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Tafeln 1–31

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Marcia, Commodus' 'Christian' Concubine and CIL X 5918*

Plate 19

The name Marcia is most often associated in Roman history with the emperor Commodus' powerful concubine. Most famously, Marcia orchestrated the emperor's rather unpleasant death — effectively ending the Antonine dynasty — and then helped select the new emperor Pertinax in 193 CE.¹ Marcia also acted as Commodus' political advisor, much to the chagrin of Roman authors, and she reportedly kept several other lovers besides the princeps. This included Commodus' own chamberlain (*cubicularius*) Eclectus whom Marcia married, apparently while continuing her liaison with the emperor.² According to the third century Christian apologist known as Hippolytus of Rome, this same Marcia was even a Christian sympathizer (φιλόθεος) and was raised by the eunuch Hyacinth who had ties to bishop Victor (c. 189–199 CE). Hippolytus recounts that Marcia secured a letter of manumission from Commodus to release a number of Christian confessors who had been condemned to the Sardinian mines.³ One of those confessors, as the story goes, happened to be a man named Callistus, later known to tradition as Pope Calixtus I. By all accounts, then, Marcia was one of the more influential courtiers of the Antonine period. But because her personal history is inversely proportional to the significance she is awarded by Cassius Dio and Herodian, and because the name Marcia was so common, a case of mistaken identity has occurred.

In 1765 two statue bases were discovered together in Anagni, 72 km southeast of Rome. The first base honored an imperial freedman named Marcus Aurelius Sabinianus, *signum* Euhodus, for his civic benefactions and for his positions within the town, especially for restoring the baths and distributing largesse to the people. The second base honored a woman named Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias. This woman was likewise

* I would like to thank the anonymous referees at the journal for their insightful comments. I would also like to thank Cédric Brélaz from the Université de Fribourg for rendering timely help.

¹ Herodian. 1.16.4–17.12 and 2.1.1–4; HA *Comm.* 8.6, 11.9, 17.1 and *Pert.* 5; (Ps.-)Aur. *Vict. epit. Caes.* 17.5.

² Cass. Dio 73.4.

³ Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9.12.10–11; Cass. Dio 73.4.6 [Xiphilinus 269,19]. For Marcia as a Christian sympathizer see A. K. Strong, *A Christian Concubine in Commodus' Court?*, *Eugesta* 4 (2014) 238–259. For Marcia as a Christian see B. Green, *Christianity in Ancient Rome: The First Three Centuries*, New York 2010, 135; and now in more popular reception, D. MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, New York 2010, 167.

honored for her civic benefactions to the town, for restoring the baths and for distributing largesse to the people. In 1883 Theodor Mommsen published this second inscription as CIL X 5918. In the notes, Mommsen suggested that the imperial freedman Sabinianus was the father of Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias. But he also suggested that Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias was the same Marcia known from Roman history as Commodus' courtier and concubine.

Since that time, several commentators have expressed reservations with Mommsen's suggestion. In 1930, at the end of the entry on "Marcia" the concubine of Commodus in Paulys Realencyclopädie, Arthur Stein mentioned Mommsen's identification stating that his "guesswork" was very insecure.⁴ Thirty years later, in his challenge to Hildebrecht Hommel's interpretation of an inscription for a court physician named Gaius Marcus Demetrius — whom Hommel thought was the father of Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias, Commodus' concubine — Attilio Degrassi also commented that Mommsen's identification was doubtful.⁵ The intensive study of Mika Kajava on "Roman Female Praenomina" raised more direct objections. Kajava observed that the identification is naturally uncertain and then pointed out that the names of address — Marcia in Roman history and Demetrias from the inscription — also pose a significant obstacle to the identification.⁶ Along the way, others have raised similar doubts about Mommsen's identification, usually in footnotes attached to the name Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias.⁷

Despite these reservations, however, Mommsen's initial identification has become the convention. Indeed, even now the standard Classical reference works,⁸ popular textbooks on the Roman Empire,⁹ critical studies of Roman historiography,¹⁰ epigraphic

⁴ A. Stein, *Marcia 118*, RE 14 (1930) 1605.

⁵ A. Degrassi, *Scritti vari di Antichità* 3, Roma 1967, 27, n. 144; Hommel, *Euripides* (n. 56).

⁶ M. Kajava, *Roman Female Praenomina: Studies in the Nomenclature of Roman Women*, Rome 1995, 169–171.

⁷ E. A. Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives, Public Personae: Women and Civic Life in the Roman West*, New York 2015, 481, n. 51; B. Holtheide, *Matrona Stolata — Femina Stolata*, ZPE 38 (1980) 130, n. 18; G. Boulvert, *Domestique et fonctionnaire sous le Haut-Empire romain : la condition de l'affranchi et de l'esclave du prince*, Paris 1974, 324. For a brief summary of positions see R. Friedl, *Der Konkubinat im kaiserzeitlichen Rom: Von Augustus bis Septimius Severus*, Stuttgart 1996, 173, n. 119.

⁸ M. Lightman, B. Lightman, *Biographical Dictionary of Ancient Greek and Roman Women*, New York 2000, 157; M. Strothmann, *M. Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias*, DNP 7 (1999) 852–853; A. Birley, *Marcia*, OCD 922; PIR² M 261.

⁹ D. S. Potter, *Rome in the Ancient World: From Romulus to Justinian*, London 2009, 229; D. S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay, AD 180–395*, London 2004, 91–92.

¹⁰ H.-G. Pflaum, *La valeur de l'information historique de la vita Commodi à la lumière des personnages nommément cités par le biographe*, in: J. Straub (ed.), *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1970*, Bonn 1972, 224–225; C. R. Whittaker, *Herodian: History of the Empire. Books 1–4* (Loeb Classical Library 454), Cambridge 1969, 47, 110–111.

and material culture studies,¹¹ scholarly articles in Classical journals,¹² and monographs on Roman women,¹³ continue to state that Marcia, the courtier of Commodus, and Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias were one and the same person.

Yet, this identification is untenable. The woman recorded in the honorary inscription from ancient Anagnina was not the Marcia of Commodus' court. They were two different individuals entirely. The identities of the two Marcia women have been conflated because the sources — Roman historiography and the inscription — have been erroneously synthesized into a single 'Marcia.' Mommsen in particular used evidence on Commodus' Marcia to explain the contents of the inscription. The result is that the inscription has rarely, if ever, been taken on its own terms. Drawing from other epigraphic examples, however, I would like to offer a new reading of this inscription (CIL X 5918) based primarily on three key features: the onomastics/nomenclature, the status indication, and the date. In so doing, this essay exposes agglutinative methods of analysis that often indiscriminately combine sources to present a fuller picture of an ancient historical subject, especially one like Marcia who seems to have been alluring and pivotal. By focusing on the inscription, I adopt instead a discrete method of analysis that begins to parse out the divergent sources. Against the historiographic picture of the concubine Marcia, I suggest the following: Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias was a wealthy and distinguished (*femina stolata*) freeborn woman married to the imperial freedman Sabinianus with whom she was jointly honored as a civic benefactor.

Thus, the exercise not only corrects a longstanding problem in the prosopography of the late-Antonine period, but also offers a methodological gain. The added benefit is at least a partial recovery of the distinct identity of Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias in her own civic context. This can then steer future discussions of Marcia the courtesan in a different direction.

The inscription on the statue base honoring the imperial freedman (pl. 19, fig. 1), preserves the following inscription, all-but complete except for the lower right end which has some lost letters in the last four lines:

Euhodi / M(arco) Aurel(io) Sabiniano / Augg(ustorum) lib(erto), patrono / civitatis Anagninor(um), / itemq(ue) collegi(i) caplato/rum, decuriali decuriae / lictoriae popularis denuntiatorum / itemq(ue) gerulor(um) sed et decemviralis / s(enatus) p(opulus)q(ue) A(nagninus) erga amorem patriae / et civium quod thermas longa incuria / neglectas sua pecunia restituer[-] / statuam ex leg(at)is suis ponend(am)

¹¹ G. Migliorati, *Iscrizioni per la ricostruzione storica dell'Impero Romano: Da Marco Aurelio a Commodo*, Milano 2011, 86; E. Thomas, *Monumentality and the Roman Empire: Architecture in the Antonine Age*, New York 2007, 175. Also P. Zappasodi, *Anagni attraverso i secoli*, Vol. 1, Veroli 1908, 36–37.

¹² Strong, *A Christian Concubine* (n. 3) 242; M. Gray-Fow, *Neither Virgin Nor Martyr*, *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 13 (2006) 417–418.

¹³ A. K. Strong, *Prostitutes and Matrons in the Roman World*, New York 2016, 85–93.

cen[suer(unt)] / ob cuius dedic(ationem) dedit decur(ionibus)] |(denarios) V sexv(iris) |(denarios) II pop(ulo) |(denarium) I et epul(um) suffic(iens).¹⁴

(Statue) of Euhodus. For Marcus Aurelius Sabinianus, freedman of the emperors, patron of the Anagnian community and also of the collegium of wine/oil distributors, decurialis for the order of the lictors of announcers and likewise of porters, but also a former decemvir. On account of his love for his hometown and its citizens, because he restored with his own money the baths that had long been neglected through carelessness, the senate and people of Anagni decreed that a statue, (financed) from his legates, be put up to him. On the occasion of the dedication [he gave] 5 denarii to the decurions, 2 to the seviri, and 1 denarius to (each) of the people, and a public banquet sufficient for all.

The second base (pl. 19, fig. 2) for Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias reads similarly:

Marciae Aurel(iae) / Ceioniae Deme/triadi stolatae / feminae ob dedicationem / thermarum quas post mul/tum temporis ad pristinam / faciem suis sumptibus restau/raverunt s(enatus) p(opulus)q(ue) Anagnin(us) / statuam ponendam censuerunt / o(b) cuius dedicationem dedit decuri/onibus /(denarios) V seviri(is) |(denarios) II popul(o) |(denarium) sing(ulis) / et epulum sufficiens omnib(us).¹⁵

For Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias, a stolated woman, because of the dedication of the baths, which after a long time, they restored to pristine form by their own expenses, the senate and the people of Anagnia decreed that a statue be set up (for her). On the occasion of the statue's dedication she gave 5 denarii to the decurions, 2 to the seviri, and one to the people, and a (public) banquet sufficient for all.

The two monuments were a pair. While washing the foundations of the home of one Signore Delfino Apolloni in 1765, in the region of Anagni known as the "Piscina," the two statues were discovered together.¹⁶ They were broken into fragments, but the bases

¹⁴ CIL X 5917 = ILS 1909. The base dimensions are H: 154 cm × W: 61 cm; letters 2.1–4.7 cm.

The *lictors populares denuntiatores* (line 7) attended at the games of local magistrates. See E. S. Staveley, A. Lintott, *Lictores*, OCD 836; and CIL X 515 (Salernum). The end of line 11 on Sabinianus' honorary inscription is damaged (pl. 19, fig. 1). The last visible mark is a portion of the letter R. It reads *restituere*[-]. So whether the correct reading should be *restituere* (either a future perfect, or a perfect subjunctive), *restituere* (imperfect subjunctive), or *restituere* (pluperfect) is open to interpretation. I have translated as if the verb was the perfect tense, which would match the tense of *restauraverunt* in the second inscription. On the *epulum* (line 16), popular especially in Italy, Spain, and North Africa, see J. F. Donahue, *The Roman Community at Table During the Principate*, Ann Arbor 2004, 7–8; F. Mitthof, *Epulum dedit: Öffentliche Bankette in den lateinischen Inschriften*, in: L. Ruscio et al. (eds.), *Banquets of Gods, Banquets of Men: Conviviality in the Ancient World, International Conference, Cluj-Napoca, Nov. 23–24, 2012*, Cluj-Napoca 2013, 380–390.

¹⁵ CIL X 5918 = ILS 406. The base dimensions are 135 × 61.4 cm; letters are 3–4.5 cm.

¹⁶ The statues were reportedly so fragmentary that they were left behind, while the base inscriptions were initially placed in the large piazza of Anagni near the local post office. Then in

of each statue contained an inscription. The two monuments are nearly identical in size, while the inscriptions have overlapping content and the lettering shows a similar script. The *restauraverunt* in lines 7–8 of CIL X 5918 also indicates a joint benefaction by the two honorees. Accordingly, Mommsen published the two inscriptions together as CIL X 5917 and CIL X 5918.

From the start, however, Mommsen's notes on the identity of the honorees made several problematic associations. First, and most basically, Mommsen thought that the name Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias seemed to be equivalent to "Marcia" in Roman historiography.¹⁷ Second, because the *Epitome de Caesaribus* from the end of the fourth century describes the concubine Marcia as being "of freedman stock" (*Marcia generis libertini*),¹⁸ and the two inscriptions show similar nomenclature, Mommsen interpreted the woman of the inscription as the daughter of the freedman Sabinianus. Third, Mommsen thought that the imperial nomenclature on the inscriptions (e.g. Marcus/ia, Aurelius/a, Augg(ustorum) and Ceionia) pointed towards the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. In this case, says Mommsen, the woman recorded on the inscription would also be contemporaneous to the Marcia of Roman history. Thus Mommsen's explanation ends.

But by using Mommsen's initial prosopography of the inscription several scholars have since enlarged the biography of the concubine Marcia. For example, it is now commonly stated that she was a freedwoman originally from the household of Lucius Verus.¹⁹ None of the ancient literary sources about Marcia provide this last detail, however. This explanation of Marcia's background, in fact, depends on reading the inscription from Anagni — especially the woman's imperial nomenclature — back onto the Marcia known from historiography as being "of freedman stock."²⁰

Likewise, Guido Migliorati has recently identified the Marcia of Roman history with Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias. Migliorati states that Marcia was the daughter of the imperial freedman Sabinianus — a freedman of Marcus Aurelius — and of an unknown freedwoman of Ceionia Fabia or Ceionia Plautia, sisters of Lucius Verus. But because Migliorati presumes the traditional identification of Marcia in the first place, he can then use the nomenclature of the woman in the inscription to claim that Marcia hailed from the household of Lucius Verus. Migliorati also marshals the *Epitome de*

1877 they were transferred to the portico of the palazzo civico, and at the beginning of the twentieth century they were transported to the portico of the Cathedral near the door of the museum (Museo della Cattedrale) where they remain. Zappasodi, *Anagni* (n. 11) 37.

¹⁷ CIL X 5918 (p. 587): "Haec videtur esse *Marcia generis libertini* ([Ps.-]Aur. Vict. *epit. Caes.* 17) concubina imp. Commodi quaeque caedem ei paravit et deinde nupsit eiusdem liberti et interfectori Eclecto (Cass. Dio 72.4)."

¹⁸ *Huic Marcia, generis libertini, forma tamen meretricisque artibus pollens, cum animum eius penitus devinxisset, egresso e balneo veneni poculum obtulit* ([Ps.-]Aur. Vict. *epit. Caes.* 17.5).

¹⁹ Strong, *A Christian Concubine* (n. 3) 242; Potter, *Rome in the Ancient World* (n. 9) 229; Lightman, Lightman, *Roman Women* (n. 8) 157 who cite Marcia from Birley, *Marcia* (n. 8) 922. Whittaker, *Herodian* (n. 10) 47.

²⁰ So Whittaker, *Herodian* (n. 10) 47. Gray-Fow, *Neither Virgin Nor Martyr* (n. 12) 418.

Caesaribus as corroborating evidence for the inscription.²¹ Edmund Thomas has similarly presumed that the woman whom he calls “Ceionia” was a freedwoman, even though nothing on the inscription explicitly indicates the woman’s freed status. Thomas does so by citing that she is later known as the concubine of Commodus.²²

The increasingly common misidentification of ‘Marcia’ has now, perhaps inevitably, begun to creep into discussions of early Christianity. In her recent book “Prostitutes and Matrons in the Roman World”, for instance, Anise Strong states that Marcia was an imperial freedwoman who originally belonged to the household of Lucius Verus — citing CIL X 5918. Strong then explains how this same Marcia acted in support of Christians during the reign of Commodus.²³ The patchwork of these sources — literary and epigraphic — cannot hold together.

And yet, the inscription and the literary Marcia have become so interlocked that they are mutually informing, in some cases even circular, with details from the latter utilized to confirm interpretations of the former. For instance, Garrett Fagan asserted that “Marcia Aurelia, a concubine of Commodus who took part in his assassination, helped restore a bathhouse at Anagnia along with her father, an imperial freedman.” Of course, the Marcia known from Roman historiography is never called Marcia Aurelia. This can only be gleaned from the inscription. But Fagan then argues that the names of Sabinianus “point to a manumission under M. Aurelius and L. Verus,” and, Fagan claims “[t]he involvement of his daughter Marcia with Commodus confirms this interpretation.”²⁴

All of these approaches mar the inscription and inflate the history of Marcia the courtier. By twisting epigraphic details to fit the Marcia of Roman history or by reading the Marcia of Roman history back onto the stones, each reiteration masks the ‘real world’ that ancient historians seek. A closer look at the inscription and its comparanda, however, shows that a new interpretation is necessary.

*

The nomenclature of the inscription for Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias has, in many ways, been the root cause of the problem. The convention is to identify the woman from the Anagni inscription by using the single name Marcia, but this needs qualification. “Marcia” was a common name throughout the imperial period. It was used in a variety of epigraphic formulations for several slaves, freed, and freeborn women who had some claim of connection with the imperial household.²⁵

²¹ Migliorati, *Iscrizioni* (n. 11) 86 and n. 76.

²² Thomas, *Monumentality* (n. 11) 175.

²³ Strong, *Prostitutes and Matrons* (n. 13) 86, 90.

²⁴ G. G. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World*, Ann Arbor 1999, 153 and 261.

²⁵ Sossia Marcia (AE 1973, 46); see also AE 1979, 214 for three different freedwomen named Marcia. It is also commonly attested as a *praenomen* for women of higher social standing. Marcia Prisca (CIL VI 9492), Marcia Salvia (CIL VI 24627), Marcia Musa (AE 1990, 42). See Kajava, *Praenomina* (n. 6) 169–171.

Here are some examples: epitaphs are attested for a Tutia Marcia who was married to an imperial freedman;²⁶ for a Marcia Marulla and a Marcia Alexandria whose partners were imperial slaves;²⁷ and for a Marcia who was the house-born slave (*verna*) of an imperial mason.²⁸ A Flavia Marcia also co-commemorated one Threptus, an imperial slave,²⁹ and an Aurelia Marcia — probably from the late-second or early-third century — set up an epitaph for one Margarida, a house-born slave of the emperor.³⁰ Similarly, “Marcia” appears as a name for imperial slave women and freedwomen, such as one Ulpia Marcia who was an imperial house-born slave (*verna*) in the first-half of the second century.³¹ From the same period, a Turrana Marcia was a member of an association in Rome dedicated to worshipping Asclepius and the health of the divine imperial house. She was likely a freedwoman but clearly had a link to the imperial household since the collegium was headed by imperial slave managers (*vilici*) and gathered on one of the emperor’s estates.³² So at the very least, it is far more likely that during the reign of Commodus there was also more than one woman carrying the personal name “Marcia” who had some connection to the imperial household.

Beyond the commonality of the name Marcia, the variation in the recorded nomenclature also makes it impossible to securely identify the woman honored on the inscription with Marcia the courtier. The inscription’s polyonymy, for instance, sets apart the Anagnian woman from Commodus’ concubine (*concupina*/παλλακή) who is always known simply, and without any further specification, as Marcia. This is probably why Mommsen, to signal the tentative nature of his identification, wrote that it “seems to be” (*videtur esse*).³³ The inscription also appears to have displayed “Marcia” as a formal *praenomen*. And as Kajava says: should the identification of the woman on the inscription with the concubine be correct, one would expect that writers called the *concupina* in the first place by the name Demetrias, not Marcia.³⁴ For the woman recorded on the inscription, therefore, Demetrias rather than Marcia would have been the personal name of address.³⁵

Besides the nomenclature, the status indicators on the inscription again point towards two contrasting identities. The statue base, for example, records an individual with two *nomina gentilicia* (Aurelia and Ceionia), a characteristic that itself is certainly not in line with the epigraphic trends known for other freedwomen. The dual names seem to connote a freeborn woman not a freedwoman like Marcia supposedly was.

²⁶ CIL XIV 2938. Praeneste, unknown date.

²⁷ CIL VI 16707. Rome, mid-first century CE (Marcia Marulla and Marcia Alexandria).

²⁸ AE 1929, 154. Surrentum, late-first century CE.

²⁹ AE 2007, 233. Rome, late-first to mid-second century CE.

³⁰ CIL VI 13354. Rome.

³¹ AE 1987, 173. Rome.

³² CIL VI 30983. First-half of the second century CE. The inscription was found in the area of Monte Testaccio.

³³ CIL X 5918.

³⁴ Kajava, *Praenomina* (n. 6) 171. See also B. Salway, *What’s in a Name? A Survey of Roman Onomastic Practice from c. 700 B.C. to A.D. 700*, JRS 84 (1994) 124–145.

³⁵ Kajava, *Praenomina* (n. 6) 29.

The fact that the honoree is then called a stolated woman (*femina stolata*) is even more important in this regard. The title, coupled with the polyonymy, tries to convey that Demetrias was an elite, freeborn, woman.³⁶ The stola, perhaps needless to say, was a garment used to represent the respectability of lawfully married wives in possession of the Roman citizenship. The title *femina stolata*, though, is rare in inscriptions from the Latin West. Most of the relatively few women who carry this title either come from the equestrian aristocracy — and are themselves married to equestrians — or from the local *ordines decurionum*.³⁷ This is a trend that several scholars have already noted. And yet, in a vicious circle, the woman from the inscription is still cited as an exception to this general rule because she is thought to be the freedwoman concubine Marcia — an idea that is based on the common interpretation of the inscription.³⁸

Rather than dissolve the epigraphic phrase *femina stolata* for the sake of an established convention about the identity of the courtier Marcia, I suggest taking into account the epigraphic comparanda. A helpful comparative here is an inscription honoring one Marcia Ulpia Sossia Calligona from late-second or early-third century Tivoli.³⁹ The text reads: *M(arciae) Ulpiae M(arci) f(iliae) / Sossiae Calli/gonae stola/tae matronae / [so]dalicium iuve/[nu]m Herculano/[rum] patronae*.⁴⁰ Marcia Ulpia Sossia Calligona was, based on her title and nomenclature, the daughter of an equestrian named Marcus Ulpus and she was honored as a civic patron for an association of young men. The honorary text was also engraved on a statue base for her.⁴¹ The reader will note the parallels with the woman from ancient Anagnina, including the names and designations: Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias *femina stolata* and Marcia Ulpia Sossia Calligona *matrona stolata* were both civic patrons in Italy who were honored with statues and both are portrayed with titles that gesture towards an elite status. It seems to me far more likely that the woman honored on the inscription from Anagni was analogous to the woman from Tivoli and did not belong to the same social group as the Roman courtier Marcia.

Still, the most striking and distinguishing feature of Demetrias' honorary inscription is the lack of a freed-status indicator. There is little reason to doubt that Marcia the

³⁶ See C. Bruun, *Senators and Equites: Prosopography*, in: C. Bruun, J. Edmondson (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, Oxford 2015, 202.

³⁷ M. Chelotti, A. Buonopane, *La stola ma non il silenzio. Statue pubbliche per donne nell'Italia romana: un'indagine preliminare*, in: C. Berrendonner, M. Cébeillac-Gervasoni, L. Lamoine (eds.), *Le quotidien municipal dans l'Occident romain*, Clermont-Ferrand 2008, 652. Also E. A. Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna*, New York 2004, 13, 15 and n. 30; Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives* (n. 7) 13 and n. 24. See Holtheide, *Femina Stolata* (n. 7) 128–129. The epigraphic evidence appears to bear this out: CIL III 5283; CIL III 6155; CIL III 8754; CIL V 5892; CIL XIII 1898; CIL XIII 7269; AE 2001, 1719; AE 1998, 569.

³⁸ Chelotti, Buonopane, *La stola* (n. 37) 652; Whittaker, *Herodian* (n. 10) 110–111, n. 1; Potter, *Roman Empire* (n. 9) 91, n. 50.

³⁹ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives* (n. 7) 543.

⁴⁰ AE 1956, 77 = AE 1958, 177.

⁴¹ See Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives* (n. 7) 543; Kajava, *Praenomina* (n. 6) 170.

concubine either descended from a freedperson or was a freedwoman herself.⁴² But considering that the standard freedperson marker *lib(erta)* is absent from the inscription, it is problematic I think to assume that Demetrias was a former slave.⁴³

It is possible, though, that Demetrias came from “freedman stock” (*libertina*). The title *femina stolata* generally appears with “wealthy upper class” women who possess the Roman citizenship but whose nomenclature suggests it had only been acquired a few generations prior.⁴⁴ Because of this, the use of *femina stolata* as a status marker could also be marshalled to offset any inkling that Demetrias was a freedwoman, especially if her Greek *cognomen* might still evoke a servile past.⁴⁵ If anything, Demetrias was a freeborn descendant, or daughter, of another imperial freedperson(s), probably from the Ceionia gens. I will return to this point below.

The final aspect to consider is the date of the inscription. Following Mommsen's initial suggestion, the imperial names ‘Marcus,’ ‘Aurelius,’ along with the plural ‘Augg(ustorum)’ and ‘Ceionia’ have led many to believe that the imperial freedman Sabinianus was a freedman of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.⁴⁶ This supposition then formed the basis for dating the inscription to the reign of Commodus and for using it as corroborating evidence that the woman who was honored on the inscription was the courtesan Marcia.⁴⁷

The problem with the traditional dating of the inscription is that Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE), Commodus (177–192 CE), Caracalla (197–217 CE), Elagabalus (218–222 CE), and Severus Alexander (222–235 CE) all have the same *praenomen* and *nomen gentile* — Marcus Aurelius. Consequently, the separate freedmen of these emperors cannot be distinguished by nomenclature alone.⁴⁸ Nor does the double imperial formula *Augg(ustorum) lib(ertus)* attached to Sabinianus necessarily indicate a date between 161–169 CE. For example, the famous imperial freedman Marcus Aurelius Prosenes is identified on his sarcophagus face as *Augg(ustorum) lib(ertus)*. But a secondary inscription on his sarcophagus records that Prosenes died on May 3, 217 CE.⁴⁹ By the same token, both the imperial freedman Sabinianus and Demetrias could have flourished in the third century. Sabinianus' double imperial nomenclature (*Augg.*)

⁴² Hippolytus also says that the eunuch Hyacinth “raised” her (θρέψας). This term (from τρέφειν) is related to the term θρεπτός (*verna* in Latin), a term for slaves who are born in the house and/or adopted as foundlings (*Haer.* 9.12.12).

⁴³ Compare the indicators for the imperial freedwoman Aelia Laenilla from ancient Anagnia (CIL X 5915).

⁴⁴ Holtheide, *Femina Stolata* (n. 7) 130.

⁴⁵ H. Mouritsen, *Freedmen and Decurions: Epitaphs and Social History in Imperial Italy*, JRS 95 (2005) 41. Greek *cognomina* by themselves did not necessarily indicate a servile connection, however. See C. Bruun, *Greek or Latin? The Owner's Choice of Names for Vernae in Rome*, in: M. George (ed.), *Roman Slavery and Roman Material Culture*, Toronto 2013, 19–42.

⁴⁶ Thomas, *Monumentality* (n. 11) 175; Fagan, *Bathing* (n. 24) 261.

⁴⁷ Thomas, *Monumentality* (n. 11) 175.

⁴⁸ P. R. C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves*, Cambridge 1972, 24–25.

⁴⁹ CIL VI 8498 = ICUR VI 17246.

equally points to a manumission during the joint reigns of Caracalla and Geta between 209 and 211 CE,⁵⁰ which of course would mean that Sabinianus lived beyond this date.

The Ceionia gens included in Demetrias' name is also attested centuries after Lucius Verus,⁵¹ though it does appear on a few other inscriptions related to the imperial household. One inscription from Tarraco commemorates a certain Ceionia Maxima, also called Achorista. She was a freedwoman of Plautia, Lucius Verus' sister. She died at the age of thirty and was commemorated by her husband, an imperial freedman, identified as *Lucius Septimius Augg(ustorum) nn(ostrorum) lib(ertus) Polybius*.⁵² The nomenclature of Lucius Septimius plus the double imperial designation *Augg.* indicates that he was manumitted between, and thus lived on after, the range of 198 to 211 CE. His wife Ceionia Maxima lived during this same period. Another, quite fragmentary, *titulus* from Rome records one Ceionia Regina and an imperial freedman *M(arcus) Aurelius Augg(ustorum) [lib(ertus)]*. The two were undoubtedly partners as the text immediately commemorates at least two sons (*fili*).⁵³ Again, the double imperial formula for the imperial freedman is not restricted to 161–169 CE but extends to 211 CE and beyond.

Moreover, it is significant that the other occurrences of the phrase *femina stolata* begin in the Severan period, specifically during the reign of Alexander Severus (222–235 CE). The phrase continues to appear on inscriptions until the end of the third century, according to B. Holtheide.⁵⁴ For Demetrias, the date range of 161–169 CE, or even 177–180 CE, would be an outlier as far as Holtheide's comparanda are concerned.⁵⁵ The paleography of the inscription for Demetrias also speaks for the third rather than the mid-second century. The script is angular and at points ornate, showing signs of cursive. For example, some letter As have diagonal bars, half-bars, or no bars; the head strokes of the Ts are curved (*stolatae*, fig. 2, line 3); the Ls have serifs; and the F in *faciem* has a long tail (fig. 2, line 7).

All this is to say, the traditional date of the inscriptions (161–169 CE) is merely the terminus post quem; the inscriptions, and the life of Demetrias, could range much later. And unless more evidence for the date of the Anagnian baths surfaces — or if one wants to make the tenuous case that the woman recorded in the inscription is the concubine Marcia — there is little reason to date the inscriptions to what is merely the earliest date after which they were completed. In all likelihood, the woman from ancient Anagnia was honored after Marcia the courtier had already been executed by Didius Julianus in 193 CE.

⁵⁰ Weaver, *Familia Caesaris* (n. 48) 59.

⁵¹ M. T. W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire*, Oxford 1972, 50.

⁵² CIL II²/14, 2, 1093 = AE 1930, 152.

⁵³ CIL VI 12988.

⁵⁴ Holtheide, *Femina Stolata* (n. 7) 129.

⁵⁵ Holtheide, *Femina Stolata* (n. 7) 133–134. Holtheide dates the inscription for Demetrias generally to the second half of the second century. This is the earliest inscription listed in the accompanying table. All the others date to the turn of the third century or later. Holtheide does not provide a reason for assigning this early date to the inscription, though CIL X 5918 is cited.

Once the inscription from Anagni is detached from Commodus' concubine, the life of Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias comes into sharper focus. Those who follow Mommsen's identification usually suggest that Demetrias was the daughter of the imperial freedman Sabinianus.⁵⁶ While it is certainly possible that Demetrias was the daughter of Sabinianus, this interpretation is often guided by reading the Marcia of the Epitome de Caesaribus back onto the inscriptions.⁵⁷ To make matters worse, the inscription honoring Demetrias gives no filiation, just as it gives no freed status indication. So although it may be tempting to think that Demetrias' *nomen gentile* (Marcia Aurelia) derived from Marcus Aurelius Sabinianus, this is uncertain. And given the absence of any original, joint dedicatory inscription with additional information, how exactly Demetrias was related to Sabinianus is open to question.⁵⁸

In my view, the best explanation is that Demetrias was the wife of Sabinianus. After all, the inscription's designation of Demetrias as a *femina stolata* suggests that she was a married woman. Sabinianus — who was himself a local from the decurial elite — had perhaps begun the restoration on his own account (*sua pecunia*) and then with Demetrias, at their own expense, the two of them together restored (*restauraverunt* lines 7–8) the baths to “pristine condition.” It was decided that statues should be commissioned for the benefactors — one was funded from the legates of Sabinianus — and since Demetrias had also funded the restoration she, too, received an honorary statue. Their statues would likely have stood together in the baths, perhaps accompanied by a plaque elsewhere on the building reiterating their joint roles.⁵⁹ On the day that the statues and the

⁵⁶ Hommel doubted Mommsen's suggestion that she was the daughter of Sabinianus. Instead, he suggested that she could have been the daughter of *Gaius Marcius Demetrius*, the personal medic of the emperor Marcus Aurelius whom Galen mentions (Gal. 1.1, 14.4K) and who died c. 170 CE. Hommel based this in large part on the names, thinking Marcia and Demetrias derived from Marcius and Demetrius. His idea was prompted by a Greek fragmentary inscription found at Isola Sacra in 1938 that records a Gaius Marcius De[metrius] as an ἄρχιατρός (H. Thylander, *Inscriptions du Port d'Ostie*, Lund 1951/52, A 158 = SEG XIII, 473). The term means an official or court physician (Gal. 14.2). The inscription was a *titulus* for himself and one Munatia Helpis his wife. So in Hommel's reconstruction Marcia Aurelia Ceionia Demetrias was (possibly) the daughter of this Gaius Marcius Demetrius, physician of Marcus Aurelius, who married an Ostian wife; H. Hommel, *Euripides in Ostia: Ein neues Chorliederfragment und seine Umwelt*, *Epigraphica* 19 (1957) 118–121, and 137. Hommel's suggestion was rightly quashed by R. Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, Oxford 1973, 563–564. See also F. Grosso, *La lotta politica al tempo di Commodo: memoria di Fulvio Grosso*, Torino 1964, 168, n. 3.

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Monumentality* (n. 11) 175.

⁵⁸ Thomas hypothesizes that Sabinianus had begun the restoration of the baths, “perhaps at the instigation of his imperial masters in the nearby Villa Magna, but that he had died, leaving the building to be completed at public expense” and “his daughter Ceionia carried out the dedication begun by her father”; Thomas, *Monumentality* (n. 11) 175. This misreads the *restauraverunt* of the second inscription, in my opinion, and suggests that Demetrias had merely performed the ceremony of christening the building. A better reading of the second inscription is that the local council and people of Anagnina are the subject of *censuerunt*, just as they are in the first inscription, while Sabinianus and Demetrias are the subjects of *restauraverunt* just as Sabinianus is the subject of *restituer[-]* in the first inscription.

⁵⁹ Thomas, *Monumentality* (n. 11) 175.

new baths were inaugurated, the two benefactors also provided money donations and a public banquet.

In other such cases of male and female joint benefactions the two individuals were usually husband and wife rather than father and daughter. The inscriptions from the Roman West that Emily Hemelrijk has painstakingly charted, for instance, indicate that when a woman is recorded as a civic benefactress and co-donor with a man — whether for religious buildings, infrastructural works, entertainment, utilitarian buildings, civic amenities like baths, or public statues — the two were almost always partners or spouses. I tallied 53 instances in which co-donors are securely signaled on the inscriptions as spouses or partners versus only 4 examples (7.5% of the total) for a father-daughter co-dedication.⁶⁰ The epigraphic trend is thus cogent.

For the inscription honoring Demetrias, however, Hemelrijk marks the co-donor Sabinianus as “father?” and appends a note stating that Sabinianus “may have been her father rather than her husband.”⁶¹ Hemelrijk provides no explanation for this suggestion. And whether the conventional interpretation of Marcia the courtier has influenced this notation, I do not know. But the fact that Hemelrijk has to attach a question mark and add a note shows just how atypical such a situation was in light of all the other evidence collected.

Among imperial freedmen, moreover, the commonest marriage pattern is with wives who bear the same *nomen*. This includes one-fifth of all marriages of the Aurelii, according to P. R. C. Weaver.⁶² The trend is either because both persons had lived under the same emperor(s) — instances of Marciae Aureliae increasingly appear from the late-second century on, especially after the Edict of Caracalla in 212 CE; or because the wife was the freedman’s *liberta*.⁶³ The former appears to have been the case for Sabinianus and Demetrias.

⁶⁰ Civic benefactresses with husband/partner as co-donor, compiled from Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives* (n. 7) 345–571 in which I have included the status of the couple where possible. AE 1928, 26; AE 1967, 95; AE 1972, 264 (decurial); AE 1975, 403; AE 1993, 477; AE 1995, 567; AE 1998, 282 (equestrian); IAM II 430 (equestrian); ILAlg I 2056 (decurial); ILAlg I 3838; InscrIt X² 17 (decurial); CIL II 271 (decurial); CIL II 8; CIL II 1191; CIL II 1267; CIL II 3269a–c; CIL II 3329 (equestrian); CIL III 13903 (equestrian); CIL V 50; CIL V 5295; CIL V 5504; CIL V 5869 (equestrian); CIL V 6513 (equestrian); CIL V 8893; CIL VIII 993 (decurial); CIL VIII 1284; CIL VIII 2398 (equestrian); CIL VIII 5142 (equestrian); CIL VIII 7043; CIL VIII 8937; CIL VIII 9015 (decurial); CIL VIII 12422; CIL VIII 15457; CIL VIII 16472; CIL VIII 20428; CIL VIII 20747 (decurial); CIL VIII 26278 (equestrian); CIL VIII 26485; CIL IX 737 (decurial); CIL IX 3019 (equestrian); CIL IX 4894 (equestrian); CIL IX 5368; CIL IX 5841; CIL X 688 (equestrian); CIL XI 2702 (equestrian); CIL XI 3206 (imperial freedman); CIL XI 3811; CIL XI 3932 (imperial freedman); CIL XI 5749 (equestrian); CIL XI 6354; CIL XII 4388; CIL XIII 8620; CIL XIV 2795. Father and daughter as co-donors: AE 1910, 203; CIL II 1474; CIL II 3361; CIL XI 405.

⁶¹ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives* (n. 7) 477, 481 and n. 31.

⁶² Weaver, *Familia Caesaris* (n. 48) 129–130. E.g. AE 1946, 141; AE 1957, 128; AE 1990, 73; AE 1992, 112; AE 1993, 364.

⁶³ Salway, *What’s in a Name* (n. 34) 133–134; Kajava, *Praenomina* (n. 6) 171–176.

Still, other examples exist of non-imperial husband and wife joint benefactors who shared a *nomen*, just as Demetrias and Sabinianus did. For example, Gaius Lollius Trophimus and Lollia Probata donated a navalis temple for Apollo Grannus at Teurnia in Noricum.⁶⁴ Likewise, M(arcus) Ulpius Quintianus, a centurion, and Ulpia Ingenua restored the temple and statue of Minerva at Lambaesis in Numidia.⁶⁵ Later, Lucia Quieta and Lucius Veturius Felix had a temple, altar and porticus constructed for Saturnus Ops in Lambaesis and dedicated it (*pro salute*) to Caracalla and Julia Domna.⁶⁶ With the context and the comparanda in mind, therefore, it would be an important exception to the rule if Demetrias was the daughter of Sabinianus.

In the end, even if she was not the powerful courtier, Demetrias was still an important woman in her own right. Despite her co-donor's grandee status in his hometown her status was nearly equal and her pedigree ultimately exceeded his. Besides her title as a stolated woman, the *nomen* Ceionia that Demetrias bore was probably a matronymic that distinguished her independent heritage apart from her husband's. As her name "Ceionia" publicizes, Demetrias is also recorded as having some additional connection to the imperial household probably through another imperial freedperson. In any case, Demetrias was quite wealthy. The baths before which or in which her statue originally stood evidently needed much more than a cosmetic lift. After she and her husband had restored them, Demetrias had enough resources to hand out additional monies and kind. Ultimately, then, Demetrias from ancient Anagnia was like many other known women from the principate who in many and sundry ways left indelible, often monumental, marks on the towns of the Roman world.⁶⁷ For this reason, Demetrias should be remembered on her own terms, not in the shadow of Marcia the courtier and concubine.

Why the normally cautious Mommsen was driven to propose such an unlikely identification of the two women in the first place is a mystery. One can only guess that he, like many to follow, was enticed by the possibility of finding a backstory for the woman who is said to have altered the landscape of Roman history and early Christianity alike. Notwithstanding historical curiosity, this Marcia's story must remain solely with the sources of Roman historiography and early Christian apologetic — as fragmentary and biased as they might be.

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⁶⁴ CIL III 4746.

⁶⁵ CIL VIII 2647.

⁶⁶ CIL VIII 2670.

⁶⁷ See E. A. Hemelrijk, G. Woolf (eds.), *Women and the Roman City in the Latin West*, Leiden 2013; also E. W. Haley, *Baetica Felix: People and Prosperity in Southern Spain from Caesar to Septimius Severus*, Austin 2003, 4–13, 171–185.

