” 236, finds Perpetua’s father to become “hysterical” in the account of the *PSPF*.

⁸¹¹ Tertullian is fully capable of manipulating these and other examples to suit his purpose; see *De an.* 58, where Mucius is a positive example, and *Apol.* 50/*Ad nat.* 1.18, where some of these same women examples are used negatively.

were such a plane in the ancient world – but also on a socio-political level common to many Africans under Roman rule. While the Christian writer would likely denounce any religion other than Christianity as false, Tertullian specifically attacks Rome, suggesting another aspect of his own religious identity.

9.2 African Christian and Roman Christian Religious Identities

As shown in chapter one's survey of recent scholarship, scholars in the past have viewed Tertullian as a member of a schismatic body, known as Montanism, but more recently the general consensus of scholars understands Tertullian as never formally separating from the church. How then should one understand Tertullian's polemical use of "Montanistic" concepts, such as the Paraclete and new prophecies? One approach is found in D. Powell's argument that Tertullian belonged to an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, which never formally removed itself from the church at large, but acted much like a "holy club" of the revivalist movements.⁸¹³ Rankin, who more recently championed this understanding, examines the textual data in Tertullian's so-called "Montanist" writings and finds that Tertullian always includes the "Catholics" within his understanding of the church.⁸¹⁴ Even more recently, William Tabbernee, a Montanism scholar, writes to confirm this understanding, stating,

This [penitential discipline] was an internal fight, within the Catholic church, not a battle between "Montanists" and "Catholics." Consequently, the term *psychici* which Tertullian

⁸¹² e.g. Altaner, *Patrology*, 167, says Tertullian "attacked and ridiculed the pagan religion in general."

⁸¹³ "Tertullianists," 33-54. Robeck, *Prophecy*, 202; and Wright, "Tertullian," 1029, agree. cf. Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 55, who identifies Tertullian as "pro-Montanist"; and Trevett, *Montanism*, 69, who calls Tertullian "the Montanist Catholic." Van der Lof, "The Plebs," argues that there was not even a distinct group within the wider Christian congregation, but that Tertullian uses the term to refer to "fellow-Catholics."

⁸¹⁴ *Tertullian*, 35-6.

hurls at his opponents must not be equated with ‘Catholics’ – the members of Tertullian’s house church were also “Catholics.” The *psychici* were simply those Catholics who were not prepared to practice the rigoristic discipline of Christian living which the “spiritual persons” of Tertullian’s house church (and probably also of some other house churches) practiced.⁸¹⁵

The common factor in recent scholars’ understanding that Tertullian remained in the catholic church is the evidence in his writings that he placed both his opponents, the “Psychics,” and himself within any discussion of the universal body of Christians rather than labeling any one party, group or congregation as *the* true church. What role, then, did “Montanist” influence play in Tertullian’s writings?

Nicola Denzey speaks on behalf of many church historians when she argues for the “need to reinvestigate the modern, arbitrary lines we have previously drawn between one group and another, lines that prevent us from appreciating how one early Christian group may have accommodated texts from other, earlier traditions.”⁸¹⁶ Moreover, she aligns herself with the recent consensus that seeks to “deconstruct or refute” the arbitrary categories and labels or “academic compartmentalization” of certain “heresies.”⁸¹⁷ One example of deconstructing scholarly tradition about “Montanism” includes the now general recognition that the title itself is anachronistic when applied to Tertullian’s era.⁸¹⁸ Long before this trend, H.J. Lawlor warned scholars that

⁸¹⁵ “To Pardon,” 385. cf. The late Christian writer of the anonymous *Praedestinatorum haeresis* 1.86, “Whenever you read of Tertullian against the psychics, you should know that he is speaking against the Catholics.” [*Vbicumque autem legeris Tertuliani aduersum psychicos, scias eum contra catholicos agere*]. On Pauline/Tertullianic use of *psychici*, see van der Lof, “The Plebs,” 353-5; and Rankin, *Tertullian*, xv.

⁸¹⁶ “What did the Montanists Read?”, 447.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid*, 429.

⁸¹⁸ The Greek appellation, “the so-called Phrygian heresy” [*τὴν λεγομένην κατὰ Φρύγας αἵρεσιν*, Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.16.1], became the “Cataphrygian” heresy in Latin, a term more contemporary to the phenomenon. For discussion, see Alistair Stewart-Sykes, “The Original Condemnation of Asian Montanism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

the typical approach of understanding Montanism through Tertullian is misguided, because, "Tertullian brought far more to Montanism than he found in it."⁸¹⁹ Tertullian did refer on several occasions to "the New Prophecy" as well as its founding prophets, Montanus, Maximilla and Prisc(ill)a, and he invoked what have been labeled "Montanist teachings," such as the active working of the Paraclete and rigorist discipline.⁸²⁰ The following analysis of some of Tertullian's works containing these elements addresses how he used the "New Prophecy" in constructing the identities of his opponents.

The number of Tertullian's treatises considered "Montanist" by scholars varies according to the criteria used to attach such a label.⁸²¹ Often, scholars use more than simply the use of "New Prophecy" or the names of Montanus, Maximilla and Prisc(ill)a, but allow any rebuttal against charges of *pseudopropheta* or *noua disciplina*, references to the ecstatic state, use of *Paracletus* for the Holy Spirit, mention of spiritual gifts to be held only by "Montanists," "we" language for Montanists, "you" language for non-Montanists or any application of the title *psychici* to "non-Montanists."⁸²² The last four criteria, however, presuppose the existence of a "Montanist"

50 (Ja 1999): 1-22. Christine Trevett, "Gender," 10, claims the earliest reference to "Montanists" (*Montanoi*) is in Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 16.8.

⁸¹⁹ "The Heresy," 338. Also, von Campenhausen, *The Fathers*, 31, "As a Montanist, Tertullian did not become other than he had always been"; Bray, "Tertullian and Western Theology," in *Great Leaders of the Christian Church*, ed. John D. Woodbridge, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 50, "It seems probable, therefore, that Tertullian saw Montanism as a movement that advocated some of his own teachings. He was therefore inclined to rate it highly, though it is most improbable that he ever became a Montanist in the strict sense"; Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 234, "Tertullian's views are not necessarily applicable to other Montanists"; and Dunn, *Tertullian*, 6, "...we do not know the extent to which he recast Montanism to suit his own inclinations...." Even Robeck, *Prophecy*, 124, who believed Tertullian a Montanist, discusses his use of Prisc(ill)a's oracle, concluding, "It provided no new theological insight" but it "corroborated" Tertullian's opinion.

⁸²⁰ Tabbernee, "To Pardon," 378, surmises that Tertullian knew of the Phrygian prophetesses and prophet through literature.

⁸²¹ For reviews, see Bray, *Holiness*, 55ff.; and more recently, Rankin, *Tertullian*, xiv-xvii, and 27-51.

⁸²² This list, as a standard example is taken from Barnes, *Tertullian*, 43-4.

group, party or a schism in North Africa. Because of the complexity involved in the scholarly reconstructions of Tertullian's "Montanism," the following discussion will focus on three of his writings almost universally considered to be influenced by the New Prophecy. In this way, the evidence drawn from the material provides examples from Tertullian's thought which unquestionably typifies his most aggressive works towards "Psychics." Other so-called "Montanist" works will only be used to supplement the discussion, the aim of which is to explore how Tertullian used the "New Prophecy" to construct his own religious identity.⁸²³

Most scholars conclude that Tertullian produced the three treatises, *De monogomia*, *De ieiunio* and *De pudicitia*, close together, probably within a year, and they largely represent a continuation of Tertullian's arguments against his dialogical counterparts.⁸²⁴ In these works Tertullian writes against his religious opponents, designated as "Psychics" throughout, regarding the subjects of discipline.⁸²⁵ The New Prophecy, according to Tertullian, teaches strict Christian discipline, "not that Montanus and Priscilla and Maximilla preach another God, nor that they disjoin Jesus Christ (from God), nor that they overturn any particular rule of faith or hope, but that they plainly teach

⁸²³ For the accusation of heresy in opposition to new prophecy, see Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.16.4, where Montanism is referred to as a "novelty, not prophecy, as they call it." [νέας ταύτης, οὐχ, ὡς αὐτοὶ φασίν, προφητείας] and later "false prophecy" [ψευδοπροφητείας].

⁸²⁴ Most recent assumptions rely on Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55; Tertullian alludes to writing *De mon.* first: *De iei.* 1.4; and *De pud.* 1.13ff.

⁸²⁵ On "Psychics" [*psychici*], note that Tertullian, aside from two examples (*Adu. Marc.* 4.22.5; and *Adu. Prax.* 1.6-7) employs the title exclusively in the three works under discussion.

more frequent fasting than marrying.”⁸²⁶ The Paraclete for Tertullian continues to lead Christians into all truths and this appellation repeatedly appears in Tertullian’s works. Tertullian can concede, however, to omit for the sake of discussion, “mention of the Paraclete, as of some authority of our own” (*mentio Paracliti ut nostri alicuius auctoris, De mon. 4.1*) because he believes his argument can stand on other grounds such as proofs from scripture.

Within the context of Tertullian’s dispute over discipline he offers an analogy between Christ’s abrogation of the teaching on marriage by Moses and the Paraclete’s abrogation of the teaching on marriage by Paul: “the New Law abrogated divorce... the New Prophecy (abrogates) second marriage” (*noua lex abstulit repudium... et noua prophetia secundum matrimonium, De mon. 14.5*). The frequent references to the Paraclete, New Prophecy and names of particular prophets indicate that Tertullian understood what is now known as Montanism to be in opposition to some more lax forms of Christianity. Moreover, Tertullian references not only the movement in his work, but he explains something of the nature of the New Prophecy as he came to know it.

While Tertullian nowhere explains how he came to know of Montanus and other “new prophets,” he does indicate what role the New Prophecy plays in his arguments. Discussing the problem of customs derived from tradition but not found in scripture, he says “we are bound to adduce so much the more worthy reason... until by some signal celestial gift they be either confirmed or else corrected” (*tanto magis dignam rationem adferre debemus ... donec*

⁸²⁶ *De iei. 1.3: non quod alium deum praedicent Montanus et Priscilla et Maximilla, nec quod Iesum Christum soluant, nec quod aliquam fidei aut spei regulam euertant, sed quod*

aliquo caelesti charismate aut confirmentur aut corrigantur, De iei. 10.5).

After then quoting the Apostle Paul, He declares that the Paraclete, as he concurrently speaks in the church, is “the Confirmer of all such things” (*confirmatore omnium istorum, 10.6*).⁸²⁷ Regarding certain matters of discipline, Tertullian admits that he once held a “fellowship of sentiment” (*sententiae... societatem, De pud. 1.10*) but later, seemingly of his own accord, came to reject his stance, which is why, “it is not lightly that the Holy Spirit has come to an agreement with us – coming to this agreement even without our asking” (*non leuiter nobiscum pactus est Spiritus sanctus, etiam ultro pactus, 12.9*).⁸²⁸ Tertullian claims the New Prophecy confirmed what he had already come to believe, and in this way it served as further proof for Tertullian and as an ally against his religious opponents.⁸²⁹ Tabernee affirms this understanding: “Tertullian... while never a schismatic Montanist, did find in the New Prophecy movement certain emphases consistent with the direction his own, progressively more rigorist, views on Christian praxis were heading. Tertullian’s adoption of certain Montanist presuppositions enabled him both to reach those conclusions more quickly and to have at his disposal additional data to support those conclusions.”⁸³⁰ The understanding of the

plane doceant saepius ieiunare quam nubere. cf. De mon. 2.

⁸²⁷ ref. Philippians 3:15.

⁸²⁸ Dunn, *Tertullian*, 7, comments, “[Tertullian] did not see himself as having anything in common with Christians who did not hold to his Montanist convictions....” cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 1.6, “We indeed, on our part, subsequently withdrew from the carnally-minded on our acknowledgment and maintenance of the Paraclete” [*et nos quidem postea agnitio paraclleti atque defensio disiunxit a psychicis*]; Holmes comments that this withdrawal is from Rome, not his own Carthaginian bishop.

⁸²⁹ See Trevett, *Montanism*, 112, “If the original New Prophecy had outlawed remarriage then it came as music to Tertullian’s ears and probably bolstered a distaste for remarriage which he had harboured for some time.”

⁸³⁰ “To Pardon,” 377. Most scholars agree some explanation is needed; e.g. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 136, who conjectures that Tertullian’s wife died and his conversion to Montanism was a “psychological buttress of his belief that remarriage was wrong.” Another example is Altaner, *Patrology*, 166, “His austere and gloomy cast of mind which abhorred neutrality and

New Prophecy in Tertullian as a confirmation and an ally against his religious opponents helps to explain his sometimes ambiguous statements about the church and its members.⁸³¹ How does Tertullian describe those Christians with whom he disagrees?

Beyond the application of the term *psychici*, Tertullian provides a few specific details about his religious opponents. According to the issue at hand in his treatise, Tertullian specifies the error of his opponents, such as the permission of multiple marriages (*De mon.* 1.1), the sin of gluttony (*De iei.* 1.1-2) and the absolution of mortal sins (*De pud.* 1.6-8). Throughout these tracts a tenuous description of his opponents' relation to his church(es) exists.

Many passages verify the view of Rankin and others who understand Tertullian to have remained in communion with the "catholic" church. From the beginning of Tertullian's argument, he displays a distinction with his opponents and heretics: "Heretics do away with marriages; Psychics accumulate them" (*Haeretici nuptias auferunt, psychici ingerunt, De mon.* 1.1).⁸³² Throughout the works, he retains the framework of one universal Church, "for our one Father, God, lives, and our mother, the Church" (*uiuuit enim unicus pater noster Deus et mater ecclesia, De mon.* 7.9). Within his discussion, Tertullian includes his opponents, even those who remarry, stating, "We shall be with God, we shall be together, since we shall all be with

compromise led him to the Montanist sect...." For more examples of psychological explanations, see bibliography in Trevett, *Montanism*, 68.

⁸³¹ Trevett, "Gender," 19, similarly yet conversely argues that the Catholics rejected the New Prophecy because women prophets did not fit into the "view of Christian community which would be recognizable to the Graeco-Roman world as ordered, respectable and deserving of toleration" which the Catholics were attempting to establish.

⁸³² On the Psychics' view of Tertullian's group, see *De mon.* 2.1, 15.1, *De iei.* 1.5, 11.2, 13.1, where some claim Tertullian's views are heretical and novel. Throughout these references the claims are treated as individual accusations, not official declarations.

the one God” (*cum Deo erimus, simul erimus, dum omnes apud deum unum, De mon. 10.9*).⁸³³ Expressing his horror that some absolve mortal sins, Tertullian declares, “But it is in the church that this (edict) is read, and in the church that it is pronounced; and (the church) is a virgin!” (*Sed hoc in ecclesia legitur, et in ecclesia promuntiatur, et uirgo est, De pud. 19.5*). Finally, as evidence for one of his arguments with those who are not heretics, he reminds the audience that one who has fallen into schism “attains pardon and is restored to the bosom of the Church” (*ueniam consequi et in ecclesiam redigi, 12.9*). While these passages indicate that Tertullian considered both *psychici* and those who agreed with him within one broadly inclusive church, still other statements display that Tertullian ecclesologically distinguishes the two groups.⁸³⁴

In several instances often used to verify the older understanding of Tertullian as a schismatic, Tertullian refers to separate and distinct ecclesial bodies. He attacks “that bishop of Utina of yours” and the many digamists who “preside in your churches” (*ille uester Vthinensis ... ex digamia praesident apud uos, De mon. 12.6-7*), as well as “your presiding (elders)” (*apud te praesidentibus, De iei. 17.4*), in contrast to his own ecclesial community, wherein, “we excommunicate digamists” (*digamos foris sistimus, De pud. 1.20*).⁸³⁵ In reference to the *Shepherd of Hermas*, despite it having

⁸³³ ref. Jn. 11:21; 17; and Gal. 3:28. Also, *De exh. cast. 12.6*, a digamist is “among our brethren” [*ex fratribus*]. When writing against “heretics” (e.g. Marcion, Hermogenes, etc.), however, Tertullian makes no such stipulations.

⁸³⁴ Tertullian is capable, even in his so-called “Montanist” writings, of locating Christians from various regions in “one church” [*una ecclesia, De uirg. uel. 2.3*]. Evans, *One and Holy*, 27, believes Tertullian’s statement is inclusive of “psychics” and “Montanists.”

⁸³⁵ Other than Tertullian’s reference, only six other bishops of Uthina are known: Felix, the Council of Carthage 256 (*PL 3.1063B*); Lampadius, the Council of Arles in Gaul 314 (Sylvester I, *Epistulae, PL 8.817*); Isaac and ‘Donatist’ rival Felicianus, the Conference of Carthage 411 (*PL 58.104*); Gallonius, the Council of Carthage 419 (*PL 56.875A*); and Quietus, Council of Carthage 525 (*PL 84.179B*).

been dismissed “by every council of Churches, even of your own” (*ab omni concilio ecclesiarum, etiam uestrarum, De pud.* 10.12), Tertullian describes how “you depict upon your (sacramental) chalice” (*in calice depingis*) this very shepherd. The former statement indicates what is to Tertullian a distinct conciliar body from councils with which he identifies, and the latter a different sacramental setting. These passages suggest more than an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*; Tertullian distances his community from the sacramental and episcopal community of the *psychici*. How then can one understand the previous passages which indicated the two groups to exist within the same communion? Further passages found in Tertullian’s work allow for a distinction based on geography.

The data gleaned from the many passages which describe Tertullian’s religious opponents include references specifying those opponents as Roman.⁸³⁶ Seemingly out of place in an internal ecclesiological dispute, Tertullian remarks how divorce was not recognized “among the Romans, ... not till after the six hundredth year from the building of the city” (*apud Romanos post annum sexcentesimo Urbis conditae, De mon.* 9.11). He then returns to such language about the legality of marriage, and states, “The case is different if men believe that, at the bar of Christ as well (as of Rome), action is taken on the principle of the Julian laws” (*Aliud est si et apud Christum legibus Iulii agi credunt, De mon.* 16.6). Moreover, in the final days, “there will arise a queen of Carthage” (*exsurget regina Carthaginiis, De*

⁸³⁶ However, see Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 290; and Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 59, who assumes *psychici* refer to Carthaginian Christians who were not “pro-Montanist”; also, Trevett, *Montanism*, 73-6.

mon. 17.2) – Dido – and “her assessor will be the Roman matron” (Assidebit et illi matrona Romana, De mon. 17.3) – Lucretia – to judge the psychics.⁸³⁷

⁸³⁷ Tertullian’s “queen of Carthage” blurs Dido and the ref. in Matt. 12:42. For Lucretia, see Mattei, *Le mariage unique*, 394.

Concerning the relationship between the local and the universal church,

Tertullian explains,

Besides, throughout the provinces of Greece there are held in definite localities those councils gathered out of the universal Churches, by whose means not only all the deeper questions are handled for the common benefit, but the actual representation of the whole Christian name is celebrated with great veneration. (And how worthy a thing is this, that, under the auspices of faith, men should congregate from all quarters to Christ! "See, how good and how enjoyable for brethren to dwell in unity!" This psalm you know not easily how to sing, except when you are supping with a goodly company!) But those conclaves first, by the operations of Stations and fastings, know what it is "to grieve with the grieving," and thus at last "to rejoice in company with the rejoicing." If we also, in our diverse provinces, (but) present mutually in spirit, observe those very solemnities, whose then celebration our present discourse has been defending, that is the sacramental law.⁸³⁸

Tertullian derides Romans who reject the New Prophecy and who can only rejoice in "goodly company," (*compluribus*) in other words, not with those from "diverse provinces" such as Greece or Africa Proconsularis.⁸³⁹

Much scholarly debate centres around the *pontifex maximus*, also

⁸³⁸ *De iei.* 13.6-8: *Aguntur praeterea per Graecias illa certis in locis concilia ex uniuersis ecclesiis, per quae et altiora quaeque in commune tractantur, et ipsa repraesentatio totius nominis Christiani magna ueneratione celebratur. Et hoc quam dignum fide auspicante congregari undique ad Christum! Vide, quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum! Hoc tu psallere non facile nosti, nisi quo tempore cum compluribus cenas. Conuentus autem illi stationibus prius et ieiunationibus operati dolere cum dolentibus et ita demum congaudere gaudentibus norunt. Si et ista sollemnia, quibus tunc praesens patrociniatus est sermo, nos quoque in diuersis prouinciis fungimur in spiritu inuicem repraesentati, lex est sacramenti; ref. Ps. 133:1; and Rom. 12:15.*

⁸³⁹ Another passage that could be read from a postcolonial understanding is Tertullian's remarks in *De pud.* 8.1 about sewing together two clothes of "purple" that do not match.

entitled, *episcopus episcoporum* (*De pud.* 1.6) attacked by Tertullian.⁸⁴⁰

Barnes has argued that Tertullian's reference is to the bishop of Carthage, rather than Rome.⁸⁴¹ Many, however, disagree on the grounds that Tertullian's use of irony points to the region of the "Pontifex Maximus" of the non-Christian world.⁸⁴² One of the most compelling reasons for understanding Tertullian to be arguing against Rome is found in another of his works, *Adversus Praxean*, written possibly within "a few weeks" of the three treatises under discussion.⁸⁴³ While the document has been left aside up to the present because its primary subject is the patripassian controversy of a certain Praxeas, Tertullian does reference the opposition with the Psychics at play in *De monogomia*, *De ieiunio* and *De pudicitia*:

⁸⁴⁰ cf. *De pud.* 21 for an assortment of Petrine references that could refer to the authority of Peter claimed at Rome or that authority inherent in every bishop succeeding from Peter. For the accusation that Tertullian attacked Soter [as bishop c. 167-174], see *Praedestinatorum haeresis* 1.26, "While Tertullian wrote all things well, first-rate, and incomparably, he made himself reprehensible only in this, that he defended Montanus, acting contrary to Soter, pope of Rome" [*Qui cum omnia bene et primae et incomparabiliter scripserit, in hoc solum se reprehensibilem fecit, quod Montanum defendit, agens contra Soterum supra dictum urbis papam*]; and *Praedestinatorum haeresis* 1.86, "We read that the Tertullianists were once condemned by the Roman pope Soter." [*Tertullianistas olim a Sotere papa Romano damnatos legimus*]. G. Salmon, "Montanism," in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines: During the First Eight Centuries* vol 3, eds. William Smith and Henry Wace, (London: John Murray, 1882), 938, says Eleutherius [as bishop c. 174-189] was the first bishop of Rome to make any decision in regards to Montanism, and that the author cited here "is not a blunderer but a willful liar; ... In a later section, Predestinatus outrages all chronology by making Soter condemn Tertullian." However, because of most chronologies of Tertullian's works, Callistus of Rome is often identified as the referent; e.g. J.E. Merdiger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine*, (YUP, 1997), 32. cf. Tert., *De praes.* 30.1, "blessed Eleutherus" [*Eleutherii benedicti*].

⁸⁴¹ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 141; for an earlier example, von Campenhausen, *The Fathers*, 34; more recently, Rankin, *Tertullian*, 62; Tabernee, "To Pardon or not to Pardon?", 376, citing Barnes; and, Wright, "Tertullian," 1042.

⁸⁴² Some recent examples include, A. Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century*, (New York: Brill, 1995), 503-35; Evans, *One and Holy*, 32, who claims it is overwhelmingly probable"; Merdinger, *Rome*, 32-3; Osborn, *Tertullian*, 175, note 31. The title *Pontifex maximus* in Tertullian's day referred to the high priest of all municipal Roman religions, and was not claimed by the bishop of Rome until later. If Tertullian is criticizing the bishop of Rome, he would likely be following the example set by Irenaeus in the Paschal controversy; see Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24.2; and discussion in Elliot-Binns, *The Beginnings*, 106-7.

⁸⁴³ Barnes, *Tertullian*, 47; however, Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 488, spreads them over approximately four years.

For after the Bishop of Rome had acknowledged the prophetic gifts of Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla, and, in consequence of the acknowledgment, had bestowed his peace on the churches of Asia and Phrygia, [Praxeas], by importunately urging false accusations against the prophets themselves and their churches, and insisting on the authority of the bishop's predecessors in the see, compelled him to recall the pacific letter which he had issued, as well as to desist from his purpose of acknowledging the said gifts.⁸⁴⁴

Tertullian knows of the bishop of Rome's actions in detail and writes in opposition to the stance of the Roman church.⁸⁴⁵

While Tertullian focuses on other matters in *Aduersus Praxean*, he addresses the issue mentioned in the three works on Christian discipline. Throughout those works, the many Romanisms, such as Julian law and the *pontif* and *flamen* (*De mon.* 17.4), illustrate the religious conflict between two groups in Tertullian's thought: North African Christians and the Roman church. This understanding provides an explanation for how Tertullian can speak of one universal church, in which belong both his group and the Psychics, and still delineate two ecclesial communities with distinguishable councils, bishops and even chalices, each representing different religious identities.

⁸⁴⁴ *Adu. Prax.* 1.5: *Nam idem tunc episcopum Romanum, agnoscentem iam prophetias Montani, Priscae, Maximillae, et ex ea agnitione pacem ecclesiis Asiae et Phrygiae inferentem, falsa de ipsis prophetis et ecclesiis eorum adseuerando et praecessorum eius auctoritates defendendo coegit et litteras pacis reuocare iam emissas et a proposito recipiendorum charismatum concessare.*

⁸⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that the bishop was likely Victor, the first African bishop of Rome: (Ps.-)Tertullian, *Aduersus omnes haereses*. 7, names him to be "Victorinus," identified as Victor by Thelwall; and P. Holmes, *ANF* (1885), note 8, comments that the bishop was "Probably Victor." Likewise, Evans, *Tertullian Treatise Against Praxeas*, 76, believes this passage refers not to Eleutherus, but Victor who "was inclined to approve of the prophets" until Praxeas persuaded otherwise. Also, Hoffman, *The Status of Women*, 172-4, apparently on the basis of Tertullian's statement (*Adu. Prax.* 1.5, see above), believes Tertullian refers to Victor as the "devil." On the other hand, Trevett, *Montanism*, 58, believes the reference is to Eleutherus. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that the bishop referenced in *De pud.* need not be the same as *Adu. Prax.*; Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage*, 124, believes the grantor of peace was "most likely Eleutherus," but it was Victor whom Praxeas persuaded. If the reference(s) were taken to indicate Victor, however, it would reinforce the view that Tertullian was antagonistic towards African new elites who were closely aligned with Rome; see Elliot-Binns, *The Beginnings*, 105, who conjectures that many African Christians resided in Rome at this time.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSIONS

In the conclusion to his monograph on Tertullian's use of rhetoric, Sider explains how he understands his contribution to Tertullian scholarship. He begins with Tertullian's application of classical rhetorical devices as his starting point. Sider then adds,

We have, in fact, proceeded on the assumption that the perceptions of the early Christians can be understood and appreciated only when we have unraveled the intricately woven fabric of their experience. That this "experience" was a highly composite one has long been known, but still too little has been done to distinguish its strands. Our work in this study has attempted to set in conspicuous clarity a major, and, I have argued, a crucial strand, of the early Christian mentality.⁸⁴⁶

In a similar vein, this present thesis has not attempted to treat Tertullian in his entirety or even to exhaust the whole array of his identities constructed in his writings, but instead, this project has chosen to select Tertullian's "Africanity" as a starting point and, borrowing Sider's phrase, to "set in conspicuous clarity" an aspect of his writings. From this vantage point, scholars can revisit traditional discussions of Tertullian's life, writings and theology, by applying, comparing and/or rejecting the interpretation of Tertullian as an African theologian.

To return to the outline of Tertullian's life discussed in chapter one, the interpretation derived in the previous chapters of this North African Christian can contribute to the understanding attained by many scholars. While the longer version of Tertullian's name, *Quintus Septimius Florens*

⁸⁴⁶ *Ancient Rhetoric*, 132. Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 24, makes a similar disclaimer.

Tertullianus, is a late attestation, one can plausibly concur with Barnes that there is no real cause to doubt its authenticity. Additionally, one can also appreciate the name recorded in one of the earliest witnesses, *Tertullianus Afer*, in that it preserves an often overlooked aspect of Tertullian's identity, namely, that he was an African.⁸⁴⁷ As to his birth, no evidence remains that clarifies his heritage or class, requiring speculation from the thoughts and concepts recorded in Tertullian's writings.⁸⁴⁸ Because, however, Tertullian's writings indicate familiarity with a variety of non-Christian sources, and because so many of Tertullian's arguments cite scripture for support, caution must be taken when attempting to determine what thoughts derive from his African background. What can be assumed is that his African context contributed something to his writings and therein can be explored in accordance with his vast array of non-African sources. Nothing is known of Tertullian's father, but Tertullian does claim Africa as his father-land (*patria*), contributing only to the plausibility of assuming Tertullian to have descended from indigenous Africans and not from Roman colonizers. Data for Tertullian's education exist in the form of his eloquence as a rhetorician and his knowledge of non-Christian sources. In light of his training and the longer version of his name, one can presume that Tertullian had access to reasonable funds, perhaps indicating wealthy kinship relations. Therefore, Tertullian likely enjoyed the life of a new elite in his training and early career.

⁸⁴⁷ Also, those who called on his authority as an *Afer* in the Council of Carthage 411 (PL 11.1481D, 11.1482A, 11.1483B); and the many later historians who, probably relying on Eusebius/Jerome, preserved Tertullian's identity as *Afer*: Cassiodorus, c. 490-583 (PL 69.1235B); Isadore, c. 560-636, (PL 83.1045A); Bede, 672/3-735 (PL 90.551B); Ado, c. 800-875 (PL 123.85B); Hermann Contractus, 1013-1054 (PL 143.68B); Marianus Scotus, 1028-1082 (PL 147.672D); Bernaldus Constantiensis, c. 1054-1100 (PL 148.1311C); Ordericus Vitalis, 1075-1143 (PL 188.70A).

⁸⁴⁸ cf. Elliot-Binns, *The Beginnings*, 151, "In him [are] the characteristics of the African Church and the Phoenician people, of whom he was so proud."

Tertullian's relation to philosophy seems to correlate with other aspects of his repertoire, such as his use of Roman law, in that he utilizes concepts and terminology available to anyone of his caliber, but does not go so far as to indicate any real affiliation with a philosophical school. Even Osborn admits that his Stoic ideas "are not directly borrowed, but reflect the mental environment in which Tertullian lived."⁸⁴⁹ More generally, all of Tertullian's knowledge with such sources support the assumption that Tertullian did convert to Christianity at some point in his life.⁸⁵⁰ After his conversion, he must have progressed rapidly in his Christian devotion and understanding, allowing him to be seen by many ancient accounts as a presbyter. Regarding Tertullian's ordination, Barnes asks, "Has Jerome preserved a valuable fact, or has he projected back into the past his own quarrel with the priests of Rome?"⁸⁵¹ Although Barnes concludes that the latter is more likely, the ambiguity in Tertullian's writings where he claims to be one of the laity and also an official within his congregation is explained by the phenomenon of African lay-elders who can preach and govern, but perform no sacramental rites.⁸⁵² When Tertullian's use of the New Prophecy is understood not as schism and heresy but in terms of religious conflict between the Roman and African sees, one can better appreciate Jerome's claim that he came into

⁸⁴⁹ "The Subtlety of Tertullian," *VC* 52 no 4 N (1998), 369; for a complete index and discussion of Tertullian's pro- and anti-philosophical statements, see Osborn, *Tertullian*, 29-37; cf. C. Tresmontanat, *La métaphysique du christianisme et la naissance de la philosophie chrétienne*, (Paris, 1961), 626, who argues that Tertullian did not have a philosophical system, but "habitually adopted his opponents standpoints and proceeded from there to demonstrate its inconsistencies," cited and trans. by Bray, *Holiness*, 36. For an example of how Tertullian compares the treatment of Christians with the treatment of philosophers, i.e. they and he are different: *Apol.* 46; and *Ad Nat.* 1.4.

⁸⁵⁰ See *De paen.* 1.1.

⁸⁵¹ *Tertullian*, 10.

⁸⁵² Stewart-Sykes, *Tertullian*, 15-6; Stewart-Sykes, "Ordination Rites and Patronage Systems in Third-Century Africa," *VC* 56 (2 2002): 115-30.

conflict with the Roman clergy. Perhaps, Tertullian did reside for a period in Rome, even serving in the Roman church, much like another African at this time, Victor, the bishop of Rome.

Other aspects of Tertullian scholarship could be reevaluated in light of the interpretation presented in this thesis. One example is various arguments forwarded regarding Tertullian's timeline.⁸⁵³ A method often used by historians and theologians to interpret Tertullian's works is to track his theological "development."⁸⁵⁴ This is usually accomplished by first outlining Tertullian's life, indicating shifts in his practice and beliefs – e.g. his embracing of Montanism. His writings are then examined for signs of the theological/pragmatic readjustments, and they are arranged in chronological accordance with such developments. Finally, scholars delineate Tertullian's "early" and "later," and sometimes "middle," writings in order to deduce theological presuppositions found in Tertullian's various periods of thought.⁸⁵⁵ Chapter one reviewed the broad details of Tertullian's life as constructed by scholars and showed the trend of scholars in the last few decades to question the assumptions underpinning most scholarly biographies of Tertullian. Chapter nine reinterpreted Tertullian's invocation of Phrygian prophets in light of a broader conflict with Rome. Can one "track" Tertullian's anti-Romanism in a linear progression through his writings?⁸⁵⁶ Or, perhaps his

⁸⁵³ Some of the most influential chronologies include Barnes, *Tertullian*, esp. 54-6, and Barnes, *Tertullian*, rev. ed. (1985), "postscript"; Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 487-8; Braun, *Deus Christianorum*, rev. ed., (Paris: Études augustinienes, [1962]1977), 567-77.

⁸⁵⁴ See discussion by Rankin, *Tertullian*, xiv.

⁸⁵⁵ Braun, *Deus Christianorum*, 572, recognized problems with a strict Montanist/Pre-Montanist chronology and introduced a middle period: "Sous l'influence montaniste"; also, Barnes, *Tertullian*, rev. ed. (1985).

⁸⁵⁶ e.g. where to place *De pall.*: cf. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 54-5, for the year 205; and Fredouille, *Tertullian*, 488, who argues that it is the logical ends of his theological trajectory and is, therefore, the last of his works. Also, cf. *De praes.* 36.3-4, where Roman and African churches are portrayed in a positive relationship.

treatises vary so widely in aim and audience that a strict “chronological” arrangement is questionable.⁸⁵⁷

Because of the complexity of the North African context into which Tertullian belonged, and because of the highly rhetorical style of his writing, Tertullian defies classification into any one category. Whether one accepts the evidence that Tertullian was born into an African indigenous family of wealth and status, or if one chooses to insist on the possibility that Tertullian’s family were immigrants from another part of the empire, the writings of the apologist betray a strong affinity with the indigenous population of Africa who, with varying levels of intensity, often stood in resistance to Rome.

The writer’s talent and wit permit him to move across many lines of demarcation. It is not surprising nor is it implicitly erroneous that past studies of Tertullian have located him in a Roman context and understood him in light of Roman sources. For all that can be ascertained by historians, Tertullian was well versed in Roman literature, and he may have studied, worked and/or resided in Rome itself. It is even possible that Tertullian could have understood himself as a Roman – although it is telling that he never describes himself as such in his extant works.⁸⁵⁸ Such a self-description, however, would not negate other instances where he constructs his identity in African terms. Moreover, Tertullian accommodates many Roman, not to mention Greek, Jewish and other, material into his rhetoric.

⁸⁵⁷ e.g. *Ad Scap.* includes historical referents that allow scholars to firmly date his work c. 212 (in his “Montanist Period”), but it does not include any “Montanist” characteristics. For further discussion, see Dunn, *Tertullian*, 7-9. It should be noted that Tertullian scholars typically do not invoke a “strict” chronological argument based on his progression into the New Prophecy, but also apply stylistic arguments and arguments based on historical allusions in his works, to name just two.

⁸⁵⁸ cf. Arnobius and Lactantius, of whom Edwards, “The Flowering,” 220, says “Both, with the pride of Africans, decline to be merely Africans; on the contrary both make clear that they are Romans, beneficiaries and purveyors of a Roman education.”

In one sense Tertullian can take up the persona of an educated elite who distances his community from the barbarians fighting the emperor when writing to Romans (e.g. the *Apologeticum*). In another instance the apologist can distance himself from the Roman colonizers and new elites by attacking the Roman system and those who adhere to it (e.g. *Ad nationes*). Although examples can be found where Tertullian has experienced wealth and the benefits of his education, when given the opportunity he explicitly rejects the pursuits of wealth and nobility and rebukes those who do not (e.g. *De cultu feminarum* 1 and 2, respectively). Tertullian constructs ethnic boundary markers such as dress in the case of the *pallium* in order to display resistance to Rome, and, when challenged, he passionately attacks the new elites who have inculturated the toga and all it symbolizes in place of the traditional African dress. In the religious world of his day which infiltrated every aspect of human life, Tertullian's opponents worshipped the gods of Rome and not the local deities of Africa, indicating that the latter posed less of an immediate threat. Even the religion of Christian Romans conflicted with Tertullian's understanding of his religious identity, resulting in his defense of the New Prophecy and in his attack on the "psychic" bishop of Rome. Understanding Tertullian as an African who was capable of pursuing status and *gloria*, like many new elites of his province, but who rejected such pursuits assists the historian in explaining the many apparent contradictions in his writings and allows the theologian the freedom to explore the plethora of sources contained within his arguments, including the element of his African identity.⁸⁵⁹ In the

⁸⁵⁹ Similarly, Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 21, claimed "la coherence de son oeuvre" in his study. This is not to argue, however, that Tertullian was not contradictory in some of his arguments; see Dunn, *Tertullian*, 29.

opening chapter, the intention was stated to “catalogue” Tertullian as an African theologian. The implication, conversely, is that Tertullian has simultaneously been *de*-classified; it is suggested here that the categories of “Roman” and “African” – to name two – should be destabilized in order to allow for more complexity and fluidity when interpreting Tertullian’s writings, and any classification or identification of Tertullian should be qualified.

In conclusion a few words need to be said about the implications of this study for Patristics and African Theology. In chapter one the point was made that Tertullian is in one sense a case study for a broader question, that of identity theory. The methods and theories applied in this study could also be applied to other Christian writers which would allow for further discussions of early Christian practice and teachings. By incorporating Social Anthropology patristic scholars can avoid some of the ethnocentric tendencies in any endeavor, which would compliment the aim of historical theologians who wish to avoid anachronism. By allowing the anti-essentialist approach of recent anthropological theorists traditional categories such as “religion,” “economics” and “politics” can be unbounded, destabilized and further explored, which would permit scholars to avoid the reifying tendencies of certain dichotomous labels, such as “orthodox”/“heretic” and “Western”/“Eastern.” This approach, moreover, would sanction scholars to contextualize Christian sources in an attempt to attain a more emic perspective.

African theologians, as shown in chapter one, often invoke early Christian authorities with African associations. In doing so, African theologians can be accused of misappropriating those sources in order to

legitimize their own endeavors – as can any claim to the past.⁸⁶⁰ Moreover, historians can claim that such a practice is anachronistic and invalid, given that the African context of the early Christian centuries was in fact part of the wider “Graeco-Roman culture.” While both of these accusations can be adequately dealt with by African theologians independently from this study, it is hoped that the above discussion has opened fresh avenues for dialogue in this area by deconstructing the notion of a “Graeco-Roman culture” – which can be a pseudonym for early “Western civilization” – and by destabilizing what constitutes “Africa” to allow for a broader spatio-temporal referent while acknowledging the diversity inherent therein.

The conclusion of this thesis has noted some specific points where contributions can be made for further discussions. Overall, this project has cut across many traditional fields of inquiry and incorporates insights from many academic disciplines. It is hoped that they have appropriately and coherently intersected in the exploration of the writings, theology and identities of Tertullian, the African Theologian.

⁸⁶⁰ e.g. Ogbu U. Kalu, “The Golden Age of Christianity in Africa?: Early Christianity in North Africa Revisited,” *Nsukka Journal of Religious Studies*, 1 (1 1996), 34, refers to “romantic efforts.”

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