



**Latin (Advanced Higher): project-
dissertation**

Candidate evidence

The Advanced Higher Latin project–dissertation has a total of 60 marks available. Marks are awarded for the dissertation as follows:

- ◆ Content: 20 marks
- ◆ Use of primary and secondary sources: 20 marks
- ◆ Argument and analysis: 20 marks

It would also be useful to review the webinar recording on the project dissertation, dated 16th November 2020, which can be found on the subject page of the SQA website.

Candidate 1 evidence

A study of the different portrayals of Dido

Who was Dido? The answer may seem simple; the ancient queen of Carthage and lover of Aeneas. But when we begin to look more closely, such answers seem inadequate. In this dissertation I will consider some of the different ways in which Dido has been presented to us over the centuries, and what we can learn from them.

Although most people will think of Dido as a character from the *Aeneid*, Virgil's character may have been based on a real, historical personage. Prior to the *Aeneid*, she was written about by Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus in his *Philippic Histories* as rendered by Junianus Justinus in the 3rd century AD¹. This earlier account tells of how Pygmalion and Dido were siblings named as joint heirs upon their father's death. However, the people would only recognize Pygmalion as their ruler, despite his young age. Dido married her uncle, Acerbas, who was second in command to Pygmalion. Pygmalion had Acerbas killed in an attempt to obtain his wealth. But Dido tricked Pygmalion with bags of sand disguised as riches and then escaped with some of her attendants. They ended up in North Africa where Dido persuaded King Iarbas to give her some land. He gave her just the amount that could be encompassed by an oxhide, so Dido cut it into thin sections and placed it around a hill to get the maximum amount of land she could, and it became Carthage. However, Iarbas demanded that Dido marry him or he would declare war on her kingdom. Dido realized that she had no choice but decided to sacrifice herself on a pyre rather than marry him. Dido was later deified and revered for the

¹ Justinus, *Epitome Historiarum philippicarum Pompei Trogi* xviii.4.1-6, 8

rest of Carthaginian history. In this account, Carthage was founded seventy-two years before Rome. In the *Philippic Histories* Dido comes across as intelligent, resourceful, and impressive. She outsmarted two very powerful men, Pygmalion and Iarbas; she also forged her own path despite the adversity she faced. The way Dido is presented by Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus differs greatly from the character that Virgil writes about. Ovid's portrayal of Dido furthers Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus's positive view of an impressive, independent woman; it is very different from Virgil's account.

In the *Aeneid* we see Dido as queen of Carthage who falls for Aeneas when he stops there on his way to found Rome. Their love affair goes well for a time but then Aeneas chooses to continue on his journey and Dido is left ruined. Due to his departure, she will lose everything: her reputation; her kingdom; and ultimately her life. Virgil begins by portraying Dido as a woman Aeneas admires. Interestingly, the main focus on Dido is that she is beautiful and has many suitors. The impression that we are given of her is that she is "pulcherrima"² – most beautiful. It is also said that there is: "incessit magna iuvenum stipante caterva"³ – a great crowd of young men following her. The use of a superlative (pulcherrima) and the way emphasis is placed on Dido's attractiveness and desirability shows very clearly what Virgil wants us to focus on. This shows from early on what Dido's role in the story will be. She is shown through the lens of her desirability and use to men. Although Aeneas enters into the affair knowing perfectly well that when he leaves it will have dire consequences for Dido, he doesn't hesitate. Despite this, Dido still ends up being

² Virgil, *The Aeneid*, 1.494-519

³ Ibid

presented as the wrongdoer rather than the victim. Virgil uses Dido to make Aeneas look better. Throughout the *Aeneid* the picture of Dido we are given is of her being somehow inferior to Aeneas despite her position of power. Dido is the queen of a successful kingdom, loved by her people, and respected by many; Aeneas is merely an adventurer who has lost everything in the fall of Troy. Although we know that his future holds great things, at the time of their encounter Dido is in a position of much greater authority than he is. However, Virgil uses Dido's emotions to make her appear as weak and irrational. She is compared to a bacchante and is described as wandering around her city helplessly, her mind consumed by Aeneas. When Dido and Aeneas argue, we are given to believe that Aeneas is calm and logical, whereas Dido, in unflattering contrast, comes across as unbalanced, even mad – a slave to emotions she cannot control.

Portraying Dido in such a negative manner invests Aeneas with an aura of credibility. This comes at the cost of seriously weakening Dido's character. Even Dido's tragic self-sacrifice is described by Virgil in such a way that she seems overdramatic and foolish. Virgil undermines Dido's character in order to shore up Aeneas's. His portrait of Dido tells us a great deal about how women were seen in ancient Roman literature and the role they played in ancient Roman society. Women were there for men to use as they needed; even the most powerful of women were seen as inferior to men. However; this portrayal of Dido is challenged by the very different depiction Ovid gives of her in the *Heroides*.

While Virgil portrays a broken women driven mad by love, Ovid paints her as a stronger and more complex individual. From the very beginning of *Heroides VII* the difference between Virgil's Dido and Ovid's Dido becomes apparent. As Trey M

Muraoka puts it, "Dido's epistle to Aeneas creates a new character and a new version of the *Aeneid* which contrasts strongly with Virgil's version."⁴ Dido refers to her letter as the; "moriturae carmen Elissa"⁵ – "song of dying Elissa". This lyrical language of Ovid's epistolary text gives us an impression of an intelligent, well-spoken woman. This greatly contrasts with the mad, rambling Dido that we see in the *Aeneid*. While she still argues against Aeneas's decision to leave, she is not begging; she simply lays out a reasonable argument. She had wished for a storm to prevent Aeneas's departure, but having reflected on the matter she asked only that he thinks of the safety of himself and his son. She asks him to stay in Carthage only until the storm passes. As she says at one point: "I'm not worth so much that you should perish...spare your child." Here a striking difference can be seen between Virgil's and Ovid's versions of Dido. Dido in the *Heroides* is far less self-centred and puts others before herself. She is able to put aside her own emotions and see things in perspective, wishing her lover safety despite all the pain he has caused her. Although Dido is not letting her emotions rule her, Ovid does not attempt to minimize the extent of Dido's feelings. In fact he shows her to be more powerful because she is aware of and can manage her feelings, rather than – as in Virgil's account – being weakened simply by having them. Ovid writes about her being "scorched like wax torches dipped in sulphur" and that Aeneas is on her mind "day and night". She clearly still feels very strongly towards Aeneas. As she puts it at one point: "if I weren't a fool I'd wish to be free". Ovid portrays a character with

⁴ Trey M. Muraoka, "From the *Heroides*: Re-Centering Myth Through Epistolary Form", *Studies in Mediterranean Antiquity and Classics*, Volume.1, issue 1, p.8

⁵ Ovid, *The Heroides*, VIII

whom it is easy to relate. She is very much in love with Aeneas, even though she has had her eyes opened to his considerable shortcomings. Ovid does not, however, present her as weak due to this. She appears as incredibly strong throughout this text as she puts aside her own most powerful emotions to wish Aeneas well.

Having addressed Aeneas, she then goes on to talk about her achievements: founding Carthage; winning wars; and being a strong leader. Ovid shows Dido as emotionally strong but also intelligent and a highly capable ruler. Virgil's Dido seems to look to Aeneas for guidance, but Ovid shows her to be a far more independent character. She may have strong feelings towards him but they do not rule her or change her as they did in the *Aeneid*. The letter concludes with Dido saying what she wishes to be written on her tomb: "praebuit Aeneas et causam mortis et ensem.

ipsa sua Dido concidit usā manu"⁶ – "Aeneas offered a reason to die, and the sword. Dido killed herself by her own hand". This neatly sums up Ovid's depiction of Dido. She recognizes and regrets Aeneas's influence on her fate, but she takes responsibility for herself and her actions. The Dido Ovid portrays is rational, emotional, and self-empowering. Ovid gives the tragic heroine of the *Aeneid* a voice in her own right and shows her as a strong woman with a mind of her own.

The two depictions of Dido offer us two different insights into Roman society. Each is important in its own way. Virgil gives us the typical male-dominated version of ancient Rome that we are used to seeing, whereas Ovid's text could almost be considered feminist for its time. He gives a voice to Dido and through her to Roman

⁶ Ovid, *The Heroides*, VIII

women in general. This was a controversial way of writing, just like his love poetry; it gave woman power in a way that their society deemed unacceptable. Ancient Roman woman had one purpose: to be there for men. They were scarcely considered as individuals in their own right. Giving power to these second class citizens through his writing must have caused some controversy at the time. Viewing women as weak-willed, irrational, and ruled by their emotions served to reinforce the dominant stereotype and keep women in their place – that is, inferior in all important respects to men. It is this demeaning version of women that we see in Virgil's writing. Dido is mad with love and is portrayed as being less intelligent than Aeneas and susceptible to behaving in irrational ways. This was how women were meant to be according to societal norms at this time. They were not meant to be in any way equal to men. Even though Dido is ruler of her kingdom and Aeneas has nothing, he is still portrayed as having more power than she does. This would be inexplicable were it not for the prevailing view of women as second class citizens, indeed not as citizens at all. One of Dido's first appearances in the *Aeneid* shows how the worth of a woman was determined in the ancient world. She is ruler of a great kingdom, but the focus is merely on her beauty and multiple suitors, not her many achievements. Virgil's writing is misogynistic and full of double standards, yet it is in keeping with what was expected by society at that time. It is easy to criticize Virgil from a contemporary perspective. But it is important to remember that he was writing over two thousand years ago, not in the twenty-first century; he was simply reflecting the values and judgements of his time. Furthermore, the *Aeneid* was commissioned by the emperor to promote his rule and his values. This means that Virgil would have been under pressure to write about Dido in a certain

way. Ovid's writing, on the other hand, seems ahead of its time in many respects. Dido is very much presented as a person in her own right. She is shown to be self-possessed, intelligent, and powerful. Giving a voice to Roman women could almost be considered threatening – Ovid was challenging the image of women that was so deeply ingrained in society. Seeing women as individuals, as real people almost equal to men, was a radically different perspective that called into question core Roman values.

Given his portrayal of Dido in the *Heroides*, it might appear that Ovid was a feminist ahead of his time. Gayle Allan suggests that he provides “a uniquely female perspective of the predominantly male-centric tales of ancient mythology⁷” and, as a feminist historian, she admits that the *Heroides* has always been one of her favourite books. However, we need to be cautious about seeing him in this way. It must be taken into account that he openly scorned epic poetry and may have been using this work to undermine Virgil's epic. And although Ovid presented Dido so positively, in other works – such as his *Amores* – attitudes to women reflect the same societal norms as in Virgil. In other words, women appear as secondary to men.

It is fascinating to see how the same person can be presented so differently by different writers. Looking at the way in which Dido was handled by Virgil and Ovid – and by a host of sources since Classical times – should make us wary of accepting any single treatment as offering a picture of “the real Dido”. Who she was – and indeed *whether* she was, for there is still debate about her historicity –

⁷ Gayle Allanm “Ovid's Heroides: An Appreciation”, *Steep Stairs Review, Literature and Culture from Trinity College Foundation Studies, University of Melbourne*. <https://steepstairs.wordpress.com/2006/03/06ovids-heroides-an-appreciation>

remains uncertain. We can undoubtedly learn a lot about attitudes to women from the various portrayals of Dido. Whether we can learn anything about the actual individual who may have lived and died in Carthage so many centuries ago must remain a matter of conjecture.

At this point in history, Dido's name is linked inseparably to that of Aeneas. The drama of their relationship has inspired writers – for example Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* – and musicians – for example Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*. But there is considerable doubt as to whether Dido ever in fact met Aeneas. Historical chronology suggests that the turbulent and tragic romance we now associate with their names could not have happened. The repeated telling of their story in key cultural sources – Shakespeare and Dante to give another two examples – has reinforced myth at the expense of history. In so doing we are provided with a good example of how powerful a hold stories can have on the human imagination. In later appearances in literature, Dido's character continues to be illustrative of society and its values. For instance, in Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Dido is present in the second circle of hell, being punished for her lust. In this work, similarly to the *Aeneid*, Dido's love and passion for Aeneas are seen as wrong – punishably so. None of the shades in the second circle of hell are men, only women. Dido and Aeneas's love affair is seen as a sin that Dido alone was responsible for. In this way, Dido is very reflective of the societal view on women that existed when this was written. Once again, Dido is portrayed as weak and guilty for her emotions and the condemnation of her 'lust' shows a society where women's sexuality was taboo. Women were still there as the property of men, for their use alone.

Dido and Aeneas's love story was re-written again by Henry Purcell, Christopher Marlowe and many others. So many re-workings of their story, by multiple well-known writers through the ages, show how Dido is a character to whom many can relate. Her reaction to love and loss are very identifiable, and it is this which has drawn people back to Dido generation after generation. German author Charlotte Von Stein was one who could clearly relate to Dido. She wrote a drama named after Dido, and wrote their love story in a way that was almost autobiographical – she had just been thrown over by her lover in a way that reminded her of Aeneas's treatment of Dido. In Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Dido and Aeneas's tragic love story is once again explored. This re-visiting of their story, so long after the original version, speaks volumes about the power of Dido's character. Countless love stories have been written over the centuries, but something about *The Aeneid* keeps drawing people back in. Is it the character of Dido? Aeneas is a fairly generic hero, but it is Dido's love for Aeneas, and her character which causes people to gravitate to her.

Although much of Dido's legacy is soured by tragedy, her bravery, leadership and intelligence are also remembered. Dido's intellect is commemorated in maths, in that the isoperimetric problem is often referred to as Dido's theorem. This pays homage to Dido's resourceful use of the oxskin during the foundation of Carthage, when she obtained the maximum area she could. She also appears in Sid Meier's video games as a Carthaginian leader. In this form, she is shown as independent, someone to follow. This shows an appreciation to Dido as a historical figure – the woman she really was.

In conclusion, Dido's character has been portrayed in a variety of forms over the centuries. We can learn a lot from the different views that are given of her. To the extent that we can determine the real historical figure – and of course there is uncertainty about this – she seems to have been notable for her resourcefulness, bravery and leadership. Later, she became a symbol of love and loss in Virgil's *Aeneid*, and a voice for Roman women in the *Heroides*. She was used almost as propaganda in Virgil's work, as a tool for promoting Augustan values. The way her character is depicted in Virgil and Ovid's work casts much light on Roman society, in particular the way in which women were viewed. In later literature, once the story of her relationship with Aeneas became embedded in tradition, she became a symbol for tragic love, loss and sacrifice. The fact that Purcell's opera is still performed, that people still recognise the name Dido, shows that she remains a kind of cultural icon. Her love story with Aeneas shows how powerful a grip this kind of relationship has on us. Dido represents many of the qualities that we still value such as intelligence, leadership and bravery. But if she only embodied these values, she would perhaps appear as an almost cartoon figure. The fact that she is also flawed by weakness and emotion, against which she struggles, is what gives her character interest. It makes her a human figure with whom anyone, at any time, can identify.

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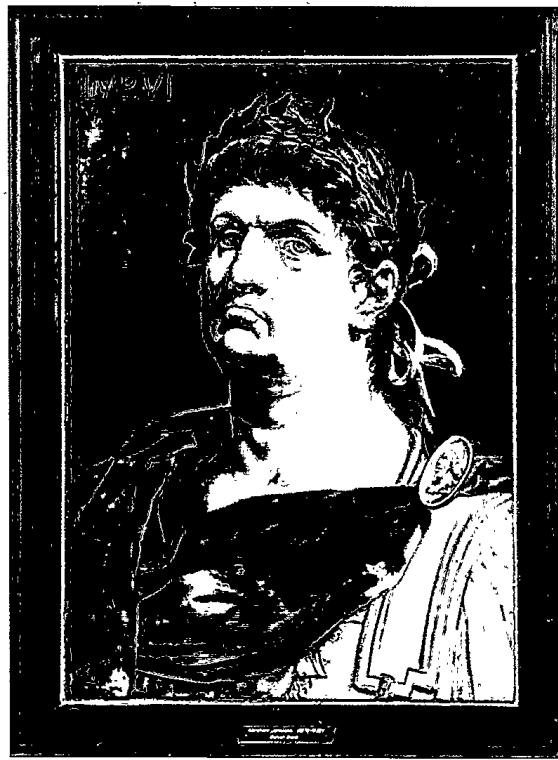
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Candidate 2 evidence

Advanced Higher Latin Dissertation

**How fair is the judgement that Nero
was a bad Emperor?**



Word Count: 4058

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Introduction

In 2016, the magazine *All About History* published an article in its 41st monthly issue entitled 'Nero: Rome's Deadliest Tyrant'. The words were emblazoned across the front cover, along with images of the city of Rome being ravaged by flames; the article itself attacked the final Emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty for his "greedy, frivolous, self indulgent" nature, concluding that "it is almost impossible to distinguish who Nero really was." One thing was certain, however – "the spectre of Emperor Nero, and the pain he brought his people, flourishes to this day."¹

Not only was the title of "Rome's deadliest tyrant" completely false (by the article's own statistics, Commodus had nearly twice as many people killed as Nero did), but views such as this have become commonplace in contemporary discussions of the infamous Emperor Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, who ruled Rome from 54 – 68 A.D. His name has become somewhat synonymous with tyranny and violence, despite the limited general understanding of his life. Indeed, much of the modern-day perception is based upon the almost fantastical stories we are given from the accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius, as well as numerous folk legends. These include his affair with and murder of his own mother, Agrippinna; the catastrophic Great Fire of Rome in 64 A.D., rumoured to have been started by him and during which he reportedly played the lyre and looked on as the city burned; and the violent persecution of Christians, whom he supposedly scapegoated as perpetrators of the fire. For all these reasons and more, Nero has come to be characterised, in the words of classicist Mary Beard, as "a self-obsessed, mother-killing pyromaniac."²

In recent years, however, historical scepticism has begun to seek the truth behind Nero's almost mythic status in ancient history. As more recent archaeological evidence is brought to light, it becomes apparent that the accounts left behind from the ancient period contain some amount of bias – and this would make a great deal of sense. Nero was succeeded by the Emperor Galba, who was instrumental in the revolt against him; being from the new Flavian dynasty, it was in Galba's interest to smear his predecessor in order to justify his grasp on power. The two key histories upon which scholars have relied – those of Publius Cornelius Tacitus and Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus – were written subsequently,

¹ White, Frances. "Nero: Rome's Deadliest Tyrant." *All About History* n.d.: 28-35.

² Beard, Mary. *SPQR*. London: Profile Books, 2016. p. 404

and such distance from the events themselves, as well as a degree of potential bias against Nero, must be borne in mind when approaching these texts.

The long-held view that Nero was a “bad” ruler has only some basis in truth, and even at this considers mostly his personal private life. This dissertation is not an attempt to defend, whitewash or praise Nero as an exemplary ruler; it simply aims to bring a more balanced approach to the debate, separating personal character from imperial leadership. If by a “good Emperor” we mean someone who improves the lives of their citizens, enhances the infrastructure of their dominions and holds a positive legacy, then Nero fits the bill. We need not judge Nero as a military tactician or conqueror, because it simply would not be relevant – since he did little to either expand or reduce the empire, and faced few armed conflicts in his time, it is difficult to reach an exact judgement. Perhaps the greatest indication of an Emperor’s abilities is how they respond in times of catastrophe, the Great Fire of 64 A.D. being a prime example. If the sources are to be believed, he was undeniably a morally debased figure – his violent matricide and almost unparalleled vanity are testament to this. But to acknowledge the good that Nero brought to the lives of so many, especially in times of unbelievable hardship, is not to run away from the moral vices of Nero the man; it is simply to place them in a context alongside the achievements of Nero the Emperor.

Chapter I - Nero as Statesman

I have addressed the matter of the Neronian stereotype, which characterises him as a bloodthirsty and destructive maniac whose grasp on power went to his head. Many scholars see his extravagance and violent tendencies as proof of this. Pick up almost any book about Ancient Rome and it will give the same impression of a man whose vices were numerous and who wrought immense damage. I do not contest the first half of that statement; in his private life, Nero was undoubtedly immoral. He *did* kill his mother by use of a collapsible wooden boat.³ He *did* go on crazed wanderings around the city at night, occasionally murdering the people who confronted him.⁴ And while Suetonius' description of his singing to appreciate the beauty of the Great Fire of Rome has been called into question,⁵ it would not be surprising if it was true.

But debating the ethics of Nero's conduct brings us no closer to an understanding of his merits as a ruler of the Empire. Issues of morality are both relevant and necessary, but only as far as it has a bearing on his duties. And there are clear examples from throughout his political career of his violent and sadistic personality feeding into his role as Emperor. The defining one was his alleged persecution of Christians, and it is this that I shall here consider.

The fullest description of Nero's treatment of the Christians comes from Tacitus, who writes in Book XV of the *Annals* about the rumour that Nero was an arsonist, guilty of starting the Great Fire of Rome:

*"ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit quos per flagitia inuisos vulgus Christianos appellabat... generis convicti sunt. et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contacti laniatu canum interirent, aut crucibus adfixi aut flammandi."*⁶

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most elaborate tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace... Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were committed to the flames and burned.

The sheer brutality of the Christians' punishment is clearly indefensible, especially from the perspective of a contemporary scholar. Not only this, but Tacitus' suggestion that the Christians could be innocent, and therefore unjustly punished, would lend substance to the

³ Beard, p. 399

⁴ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *Nero* 26, translation by

⁵ Champlin, Edward. "Nero Reconsidered." *New England Review* (1990-) 19.2 (1998): 97-108.

⁶ Gaius Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44, translation by

view that Nero was indeed self-seeking; so much so, he was willing to sacrifice a significant number to a gruesome death in order to shift blame and thus save his own reputation.

However, we must be cautious with Tacitus' account. As F. W. Clayton has shown, historians such as Tacitus harnessed their information often from word of mouth in the form of stories and rumours passed down through generations.⁷ With this passage composed several decades after the event, we cannot be sure quite how reliable these stories would be; the farther the stories are passed from person to person, the more exaggerated they can become. Not only this, but prejudice and emotion may also have played a part in the portrayal of events by these sources, with Flavian bias against the Julio-Claudian Emperor, or even pity for the victims of the attack being a potential source of unreliability. The biggest reason to doubt Tacitus, however, is that he is the only recorded author to correlate the persecution of Christians under Nero with his blaming them for the fire.⁸ Religious persecution was nothing new in the Roman Empire: as Tacitus himself admits, "Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius" ("*auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante*").⁹ They were charged with and arrested for practising an apparently wicked and anti-social religion, and this was a long-running tradition in Roman law.¹⁰ So Nero was not exceptional in this regard. It is Tacitus and Tacitus alone who considers it so.

But does this make him a bad Emperor? If we consider Nero in relative terms, then his morally reprehensible violence against the religious faction does not by necessity make him a "bad Emperor" by the general standards of Emperors. Let us not forget that numerous previous Emperors were perceived to be morally deficient, often with destructive ramifications: though not officially an Emperor, Julius Caesar's lust for gold infamously led him to the pillage of small townships for no good reason other than to satisfy this greed; Tiberius' laziness and neglect of military duties left Armenia defenceless against Parthian invasion and Gaul against the German tribes;¹¹ and Gaius Caligula, disappointed that his reign had not encompassed a natural disaster for which history would remember him, sought instead to be remembered for the cruelty of his executions (at which parents of the

⁷ Clayton, F. W. "Tacitus and Nero's Persecution of the Christians." *The Classical Quarterly* 41.3/4 (1947): 81-85.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Tacitus, *Annales* 15.44, translation by

¹⁰ Beard, p. 398-399

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 399

convicts were made to watch).¹² Nor was this immorality a trend which stopped at Nero – even his successor, Emperor Galba, was prone to violence in the name of greed, as Suetonius chronicles how “he punished townships in Spain and Gaul which had been slow to receive him by levying huge taxes... he executed not only local officials and administrators, but their wives and children too.” (“*ciuitates Hispaniarum Galliarumque, quae cunctantius sibi accesserant... et praepositos procuratoresque supplicio capitis adfecisset cum coniugibus ac liberis*”).¹³ Beard is correct, therefore, in her assertion that “Nero is only one of a wide repertoire of different versions of imperial sadism.”¹⁴ Ancient Rome was a vicious place, so it should hardly surprise us that Nero exemplified this.

The barbarism he wrought on Rome’s Christian population is rightly frowned upon by those who pass judgement on Nero as an Emperor. It is one of the great scourges on his reign – just as in the same way the wild excesses of Caligula or the greedy ambition of Caesar were a scourge on theirs. By reinforcing the bloodthirsty imperial tradition of which Nero was a part, I do not wish to justify said bloodthirstiness, but merely to point out that in relative terms, it was nothing remarkably bad. Thus, while Nero’s reputation as the cruel perpetrator of religious slaughter generally places him in the category of bad Emperors, a contextualisation should help us to realise this was standard practice – to condemn Nero would be to condemn almost every Emperor in Roman history.

¹² Spivey, Nigel. *Classical Civilization*. London: Head of Zeus Ltd, 2015. p. 187

¹³ Suetonius, *Galba 12*, translation by

¹⁴ Beard, p. 398

Chapter II - The Economy under Nero

Perhaps the finest achievement of Emperor Nero is his management of the finance and resources of his Empire, especially within Rome itself. His economic handling made a genuine difference to the lives of countless citizens. But this fact is too often hidden behind the status Nero holds in collective historical memory. Many of the economic arguments made against Nero are surrounding his extravagance. This is often derived from the ancient historical accounts, like that of Suetonius, who tells us that Nero "never wore the same clothes twice," spending ridiculous amounts on personal fashion. Furthermore, it is argued that the gifts he made to fellow rulers such as King Tiridates were indicative of a disregard for money, which should be regarded with frugality.¹⁵ The problem, however, is another of Nero's private life and personal character versus his role as a leader. The fact of the matter is that the management of personal finances and the control of a vast economy are two very different things, and it would appear that Nero's talents lay in the latter – arguably the more important of the two. Particularly exceptional was his reasoned response to economic crisis.

Following the Great Fire of Rome in A.D. 64, the city, and indeed the Empire, faced economic disaster: damage to infrastructure was immense, with Tacitus estimating that ten out of Rome's fourteen regions were ravaged by the blaze;¹⁶ the destruction of warehouses and raw materials heavily impacted commerce;¹⁷ and the displacement of so many from their homes put immense strain on the labour force of the city. In response, Nero imposed two significant fiscal measures.

The first was the introduction of a new form of coinage, containing fewer granules of gold than before, down from 61.46 grains to 52.68 in every *denarius*. The effect of such an action was a 14% devaluation of the currency, which in practical terms meant more cash could be acquired for every pound of gold used to manufacture the coins. In a paper analysing the impact of this fiscal measure, the economic historian Mary Thornton argues that, at its most fundamental level, Nero's devaluation of the currency was a means to "increase the rate of the use of resources", stimulating the economic activity necessary to recover from the disaster more quickly.¹⁸ And the effects were not lost on the ordinary

¹⁵ Suetonius, *Nero* 30, translation by

¹⁶ Tacitus, *Annales* 15.40, translation by

¹⁷ Newbold, R. F. "Some Social and Economic Consequences of the A.D. 64 Fire at Rome." *Latomus* 33.4 (1974): 858-869.

¹⁸ Thornton, Mary Elizabeth Kelly. "Nero's New Deal." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 102 (1971): 621-629.

citizen; in fact, Nero's decision to devalue the *denarius* specifically would imply that his fiscal policy was conceived with the working man firmly in mind, as this was a commonly-used coin of low value, as opposed to the *aureus*, which was of too high a value for the vast majority. Hence Nero's monetary manipulation would have direct positive consequences for the funds of the average citizen.

The second significant measure was one for which he has been heavily criticised by subsequent historians. In Suetonius, Nero's extravagance is implied in the description:

*"Spectaculorum plurima et uaria genera edidit: iuuenales, circenses, scaenicos ludos, gladiatorium munus... sparsa et populo missilia omnium rerum per omnes dies: singula cotidie milia auium cuiusque generis, multiplex penus, tesserarum frumentariae, uestis, aurum, argentum, gemmae..."*¹⁹

He gave an immense variety of entertainments – youth games, chariot races in the Circus, stage plays, a gladiatorial show... Throughout the games all kinds of gifts were scattered to the people – 1000 assorted birds per day, and quantities of food parcels, as well as vouchers for grain, clothes, gold, silver, precious stones...

This has been interpreted as one of many actions demonstrating Nero's callous and wanton spending; they see it as a crass attempt to bribe the people and secure support. The cynicism of historical accounts may, in this case at least, be obscuring Nero's real intentions. Such actions would be seen as benevolent virtue in almost any other case. Perhaps this is a case of wilful misinterpretation by those who seek to smear or denigrate, as it is a difficult point to argue that giving aid and relief to one's citizens on such a scale is either immoral or ineffective. Taken at face value, the distribution of food and clothing to the people suffering the effects of a devastating fire are the actions of an Emperor genuinely concerned about the welfare of the people; his reason for being benevolent was less important than the fact he was so.

Considering the broader debate of Nero's success as a whole, his response to the Great Fire is entirely at odds with the Neronian stereotype of a man flippantly spending for his own gratification. Perhaps this is the fault of the ancient historians who lambasted his extravagance; economic analysis should lead us to the conclusion that Nero was not, as Suetonius would have us think, someone who "believed that fortunes were made to be squandered."²⁰ Nor were his actions, as Mary Beard suggests, lost on the common man, to whom "it can hardly have made much difference who was on the throne."²¹ This economic

¹⁹ Suetonius, *Nero 11*, translation by

²⁰ *Ibid.* 30, translation by

²¹ Beard, p. 403

policy was one which had tangible effects for the everyday citizen on the street. Through his manipulation of currency, Nero ensured his citizens were never out of pocket; through his obsession with games and public entertainment, he distracted citizens' minds from their financial hardship; and through his supply of banquets and food vouchers, he fed the poor. Albeit wanton with his personal finances, this vice was carefully counterbalanced by a generosity toward the Roman people. Neither was this confined just to Rome – Nero even sought to relieve the financial burden of other dominions, for example by lifting taxes on the people of Greece.²² Nero's reign, while marred by the moral questions which make up much of the contemporary discussion, was undoubtedly marked by fiscal success in the face of adversity. He combined good pecuniary sense with genuine concern for his citizens and, in his overcoming of the Empire's economic woes, he deserves rightful commendation.

²² Thornton, Mary Elizabeth Kelly. "Nero's New Deal." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*. 102 (1971): 621-629.

Chapter III – Urban Development under Nero

“Nero is perhaps most famous as a builder”²³ – summaries of Nero’s reign such as this one are generally penned with one particular example in mind: ‘The Golden House’ which Nero constructed as the grandest of imperial homes. The problem, however, is that the notoriety of the luxurious palace often overshadows the other aspects of his infrastructural legacy. The historiographical focus given to his project of self-gratification at the expense of his projects for the people of Rome has again given us imbalanced perceptions of the Emperor. In order to redress this, both Nero’s personal and public pursuits shall be examined.

The reputation Nero holds as a “builder” was forged in the aftermath of the Great Fire, when he responded with a programme of rebuilding, both to house the displaced population and to restore the architectural glory of the city. The major project of Nero’s rebuilding scheme was the construction of a new imperial palace – ‘The Golden House’. The archaeological remains indicate it was a luxurious space, complete with a 120-foot statue of Nero, a revolving dining room, and ornate gold decoration.²⁴ Suetonius’ description tells us of a “lake the size of a sea” (“*stagnum maris instar*”), for which he laid against Nero the charge of “pernicious wastefulness” (“*dannosior*”).²⁵ Speculation has led some to the conclusion that Nero intentionally started the fire in order to clear space for this, the architectural centrepiece of Imperial Rome.

This myth is one of many contributors to Nero’s bad reputation and, as long as it is promulgated, our judgements will be clouded. There are two reasons to doubt this notion. First, the fire began on the evening of the 18th July – according to every available astronomical calendar, one day after a full moon, which would mean the night was light almost as in daytime – which should lead us to question why Nero would order a plot requiring the cover of darkness to be carried out in such inconvenient conditions.²⁶ Second, the conflagration was started on the Palatine hill; thus, clearing room for his new palace can hardly have been the motivation, for this was far away from the site itself – it was left to chance. Even the scathing Tacitus is uncertain whether or not Nero was responsible, instead merely observing “the rumour” generated by the people.²⁷ So Nero was not himself the

²³ Beste, Heinz-Jürgen and Henner von Hesberg. “Buildings of an Emperor - How Nero Transformed Rome.” *A Companion to the Neronian Age*. Ed. Emma Buckley and Martin T. Dinter. Chichester: Blackwell, 2013. 314-331.

²⁴ Grant, Michael. *Nero*. London: Michael Grant Publications Ltd, 1970.

²⁵ Suetonius, *Nero 31*, translation by

²⁶ Hülsen, C. “The Burning of Rome under Nero.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 13.1 (1909): 45-48.

²⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*, translation by

instigator of destruction, but rather someone who simply viewed this 'clean slate' as an opportunity and acted accordingly.

Yet the most significant Neronian architectural project was not his palace, but his programme of urban development, which restored Rome to a supposed "new Golden Age"²⁸. In the areas demolished by the fire, Nero established living quarters of remarkable quality alongside the experienced architects Severus and Celar (about whom little is known). The new buildings were laid out with meticulous precision according to a rectangular scheme, and the streets were made spacious with long porticoes running along either side, providing for pleasurable, modern living. The new homes and work spaces were, of course, subject to a host of regulations, such as the requirement of a water supply, the guarantee of fire extinguishers and a reduction in the amount of timber used in favour of stone – all measures to prevent the spread of another fire on this scale.²⁹ In this way Nero was not simply rebuilding for the sake of fine architecture; he did so with the safety of his people in mind. Not only this but, according to Suetonius (a writer highly critical of the Emperor's spending habits), Nero promised to pay for the reconstruction himself, in order to further alleviate the financial burden on his citizens.³⁰ The urban development of Rome under Nero does not match his stereotypical profiling as a bloodthirsty and self-seeking ruler. This evidence should all point to the conclusion that Nero's rebuilding programme was a success – by building homes for his citizens, he was a champion of the people, and by ensuring safety regulations, he was a champion of the city.

As to the overall legacy of Nero as the builder of Rome, it was largely positive. The model of reconstruction that Nero had ordered in Rome was one replicated in numerous other towns across the Empire, for example in Ostia (built, incidentally, long after Nero's urban development was completed). The German archaeologist Heinz-Jürgen Beste has suggested that this is one of Nero's finest accomplishments: not only did he restore the city's architecture, but Nero also left behind a model for urban planning which was both aesthetically and practically valuable, admired and emulated across the continent of Europe to this day.³¹ Even the wildly extravagant Golden House was not simply a personal fancy. It

²⁸ Champlin, Edward. "Nero Reconsidered." *New England Review (1990-)* 19.2 (1998): 97-108.

²⁹ Beste, Heinz-Jürgen and Henner von Hesberg. "Buildings of an Emperor - How Nero Transformed Rome." *A Companion to the Neronian Age*. Ed. Emma Buckley and Martin T. Dinter. Chichester: Blackwell, 2013. 314-331.

³⁰ Champlin, Edward. "Nero Reconsidered." *New England Review (1990-)* 19.2 (1998): 97-108.

³¹ Beste, Heinz-Jürgen and Henner von Hesberg. "Buildings of an Emperor - How Nero Transformed Rome." *A Companion to the Neronian Age*. Ed. Emma Buckley and Martin T. Dinter. Chichester: Blackwell, 2013. 314-331.

was a public space for the people of Rome to partake in as well: they could roam around the parks within, enjoy public entertainments and spectacles, and marvel at the brilliant statues of their beloved ruler.³² Obviously there was a level of vanity in this, but again this is secondary to the fact that the people's lives were improved by the existence of the Golden House. With his crowning architectural glory, Nero aimed to portray himself as the great benefactor of the people, alongside whom he now lived. The building projects he oversaw were not, as has been accepted for the sake of a good narrative, an outrageous and out-of-touch act in the midst of widespread suffering. It was an indication that Rome had risen from the ashes into power and supremacy once again – both physically and symbolically.

³² Champlin, Edward. "Nero Reconsidered." *New England Review* (1990-) 19.2 (1998): 97-108.

Conclusion

In the decades following Nero's death in 68 A.D., there appeared three 'false Neros' - men who claimed to be the fallen Emperor returned from the dead to reclaim his position.³³ Tacitus and Suetonius would have us believe that this was simply a power-grab from desperate citizens, willing to take on the persona of an evil tyrant in the hope of political capital. But in light of the evidence discussed here, there may be an alternative interpretation: why would anyone aim for power and esteem by imitating a universally hated figure? Any judgement of the overall success of the reign of Emperor Nero will ultimately come down to a peculiar dichotomy between the dark private life of the man and the shining achievements of the Emperor. It is the job of the historian to take the accounts which we have been left and discern truth from bias (a task most challenging, considering Suetonius and Tacitus remain leading authorities on these periods of history). Nero's re-evaluation is a fine example of why this is such an important academic exercise.

As we have seen, Nero made decisions and pursued policies which improved the lives of his citizens. In particular, his provisions of food, clothing and housing of a sufficient standard were especially important to the people of Rome as they suffered in the wake of the Great Fire; in this vein, Nero's relief measures could be considered much like the modern welfare state. Whether or not he was the benevolent figure these actions suggest he would be is difficult to tell, but as long as he languishes in infamy, it is likely the answer will never be known. Nero was a bad man, and there is no doubting this - regardless of whether or not his savage barbarism was unique. However, the judgement that he was a bad Emperor is to a large extent patently unfair, especially when this view is based on moral judgements of character and relies on dubious sources. There is certainly a sizeable gap between contemporary representations and the evidence I have examined about him.

The question still remains of what we can learn by reviewing the reign of Nero, and why this is at all useful to us. This should be self-justifying: the fact that he and his reputation have suffered at the hands of historians, who failed to fully record his actions and misrepresented his intentions, should give us a prescient lesson in the power of a historical narrative. For centuries, Nero has been lambasted as a cruel, selfish, extravagant and warped figure, and these interpretations have rarely been challenged, nor been discussed alongside the remaining evidence of his sound economic thinking and general benevolence.

³³ Beard, p. 404

Perhaps, by starting to do this it may become possible to free up debate and turn the tide on the ancient judgement that Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus was a bad Emperor.

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Candidate 3 evidence

Did the Romans use harmony in music?

The role of music in Roman life and literature was very limited compared with the Greek culture. There were, no doubt, elements of Roman music that were native Latin as well as non-European; the exact nature of these elements is unclear. There seems to be the idea that Roman music lacked creativity, resulting in the idea that harmony was not used. However, if Romans admired the Greeks, Roman music might not be as monophonic as once thought. Roman music did not really attempt to find an identity of its own. As the Roman Empire began to rise and the Etruscans were no longer dominant, the Etruscans were still respected by the Romans particularly through their religious rituals. The use of music during their rituals influenced the Romans to do the same and so they employed the Etruscans to accompany their rituals with music. The lack of evidence towards the Romans playing or being involved with musical activities in society, makes understanding the Roman musical experience difficult and whether or not harmony was, in fact, used. Furthermore, very little is understood about harmony in Roman music or whether it was used at all. Surviving scores and written evidence is limited but short phrases, art and sculptures can help us build an image of what music was like but also help us to develop an understanding about harmony and whether it was used in Roman musical experience.

The Roman's use of trumpets in the military suggests harmony was not used. The Roman's love of trumpets was likely extended from the Etruscans who also favoured the use of brass instruments. Vegetius, in his *De Re Militaris* Book II, categorises the various horns according to their specific use in the army;

An extract from Vegetius¹:

“Habet praeterea legio tubicines cornicines bucinatores. Tubicen ad bellum uocat milites et rursum receptui canit. Cornicines quotiens canunt, non milites sed signa ad eorum obtemperant nutum. Ergo quotiens ad aliquod opus exituri sunt soli milites, tubicines canunt, quotiens mouenda sunt signa, cornicines canunt; quotiens autem pugnatur, et tubicines et

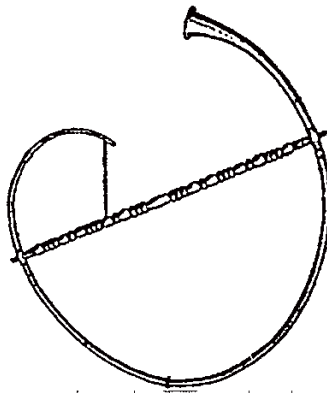


Figure 1

cornicines pariter canunt. Classicum item appellatur quod bucinatores per cornu dicunt. Hoc insigne uidetur imperii, quia classicum canitur imperatore praesente uel cum in militem capitaliter animaduertitur, quia hoc ex imperatoris legibus fieri necesse est. Siue ergo ad uigilias uel agrarias faciendas siue ad opus aliquod uel ad decursionem campi exeunt

¹ Vegetius de Rei Militaris Bk 2 XX11

milites, tubicine uocante operantur et rursus tubicine admonente cessant. Cum autem mouentur signa aut iam mota figenda sunt, cornicines canunt.”

A Roman horn known as the tuba, which comes from the Latin *tubus*², meaning “tube”, was a long, straight bronze trumpet with a detachable, conical mouthpiece similar to the modern french horn. Since there were no valves, the tubus was capable of only a single overtone series that would probably sound familiar to the modern ear, given the limitations of musical acoustics for instruments of this construction like the bugle. For example, ‘The Last Post’ played a remembrance service is played traditionally on an instrument without valves. The Roman tubus could have sounded very similar to the more modern bugle. This can be further backed up by the fact that in the military, the tubus was used for “bugle calls”. Another brass instrument used was the *cornu*³ which is Latin for horn. The cornu (which can be translated to cornet) was a long tubular metal wind instrument that curved around the musician’s body, shaped rather like an uppercase G. It had a conical bore (like a French horn) and a conical mouthpiece. The cornu was used for military signals and on parade. The cornicen was a military signal officer who translated orders into calls. Like the tubus, the cornu also appears as accompaniment for public events and spectacle entertainments. The cornu is very similar to the buccina (figure 1), a brass instrument also used in the Roman army. An aeneator who blew the buccina was called a ‘buccinator’. The word comes from the Latin *aēneus* or *ahēneus*, “brazen”, from *aes*, meaning ‘copper alloy’. The buccina was originally a long tube and had a cup-shaped mouthpiece. The tube was bent round upon itself from the mouthpiece to the bell in the shape of a ‘C’. The bar across the curve, can be held by the performer and the bell curves over his head or shoulder. The buccina was use for the announcement of night watches and summoning soldiers. Latin names for the brass instruments is important because the existence of a Latin name showed their prominence in Roman society where they typically did not exert themselves into Latinising musical vocabulary.

The extract from Vegetius demonstrates how brass instruments were used in the army. Vegetius mentions the ‘tubicines cornicines bucinatores’ so we know that the tubus, cornu and the buccina were used in the military. The tubus sounded charges and retreats and changing of the guards and the buccina was given to the imperator for use in his presence and in soldier executions. Military music is more practical and used to convey orders and encourage the soldiers going into battle. For instance, the bagpipes were used to encourage Scottish soldiers and The Last Post is used as a military signal. The Last Post was played on a bugle and the ‘tubicen’ as mentioned above, trumpet, was also used to signal the ‘rursum receptui canit’ (return and retreat). The ‘cornicines’, cornets, are used when the colours are present - the colours in military terms refers to ‘carrying your colours’ which is the flag. The phrase ‘Cum autem mouentur signa aut iam mota figenda sunt, cornicines canunt’ demonstrates that the cornet must play when the colours are planted. The use of the cornet highlights that Romans used instruments to identify importance in the military. This is also true for ‘Classicum item appellatur quod bucinatores per cornu dicunt’. The buccina or horn was given to a buccinator and they played in the presence of a chief or general, highlighting authority. Therefore, we can concur that although compositions of music are not used in the military, the Romans used instruments practically to give signals

² <https://www.imperiumromanum.edu.pl/en/roman-art-and-culture/roman-music/amp/>

³ <https://www.imperiumromanum.edu.pl/en/roman-art-and-culture/roman-music/amp/>

and orders but also to express authority. Based on this evidence, harmony was not used in



Figure 2

the military.

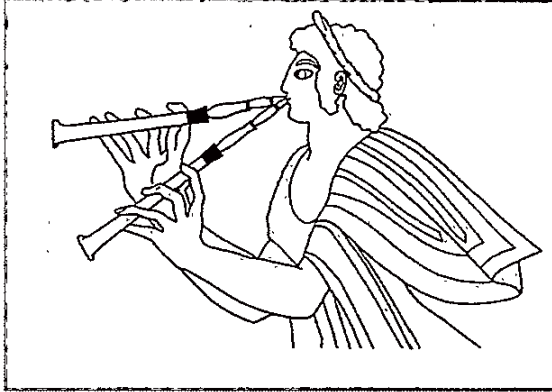
However, the fact that the use of the tubus, buccina and cornu each symbolise a different military signal, due to the different shapes and sizes of each instrument, they would have produced a different sound. The different sound of the instrument means that when played together, a form of harmony must have been produced. Therefore, it is possible that during triumphant processions (Figure 2 shows the triumphant procession of Marcus Aurelius, *'triumphus'*, in which a horn player can be seen in the top right hand of the sculpture), they played together in harmony. This isn't inconceivable since we know that brass instruments were played together from an extract from Juvenal Satire. Based on evidence from Juvenal Satire⁴, we can gather information about the performers who played the Roman brass instruments. Satire says:

"quomdam hi cornices et municipalis harenae
perpetui comites notaque per oppida buccae
munera nunc et, verso pollice vulgus
cum iubet, occidunt populariter"

This translates to: "Some of these fellows were horn-players, stumping the provinces in road-shows, their puffed out cheeks a familiar sight to every country village." From the evidence, we can assume that there were groups of musicians playing together. The idea of brass instruments playing together for entertainment could help us assume that when these instruments were played together, they played in harmony. Maybe they played different melodies at the same time (polyphony). Practically, each instrument is designed to sound different so the soldiers can hear the orders. For entertainment, the instruments played together produced harmony that people could listen to on the street. We can conclude that the Romans used music practically and without harmony in the military, but for triumphant processions and entertainment, harmony was likely used.

⁴ Juvenal, Satire III, lines 34-37

Figure 3



Besides the brass instruments, woodwind instruments were also used in Roman music. The *tibia* (Greek Aulos⁵), figure 3, was usually a double, piped instrument, with a double reed (like a modern day oboe) and was played with a mouth band to hold the pipe between the players lips. There is some confusion as to whether a double reed or a single reed was used since there are alternative descriptions of the instrument. This could indicate that there were similar instruments to the tibia. Modern replicas of the instrument indicate that the tibia produced a low sound like a the lower-range of a clarinet, however this would suggest it was a single reed since a double reed would sound more nasally (like the oboe). The tibia is iconic for its double pipes angled like a "V" with the player blowing at the point. There also existed a single pipe version as well. The player's fingers (figure 3) are clearly shown in positions that indicate keyholes. The little finger on the right is under the instrument instead of on top could indicate the opening of a keyhole. This could be indicate that the performer is playing two different notes, evidence which could prove that the Romans did use harmonies in their music. Since two pipes were used, it is possible that two melodies were played or a melody was played in harmony.

The tibia has been referenced in poetry and theatre, an indication of what it was used for but also whether or not harmony could have been used. We know that music was used in theatres since Vitruvius wrote a book about the acoustics but we do not know to what extent music was used. Unfortunately, there is little to be said about music in epic, tragedy and lyric since they were designed for reading by the poet. We have no evidence supporting the idea that music was composed for tragedy. With comedy, however, the situation is different. There has been times in theatre when a stage direction indicates 'the aulos-player plays'⁶. It can be assumed that this means the accompanist for the comedy, who perhaps play with the 'KHOROS' (chorus) too. It may also be likely that the character could be pretending to play the tibia (aulos). In 'The Magic Flute', Papageno plays a dummy instrument, and a flautist in the orchestra plays the notes. This could be the same in the comedy, the person of stage plays a dummy instrument whilst a musician offstage plays the notes. It is possible that there was more than one 'aulos' used which suggests that the accompaniment could have been in harmony. This would have added interest to the music in the background and the play as a whole. We can depict an image of a few musicians accompanying the play as this is what they would have been done in the renaissance through to modern day period. From this we can assume that harmony was used at some point due to the double piped instrument and that not all the musicians would have been playing in unison.

⁵<http://www.crystalinks.com/romemusic.html>

⁶Music in Ancient Greece and Rome, John G. Landels, pg.183

Apart from music being used in comedy, there is some evidence as to what else music was used for. The writer Plautus uses the word 'KHOROS' meaning song or chorus.⁷ Neither the lyrics or the music was ever written down by the poet but this can be used as evidence that music was used in theatre. Whether it was in harmony or unison will remain unknown since it depends on how many chorus members there were and what their purpose was. Although the word 'KHOROS' was related several times in the script, this does not represent the musical content as a whole. An integral part of almost every social occasion was performance of the song (*carmen*). The *Carmen Saeculare* (Latin for "Secular Hymn" or "Song of the Ages") is a hymn in Sapphic meter written by the Roman poet Horace. It was commissioned by the Roman emperor Augustus in 17 BC.⁸ The hymn was sung by a chorus of twenty-seven maidens and the same number of youths on the occasion of the 'Ludi Saeculares' (Secular Games). The mythological and religious song is in the form of a prayer addressed to Phoebus (Apollo) and Diana. Although, it is not sure what the *Carmen Saeculare* sounded like, or whether harmony or an accompaniment was used, the number of musicians (singers) involved suggest there was more than one part. Whether this song was written for two parts or more, we can assume that more than one melodic line was used. It is possible they sang unaccompanied or an instrument played along with them. For such a big event, I believe that this song was important and so harmony was used to show off the talent of the Romans. Perhaps the 'KHOROS' in theatre also sang in harmony if the songs for spectacles were. Voices in harmony had been around before the Romans

⁷Ibid. pg.183

⁸<https://www.imperiumromanum.edu.pl/en/roman-art-and-culture/roman-music/>

(plainchant in the medieval period) and so the Romans also used harmony in their singing



Figure 4 (Right)



Figure 5 (Left)

too.

Perhaps the most recognisable instrument from the ancient world, the lyre continued its high level of popularity over centuries. The lyre was borrowed from the Greeks and was made from wood or a tortoise shell with strings stretched across (Figure 4). The lyre was held in one arm and was played by plucking the strings with the other hand. Described simply as a portable harp it had various numbers of strings with four, seven and ten being the favourite and was strummed with a plectrum. It was used widely and in many combinations with other instruments such as the kithara and was often used as an accompaniment for poetry. The lyre's professional counterpart was the kithara (also spelt cithara) which was a larger and heavier instrument with a box frame and strings. The kithara was played and held upright (figure 5). There were originally three strings, then later up to twelve strings passed over the bridge at the lower end of the instrument. The strings were played with a plectrum, the left-

hand fingers dampening unwanted strings and are said to at times, stop the strings or producing harmonics.⁹ This allowed a more louder dynamic than the lyre and it sounded more delicate. The kithara was played on a daily basis as well as during formal occasions. It was believed that the gods of music such as Apollo and the Muses gave the musicians of Rome who played the kithara the ability to hypnotise their listeners.¹⁰ In Tacitus, it mentions Emperor Nero 'singing to the lyre.'¹¹ Stringed instrument accompanying poetry was also used in the renaissance period which later developed to produce the 'Air', a poetic song accompanied by the simple chords of a lute. To me, this sounds very similar to the idea of Roman poetry being accompanied by the lyre or kithara or both. The 'Air' was accompanied by simple chords, so harmony was used which means this could potentially have also been done by the Romans. Based on the evidence of the number of strings on each instrument which would have been plucked or strummed, more than note would have been played and so harmonies would have been used, probably very simple but ultimately effective as a



Figure 6

simple accompaniment for poetry.

The water organ was the keyed instrument of the era. We usually think of big, bold chords and a large sound so is this the case with the water organ used by the Romans?

The water organ was described by Vitruvius¹² (Figure 6):

"De hydraulicis autem, quas habeant ratiocinationes, quam brevissime proximeque attingere potero et scriptura consequi, non praetermittam. De materia compacta basi, ara in ea ex aere fabricata conlocatur. Supra basim eriguntur regulae dextra ac sinistra scalari forma

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/art/kithara>

¹⁰ <https://www.imperiumromanum.edu.pl/en/roman-art-and-culture/roman-music/amp/>

¹¹ Tacitus, The Annals of Imperial Rome, pg.377

¹² Vitruvius II, Book X, De Architectura,pg.315-318

compactae, quibus includuntur aerei modioli, fundulis ambulatilibus ex torno subtiliter subactis habentibus fixos in medio ferreos ancones et verticulis cum vectibus coniunctos, pellibusque lanatis involutis. Item in summa planitia foramina circiter digitorum ternum. Quibus foraminibus proxime in verticulis conlocati aerei delphini pendentia habent catenis cymbala ex ore infra foramina modiolorum calata.'

Vitruvius describes the water organ - 'De hydraulicis' - as a 'base made of framed wood and a bronze vessel is placed upon it', which comes from the Latin 'De materia compacta basi, ara in ea ex aere fabricata conlocatur.' Furthermore, 'on the base, uprights are set up left and right, with rungs like a ladder. Between these, bronze cylinders are enclosed. Pistons which move up and down are accurately wrought on a lathe, and with iron piston rods fixed in the middle. These rods are joined by pins to levers, and the pistons are covered with leather and wool. Further, on the top surface of the cylinders are openings about three fingers broad. Adjoining the openings and placed on pins are bronze dolphins with valves hanging by chains from their mouths and secured below the openings of the cylinders.'

Vitruvius's description helps us understand the structure of the water organ which can give us an indication of what it sounded like. The instrument's mechanics and water were held in a large alter-like base and the pipes stood vertically across the top in a horizontal line. The air to the pipes that produce the sound comes from a mechanism of a wind-chest connected by a pipe to a dome submerged in a tank of water. Air is pumped into the top of the dome, compressing the air and forcing water out the bottom. The displaced water rises in the tank and the increased hydraulic head and the compression of the air in the dome provides a steady supply of air to the pipes.

"Itaque cum pinnae manibus tactae propellunt et reducunt continenter regulas alternis opturando foramina alternis aperiundo, e musicis artibus multiplicibus modulorum varietatibus sonantes excitant voces."

Vitruvius explains that 'when the keys are touched by the hands, they forthwith move the sliding bars backwards and forwards, closing some holes and opening others. By the art of music, the notes of the organ are struck with manifold and varied modulation.' From this description we can also depict that more than one note was held down at once - notice 'keys' and 'hands' are plural and Vitruvius explains that some holes were opened and others were closed. The lengths of the pipes are not necessarily to scale but the number suggests that the instrument could play a complete set of two-octave scales in several, different keys. This could also be used as evidence towards the idea that Romans did have some idea about harmony. Due to the size of the organ, maybe only a few chords were possible. The sound was probably different from a modern day organ but this is similar to the small harpsichord in the baroque period to the modern day piano. Instruments change and improve in quality. Vitruvius admits at the end of his description that trying to write about such a device is difficult and it is best seen and experienced for one's self to best understand it - 'Quantum potui niti, ut obscura res per scripturam dilucide pronuntiaretur, contendi, sed haec non est facilis ratio neque omnibus expedita ad intellegendum praeter eos, qui in his generibus habent exercitationem.' Maybe we won't know what it sounded like but its use can give us a further indication about Roman music and whether harmony was used.

Figure 6 shows a water organ and a buccina. The use of the buccina also highlights that brass instruments were not just used in the military but for entertainment. The idea of an instrument accompanied (or perhaps a duet) by an instrument with keys is a form used throughout history. To have an accompaniment would suggest harmony whether in chords or different melodies interweaving (polyphony) as we theorised with the kithara and lyre.



Figure 7

This idea of accompaniments and duets can show that the Roman musical experience wasn't just one harmony in unison but based on evidence, included more techniques like homophony and perhaps polyphony. Furthermore, figures 7 and 8 demonstrate that more than two instruments were played together. Figure 7 revisits the idea of music being used for entertainment. The image shows the tibia being played with percussion; castanets and drums. The idea of street music and busking is still used today. There is no evidence of busking here but music on the street could be a form of entertainment. The tibia is likely to be playing the main melody, accompanied by the percussion which could be providing a basic beat or perhaps it might have been more complicated. The trio are most likely playing a simple melody accompanied by a beat to keep in time but this still shows that Romans used music to entertain. Whether harmony occurred here depends on the tibia player. Due to figure 3 proving that the instrument can play two different notes, harmony could have been used depending on how the player wished the music to be performed. Using harmony would have created more musical interest to the piece and so would have been more appealing to

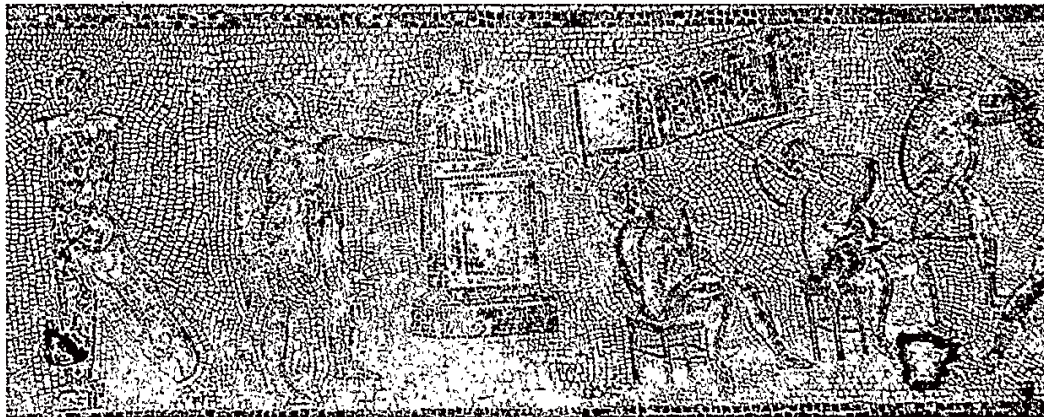


Figure 8

listen to.

Music was not just for the streets but used at spectacles and games. Figure 8, is a floor mosaic from II century CE depicting musicians playing during gladiators and animals fights in the arena (From the left side: *tubus*, *hydraulis* and two *cornua*). The mosaic depicts music being played to accompany gladiatorial games. The water organ is small in this picture, probably meaning it was portable and could be carried around. This could indicate that it was used for other events, maybe a banquet, for example. The use of brass could be used to celebrate the victory at the end of the fight since brass was used to celebrate victory in the army (triumphant processions). The ensemble of different instruments would also suggest that different notes were played. A small band such as this couldn't have been playing in unison since the brass instruments (the cornu and the tubus) must have sounded

differently. Either these instruments clashed or the Romans applied the basic maths of intervals (like thirds and fifths, commonly used in the renaissance) to work out the harmony between the instruments and this can be done by ear.

Therefore, from evidence gathered from texts, paintings and remodels of instruments, we can conclude that harmony was used. We may never know what Roman music really sounded like or if it was any good but we can conclude that there was harmony in their music. The fact that the brass instruments were all created differently and had a different sound suggests that even though, they were played individually for practical purposes in the army, when played together there was a possibility of harmony. Furthermore, the two pipes of the tibia suggest also that harmony could be played in this instrument, even if it was played alone. The Roman stringed instruments definitely had the ability to play in harmony, providing simple chordal accompaniments to poetry. In addition to this, the number of pipes on the water organ suggests that a couple of octaves could be played and Vitruvius's description suggests that two hands played the instrument, another example of where harmony could have been used. Even if simple harmonies were used, Roman music must have included harmonies since they would have been able to work out the basic maths behind the intervals (or the Greeks would have been able to and the Romans copied) or the very musically talented would have been able to hear the sounds produced by the instruments and work out how they could have been played together using different notes, resulting in some form of harmony. Whether for entertainment purposes of the street or incidentally by plucking more than one string on a lyre. Based on evidence, Romans created instruments that could play individually, together in groups in unison, but also in harmony proving that Romans did use harmony in their music.

Word Count: 3966

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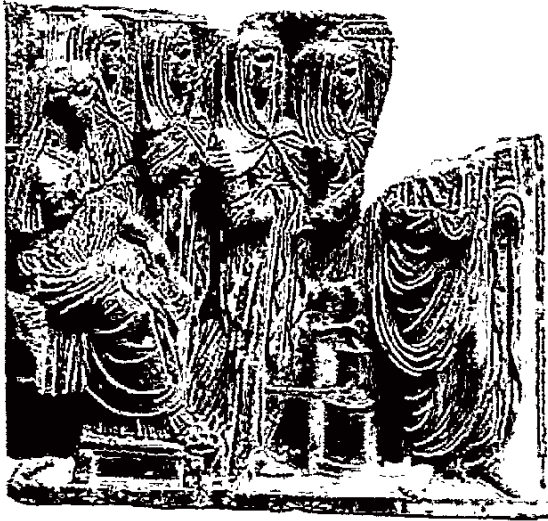
Advanced Higher Latin Dissertation

How Big A Role Were Women Given In Roman Religion?

Introduction

The Classical Roman period was known to be a world ruled by men. In most cases, men had the upper hand in everything and held sole power in several areas of political and social systems of Roman life and as a result, women had no choice but to obey their household's paterfamilias. However, women did enjoy some status and recognition within Roman state Religion, both in public areas and in the home. This investigation will consider their role within religion.

Chapter 1-Women in State Religion



This is a classical sculpture displayed in the Palermo Museum, Italy. This image shows the Goddess Vesta seated on the left along with some of her Priestesses, the Vestal Virgins. We can learn a lot from Roman sculpture about attitudes towards women and this is a typical portrayal of the Vestal Virgin—calm, dignified and clearly a “bonded” group. This sculpture does seem to treat these Priestesses in a respectful way.¹

Vestal Virgins

Although, Roman priesthood in state religion was dominated by men, there was one opportunity for women to join a priesthood. This allowed six girls from the top end of society to take on the role as a priestess to Vesta.

Only women were qualified to play this role and they surprisingly started at the age of six and they continued to serve for 30 years. Every 10 years, two virgins retired and two new ones were chosen in a lottery of Rome’s elite families. After their 30 years were up, some stayed on unofficially and the record was a 64 years old virgin. The qualifications to enter were strict as you had to be 6 years old, had to come from a top family and both your parents must have been alive. They were certainly treated with respect and honour and there is no doubt their treatment was fair.

However they were still controlled by a man, the chief priest or Pontifex Maximus, as this quote from Aulus Gellius shows:

“As soon as a Vestal Virgil has been chosen, escorted to the House of Vesta, and handed over to the priests, she immediately leaves the control of her father.”

“Cum virginem capiat, mox Vergilium, sicut electi sunt, in atrium Vestae deducta et in manu Chaldeorum et sacerdotis: et statim relinquit in potestate patris sui.”²

¹ Palermo Museum, Italy, <https://kids.britannica.com/students/assembly/view/108882> (accessed 03/08/18)

² Aulus Gellius, “*Attic Nights*” 1.12
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Vestal-Virgins> (accessed 04/08/18)

Duties

The reason they were looked upon to be really highly is because they had duties like protecting Vesta's fire and keep it going and if the fire went out then they believed that Rome would fall. Therefore the existence of Rome's future depended not on men but on women! This was a huge responsibility for these six women, and they certainly took their duties very seriously. They also looked after the rich people's wills e.g. - emperor and they guarded valuable treasures that were stored in temples. In addition to this, they also made daily food offerings at Vesta's hearth on behalf of Rome. Therefore, we can see that men trusted them to hold this important role to ultimately protect and continue to run city as all of Rome relied on their activities which had to be carried out correctly under all circumstances.

Punishments

However, at some points they were given severe punishment if they were not giving enough attention to the flame. The punishment was getting a beating. Although this might seem extreme, it is understandable if Rome's future depended on getting these duties right. A more serious crime was losing their virginity and the punishment of this was to be buried alive along with food to help survive for seven days which resulted in slow starvation and eventually death. This shows women were still dominated by men as they had no right to defend themselves once charged with misconduct.

All punishment was given to them by men i.e. the priests, who acted as surrogate fathers to them. The Roman historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote:

"According to the law, the priests are the investigators and the punishers of the misdeeds."
"Secundum legem, et sacerdotes tui facti sunt scrutatores, et in malitiis punitores."³

Perhaps, looking back from the modern world, they should have left it for the gods to punish them!

Privileges

In contrast, the Vestal Virgins did also have privileges as they got a huge state pension when they retired at 36. They were also given VIP seats when invited to events. In addition, they were the only Roman women who could make a will. Also the only Roman women who were allowed to travel in a four wheeled vehicle in Rome. Most importantly, they were the only women who were trusted to appear as witnesses in courts and they did not have to swear oaths as everyone trusted them and believed them anyway. This demonstrates how highly they thought of them that they gave them special arrangements and shows that they were on a rank and status that was higher than everyone else's which is why they could appear in courts as witnesses and not swear oaths. Their importance is

³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, "*Roman Antiquities*" 2.67
-<https://www.historyhit.com/the-vestal-virgins-romes-most-independent-women/> (accessed 04/8/18)

also seen as they got a huge pension by the state which shows that the state recognizes them as respected figures and role models of the state. However, this also shows the lack of treatment other women received as they only got these privileges because of their religious role. Overall, the role of women as Vestal Virgins was highly important as we can see from the amount of rewards and vital duties they carried out. This shows how high their status was compared to not only other women but also other men.

State Festivals

The Vestal Virgins played a vital part in state festivals and were encouraged to do so. At the festival of Vestalia, they would make offerings of sacred cakes which were also used at the Lupercalia and other festivals as well. This demonstrates the importance of these women at these festivals.

So it is clear the Vestal Virgins were held in high regard. They enjoyed special treatment and great respect. However, one cannot use the Vestal Virgins as evidence for all Roman women. There were only six of them and were not typical Roman women. This would be the same in the modern world with nuns within the Christian religion. We cannot generalize about the treatment of modern women just by looking at the treatment of nuns!

Oracles



This picture shows the priestess at the Delphic Oracle. She is wearing a head scarf indicating that a religious ritual is taking place. The man standing in front of the priestess may be another priest or a man consulting her. Either way, because she is sitting on a tripod, the picture shows she is in a slightly higher position than the man, which may be symbolic, showing her superiority.⁴

Women played a huge role in divination at oracles throughout the Roman world. Although, the Delphic oracle was started by the Greeks, it did however last in the Roman times and can be used as an example to demonstrate how important the role of a woman was in divination. The Delphic oracle was considered to be the most accurate oracle in the world, and it was in the control of a woman, which says a lot.

The fact that men were willing to travel long distances through the mountains to seek out the priestess in Delphi, shows how highly she was viewed. They would be away from home

⁴ <https://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/some-jottings-on-the-pronouncements-of-the-delphic-oracle/> (accessed 09/09/18)

for many days at a time and yet they must have thought it was worth it.

The priestess would be taken so seriously that if the answer was wrong then they believed that they probably messed up in the ritual building up to the consultation and the priestess would not be blamed.

Of course the women who provided the answers at the different oracles across the Roman world were in very small numbers, probably fewer than ten. So we cannot use these as an example of women being involved in interpreting the god's will in any big numbers.

To sum up so far, although priestesses involved in the worship of Vesta and at the oracles did have respect, authority and influence, they were in such small numbers they are not representative of Roman women in general.

Chapter 2-Women in Domestic Religion

In domestic religion, although the Romans performed rituals regularly to the household gods under the guidance of the father of the household in order to keep their families protected, the women did play an important role. It was considered that within the home the whole acted as a team and of course that included the women too.

Vesta

She was the goddess of fire and hearth and played a major role for the household as she ensured the warmth was always available which is why she was always worshipped. She was also seen to be above the other household gods. Because Vesta was female, there was a special bond between her and the women in the home. As a result, the women were held in high regard.

The Lares



Worship by the family at the lararium every day included participation by the women. The Lares were the guardians of house and the Lararium was the shrine to the Lares at the entrance of the house. Every person in the home had an obligation to show respect to these gods and the women were meant to take a lead in this.

This picture shows a statue of a Lar.⁵

The Penates

They were the spirits of the store cupboard. They were honoured at each meal, again by throwing a part of the meal into the fire. The women in the home would have had a keen interest in the food supply, so they would be very much involved in the rituals to honour the Penates.

It was vital for the survival of the family to have a good supply of food, and the women

⁵ Lar holding a cornucopia from Axatiana (now Lora del Rio) in Roman Spain, early 1st century AD (National Archaeological Museum of Spain). <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lares> (accessed 12/09/18)

certainly played an important role in ensuring this.

This quote from Cato shows that the women were required to take part in rituals at the lararium on at least three days in the month:

'Kalendis, Idibus, Nonis, festus dies cum erit, coronam in focum indat, per eosdemque dies lari familiari pro copia supplicet.'

'On the Kalends, Ides, and Nones, and whenever a holy day comes, she must hang a garland over the hearth, and on those days pray to the household gods as the opportunity offers.'⁶

Cato implies that this is a task which the women were responsible for. As a garland would have been made by hand from leaves and twigs, the woman probably would have had the task to make it first or at least supervise the slave who would have had to make it.

This reminds me of a ritual in Judaism, on the "Day of Rest", which is known as Shabbat, when it is a women's role to light the candles. This makes more sense, as she is known to be more involved in running the household and spends more time at home than the men. This was also the case in the Roman household. Traditionally you would find the woman at home and the man outside the home.

Women at Family Events

Birth

Giving birth in Roman times was a risky business and a lot of women died in the process. All the women in the home were expected to take part fully in rituals in order for the mother and the baby to survive. Since childbirth was something Roman men did not actively take an interest in, the women played a huge role at this time. Firstly, prayers were offered to Juno Lucina who was the goddess of childbirth. The windows of the property were blocked with thorns for protection. Wreaths would also be hung to convey the happiness of the household. A coin would then be offered to Juno Lucina which finished the ritual of birth. All these rituals were done not by the men but by the women. If the rituals were not done the whole future of that family was put at risk, so it is encouraging that the women were entrusted with this important religious duty.

⁶ Cato the Elder, "On Agriculture" 143.2

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cato/De_Agricultura/J*.html (accessed 06/10/18)

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Marriage



This stone carving of a Roman marriage ceremony shows a woman-not a man!-standing between the bridal couple supervising the shaking of the right hands, the most important part of the whole ceremony.⁷

All the women in the home took part fully in the preparations for the wedding and during the day itself. They prepared the bride in a special way in order to win the god's blessings and the most senior woman acted as a kind of promoted bridesmaid, which the picture above shows.

Death

Women played a role in preparing the bodies as they were usually the closest relatives. They had the task of trying to hear the words and breath, then close the eyes of the corpse. The body was then washed and dressed by the women in its best clothes and placed on a couch. Afterwards, they had to sweep the house to remove pollution and be sprinkled with water. They also led the mourning by weeping, tearing clothes, beating themselves and wailing loudly.

Overall

All this evidence shows, at the key stages of a family's life, women were given vital roles. They were given rituals to do and the successful completion of them was paramount. It is pleasing to see the women could be trusted to do these.

⁷https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?assetId=241199003&objectId=460103&partId=1 (accessed 02/10/18)

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Chapter 3-Women in Mystery Religions

Although mystery religions were open to all, women in particular were keen to join. It attracted them for many reasons- it got them out the house, it gave them a sense of belonging, it gave them excitement, it gave them friendship with other women and it gave them a feeling of importance, especially when given secrets.

Cult of Bacchus



This wall painting was discovered at the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii and clearly shows women participating in the cult of Bacchus.⁸

In this cult, women felt particularly included and special. This is because they believed to become spiritually close with Bacchus and by joining there was almost a marriage ceremony between them and the god. In return they were given a reward of a good life after death. Often in their real lives there were very few rewards and so this appealed to them.

Roman men did not approve of their women joining this cult as in their eyes it encouraged wild behaviour, drunkenness, vandalism and immorality. However, despite this, or maybe because of this, women continued to join in huge numbers.

The Eleusinian Mysteries

This religion centred round the cult of Ceres and her daughter Proserpina, so from the beginning it was dominated by females. As a result, women were keen to join as it gave them the opportunity to take part in rituals, festivals, processions and the chance to become a priestess.

⁸ Wall painting, from Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii. c. 50 B.C.E. Fresco.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Villa_of_the_Mysteries (accessed 10/11/18)
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Cult of Cybele or Magna Mater



This is picture of Cybele enthroned, with lion, cornucopia, and mural crown. It is a Roman marble, c. 50 AD. Now in the Getty Museum in U.S.A. The fact that the Romans used marble to make this shows how much money and effort they were willing to invest in a cult which was dominated so heavily by women.

This goddess, who was known as the “Great Mother,” came from Middle East. In a myth her lover castrated himself after they split up and he bled to death. She brought him back to life again. The myth’s message was that the people who follow her will also experience life after death, which was a reason to join the cult. After the Romans received the prophecy from the Sibylline books, saying that Rome’s future depended on Cybele being worshipped, they introduced the cult whilst knowing nothing about it. The cult eventually gained so much popularity that Magna Mater had a temple on the Palatine hill which was right in the heart of Roman political and religious life.

This cult attracted a lot of women, but the Romans were shocked when they found out that women priestesses were castrated men (as membership required castration). So, this religion blurred the edges between male and female. Wanting to be female, I suppose, is an indication how important it was seen to be by followers of this religion.

The Romans did not at first tolerate this cult, but it became so popular that the ban was eventually lifted. Later, it became so popular, that the original temple destroyed by fire twice in the next three centuries and was rebuilt is evidence that the cult survived the Republic and was still valued under Augustus. This shows how much demand the cult had that it managed to survive and still appeal to supposedly women through so many centuries.

This cult certainly valued women, as can be seen by the fact the men wanted to be women too!

Isis

This cult was imported into the Roman Empire from Egypt, where Isis was a goddess, whose husband Osiris was killed and chopped by his brother. His body parts got scattered all over the earth and Isis travelled the world to collect them up. Isis then brought her husband back to life, which represents the idea of life after death. They then had a son called Horus and they formed the model of a happy married family.

Women had a big role in this cult, as it became popular to woman instantly because it was a woman who was the main hero of the story. It did not appeal to men. Another reason why women joined this cult was because it reflected the importance of a marriage and happy family life. This became so popular amongst the women that many wives of senators were participating in this cult before it became a common part of society, and eventually also became popular amongst the merchants, traders and the poorer members of society showing that class did not matter. This is why it attracted women from all sections of society.

Gradually, it allowed women to take a larger role in the cult. Some experts consider the cult of Isis to be the origins of the cult of Mary in the Christian Church, worshipped as the “Mother of God”.

Christianity

There was a lot of tension between this religion and the official state religion and the Roman authorities were very suspicious of it. The cult declared everyone to be equal in the eyes of God, including women. The religion valued women as can be seen on how they treated the mother of Jesus almost as a goddess herself. As a result, women were keen to join as it was unheard of, anywhere else in Roman society, for a woman to be treated as an equal! This was the unique selling point Christianity had to encourage women to join.

Some women were given roles inside the organisation. In this letter to Trajan, Pliny tells him he has interviewed two slave girls who were said to be servants of the Church.

“quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabas ancillis, quae ministrae dicebantur, quid esset veri et per tormenta quaerere. Nihil aliud inveni quam superstitionem pravam et immodicam”

“I believed it even more necessary to interview two slave girls who were said to be servants of the church to find out what the truth was. Through torture, I discovered nothing except for a wicked and over the top superstition.”⁹

⁹ Pliny “*Letters*” 10.96

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When Pliny refers to “servants” of the church, he is probably talking about deaconesses which the Christian Church still have today. Since Pliny is writing about Christianity in its early years, it is surprising that women are already being given leadership roles. In fact, there have been very few leadership roles for women in the Roman Catholic Church ever since!

Conclusion

Roman religion had various dimensions, so to answer this question is more complicated than it appears. The role of women varied depending on which aspect of Roman religion we are considering.

In state religion, a lot is made of the fact that the Vestal Virgins and the priestesses at the oracles were women, but there were hardly any of them to make much of an impact.

In the home, women were much more active and at every important event they were relied to take a leading role.

In the Mystery religions, they dominated many of the cults and it was the men who felt excluded and resentful! So maybe the women took delight as this was “payback” time!

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