Tertullian the African

An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian’s Context and Identities

by

David E. Wilhite

Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York
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Abbreviations

General

AA American Anthropologist
AE American Ethnologist
AJA American Journal of Archaeology
AJAH American Journal of Ancient History
AJP American Journal of Philology
ANF Ante-Nicene Fathers
AQ Anthropological Quarterly
ARA Annual Review of Anthropology
AT Anthropology Today
BMCR Bryn Mawr Classical Review
CA Cultural Anthropology
CAJ Cambridge Archaeological Journal
CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CJ Classical Journal
ClAnt Classical Antiquity
ChUP Chicago: Chicago University Press
CPh Classical Philology
CQ Classical Quarterly
CrA Critique of Anthropology
CSL Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
CuA Current Anthropology
CUP Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
CW Classical World
DA Dialectical Anthropology
ERS Ethnic and Racial Studies
EUP Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
GRBS Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies
G&R Greece & Rome
HTR Harvard Theological Review
HUP Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
JAH Journal of African History
JAAR Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JAR Journal of Anthropological Research
JArR Journal of Archaeological Research
JBL Journal of Biblical Literature
JECS Journal of Early Christian Studies
JRA Journal of Roman Archaeology
### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>JRAI</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</td>
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<td>JRS</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classic Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUP</td>
<td>Manchester: Manchester University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPF</td>
<td>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUP</td>
<td>Oxford: Oxford University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCPS</td>
<td>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>Patrologia Graeca</td>
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<td>PL</td>
<td>Patrologia Latina</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSPF</td>
<td>Passio sanctorum Perpetuæ et Felicitatis</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSS</td>
<td>Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum</td>
</tr>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>Social Anthropology</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Sources Chrétiennes</td>
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<td>SCI</td>
<td>Syllecta Classica</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Studia Patristica</td>
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<td>SUP</td>
<td>Stanford: Stanford University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAPA</td>
<td>Transactions of the American Philological Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>TUP</td>
<td>Toronto: Toronto University Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCP</td>
<td>Berkeley: University of California Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMP</td>
<td>Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCP</td>
<td>Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Vigiliae Christianae</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>World Archaeology</td>
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<tr>
<td>YUP</td>
<td>New Haven, CT: Yale University Press</td>
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### Tertullian's Works

- **Ad mart.** - Ad martyras
- **Ad nat.** - Ad nationes
- **Ad Scap.** - Ad Scapulam
- **Ad ux.** - Ad uxor  em
- **Apol.** - Apologeticum
- **Adu. Iud.** - Aduersus Iudaeos
- **Adu. Marc.** - Aduersus Marcionem
- **Adu. Prax.** - Aduersus Praxean
- **Adu. Val.** - Aduersus Valentinianos
- **De an.** - De anima
- **De bapt.** - De baptismo
- **De res. carn.** - De resurrectione carnis
- **De carn. Chris.** - De carne Christi
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>De cor.</td>
<td>De corona militis</td>
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<tr>
<td>De cul. fem.</td>
<td>De cultu feminarum</td>
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<tr>
<td>De exh. cast.</td>
<td>De exhortatione castitatis</td>
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<tr>
<td>De fug.</td>
<td>De fuga in persecutione</td>
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<td>De idol.</td>
<td>De idolatria</td>
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<td>De mon.</td>
<td>De monogomia</td>
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<tr>
<td>De or.</td>
<td>De oratione</td>
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<tr>
<td>De paen.</td>
<td>De paenitentia</td>
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<td>De pal.</td>
<td>De pallio</td>
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<tr>
<td>De pat.</td>
<td>De patientia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De prae. haer.</td>
<td>De praescriptione haereticorum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De pud.</td>
<td>De pudicitia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De spect.</td>
<td>De spectaculis</td>
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<tr>
<td>De uirg. uel.</td>
<td>De uirginibus uelandis</td>
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1 Conceptual Frameworks for Re-Reading Tertullian

1.1 A Postcolonial Re-reading of Tertullian

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

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

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus was born, it is usually believed, about the year 160 at Carthage, where his father was serving as a centurion (centurio proconsularis) in the service of the proconsul of Africa. He received an excellent academic training and probably entered upon the career of an advocate. There are in the Pandects some excerpts from the writings of a jurist Tertullian (Quaestionum libri viii, De castrensi peculio) whom many historians are inclined to identify with our ecclesiastical writer. About 193, certainly before 197, he became a Christian, was ordained also a priest according to St. Jerome, and began a long literary career in the service of the new faith. About midway in his life (ca. 202) he openly joined the sect of the Montanists, and began to attack the Catholic Church with a violence scarcely inferior to that which he had manifested against heathenism. Within the Montanist fold he founded a special sect known as Tertullianists. He is said to have lived to a very advanced age.

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2 See Pontius the Deacon, Vita Cypriani. All dates are general reference points; those in question pertaining to this thesis shall be noted.
3 Patrology: The Lives and Works of the Fathers of the Church, 2nd ed., trans. Thomas J. Shahan, (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1908), 179; an almost identical synopsis can be found in Berthold Altaner, Patrology, trans. from the 5th German ed. by Hilda C. Graef, (Nelson, 1960), 166.
More recently, however, scholars have questioned many of these claims. Gerald Bray expresses the sentiment of most Tertullian scholars of the last twenty-five years when he says, “Tertullian himself never dwelt on autobiographical details, and there is remarkably little which can be deduced with certainty from his writings... In the end all we can really say about Tertullian’s life is that we know virtually nothing about it.”

Is this, however, really all one can say? One aspect of Tertullian’s life widely accepted is the place of his writing being Carthage, and most contemporary scholars agree that Africa Proconsularis was his patria or homeland. The following project seeks to explore Tertullian’s life and identities with this locale at the forefront. Before delineating the scholarly trends in Tertullian studies, a framework of theoretical questioning will be suggested.

Over two centuries before Tertullian lived and wrote, Virgil, the famous poet and champion of Rome’s glory, produced the following lines:

There was an ancient city, the home of Tyrian settlers,
Carthage, over against Italy and the Tiber’s mouths afar,
Rich in wealth and stern in war’s pursuits.
This, ‘tis said, Juno loved above all other lands,
Holding Samos itself less dear.
Here was her armour, here her chariot;
That here should be the capital of the nations,
Should the fates perchance allow it,
Was even then the goddess’ aim and cherished hope.
Yet in truth she had heard that a race was springing from Trojan blood,
to overthrow some day the Tyrian towers;
that from it a people, kings of broad realms and proud in war,
should come forth for Libya’s downfall;
so rolled the wheels of fate.

What would Virgil’s lines mean for an individual like Tertullian writing in the time of “Libya’s downfall” (excidio Libyae) and existing under the Roman “kings of broad realms” (late regem)? From within the walls of a city destroyed and rebuilt by Rome, Tertullian composed a plethora of tracts aimed at a variety of

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

audiences, and his rhetorical skill earned Tertullian a place in history as a primary spokesperson for the Christians in North Africa in the late second to early third centuries. How, then, would an educated thinker of Tertullian’s caliber interpret comments like Virgil’s which celebrates the Roman colonial presence in Africa? While many ancient historians might ignore such questions, the relatively young field of Postcolonialism as an academic project exists to address the phenomenon of colonial encounter.

Postcolonial critics generally trace their roots to Edward Said’s work, Orientalism, in which he attacks the “colonial discourse” of the West for alienating the non-western “Other.”7 In their work, The Empire Writes Back, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin defined Postcolonialism as a “reading practice,” distinct from the hyphenated, temporal adjective, “post-colonial.”8 The practice referred to by these authors stems from the call of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who asked, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”9 In her essay Spivak declares that the subaltern, a Marxist term for a member of the lowest rankings of society, does not have a voice, especially in the context of “postcoloniality,” and she challenges the academic community to attempt to speak on the subaltern’s behalf. Spivak’s utilization of Marxist concepts is just one of many philosophical systems used by postcolonial scholars; other examples include Foucault’s discourse theory, Derrida’s poststructuralism and Lyotard’s postmodernism.10


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


10 While many postcolonial critics like Spivak have relied on Marxist theory, others have rejected it; see discussions in Williams and Chrisman, Colonial Discourse, 6; and Gandhi, Postcolonial Theory, viii-ix. On Foucault, see Young, Postcolonialism, 386, who says Said’s usage of “discourse” is only “loosely connected” to Foucault’s understanding, which did not reach its
European origin of so many of these theories, however, is problematic for many scholars who promote the postcolonial approach as an attempt to correct Eurocentricity. Despite the complexity and multiplicity of approaches within the field of Postcolonialism, many scholars find the theory useful in attempting to answer the call to re-read history, including ancient history and the era of the Roman Empire which ruled in Tertullian’s day.

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

1.1.1 Postcolonialism and Roman Imperialism

When historians reference Rome’s colonization of Italy and what became the Roman provinces, they employ the term “Romanization,” a concept which usually involves political dominance coupled with the usurping of indigenous or pre-Roman elements with Roman “culture” (Latin language, Roman religion, baths, gladiatorial games, architecture, etc.) Romans, as early as Pliny the Elder, felt a completion until his work, The Archaeology of Knowledge, in 1972. On Derrida, see Ashcroft et al., The Empire, 193; cf. Young, Postcolonialism, 395, who discusses the postcolonial contexts of Tunisia and Algeria and their influence on Foucault and Derrida, respectively. On Postmodernism’s relation to Postcolonialism, see Williams and Chrisman, Colonial Discourse, 5, who say the two are “by no means disjunct”; however, Castle, Postcolonial Discourses, xiv, discusses the many postcolonial critics who challenge the use of postmodern theory.


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

13 On “culture,” Josephine Crawley Quinn, “Roman Africa?”, “Romanization”? Digressus Supplement 1 (2003), 9, concludes that “categorization by culture is not the best basis for interpreting [ancient African] society.” For discussion of the problems entailed with the term, see M.A. Aguilar, “Changing Models and the ‘Death’ of Culture: A Diachronic and Positive Critique of Socio-scientific Assumptions,” in Anthropology and Biblical Studies: Avenues of Approach, ed. Louise J. Lawrence and Aguilar, (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2004), 299-313. For an example, see R.D. Sider, Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian, (OUP, 1971), 128, “...Tertullian was deeply concerned to integrate Christianity and classical culture.” His basis is Tertullian’s extensive use of classical rhetoric. However, as will be shown below, see section
vocation to "civilize" (i.e. Romanize) the world by extending the pax Romana. Often, the process of Romanization is said to have been extensive in the West but limited in the Greek speaking East.

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

Several scholars of Roman history have contributed to the discussion of Romanization in Africa by focusing on the presuppositions held by contemporary historians and emphasizing the perspective of the colonized. One of the first to question the scholarly assumptions regarding the Romanization of Africa was A. Laroui. Based on the evidence of repeated indigenous revolts in Africa against Rome, Laroui argues that Africans under Rome led a continuous resistance to Roman power. Similarly, M. Benabou claims that Africans resisted Rome

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5.1, what is often deemed "cultural content" can flow freely across group boundaries without compromising that boundary; therefore, deeming any exchange or resistance of "culture" as "acculturation" or "counter-cultural," respectively, could obscure, if not misrepresent, ancient sources.

15 e.g. James B. Rives, "Religion in the Roman Empire," in Experiencing Rome, ed. Huskinson, 269, who argues "that the reason for this lies in the fact that the cultures of the west lacked the prestige of Greek culture, and so could not compete as well with the culture of the conquerors." For full discussion, see Greg Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek: Culture, Identity and the Civilizing Process in the Roman East," PCPS 40 (1994): 116-143.
17 Huskinson, "Looking, 20-3. For examples of anti-Roman sentiment, or "resistance" in Egypt, see Christopher Haas, Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict, (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 331.
19 On indigenous revolts, see the following discussion in section 3.1.2.
“culturally” as well as militarily. The wake of scholars that followed polarized to favor a colonial perspective or an indigenous perspective, the former claiming that Laroui and Benabou were anachronistic in assigning nationalism to ancient societies. Although Mattingly and Hitchner agree that the postcolonial perspective can in turn offer an equally one-sided approach, they declare that “the scholarly reaction to Laroui and Benabou has been unjustifiably harsh.”

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

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

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

Broughton, however, was not well received by his colleagues. Cherry explains why: “[Broughton’s] book, I think, was never really given the attention it deserves, perhaps because many of its conclusions ran counter to views which

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21 “Roman Africa,” 170. Regarding a “one-sided approach,” Quinn, “Roman Africa?””, 9, discussing the Republic, concludes both “Romanization” and “Punicization” are inadequate categories.
23 Frontier, 160-1.
were widely held at the time it was published, and which, in a tradition that was not entirely overthrown even by the Algerian revolution of 1962, tended both to interpret the Roman conquest of North Africa as a blessing for its 'less civilized' indigenous population, and to assume that the Romans profoundly altered North African economy and society. More recently, through the efforts of the aforementioned scholars, the study of North African history has entailed a renewed approach.

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

The succeeding chapters will entail a Postcolonial re-reading of ancient North Africa. Although the scope of this work is limited primarily to Africa Proconsularis in the second and third centuries, other neighboring contexts and eras will be discussed when they illuminate the focal community. Within this discussion, moreover, Patristic studies of North African Christians must also be incorporated.

1.1.2 Postcolonialism, Patristics and Tertullian

Returning specifically to Tertullian, both the questions raised by Postcolonial critics and the theoretical framework they establish serve as useful tools in interpreting this North African writer. Could Tertullian have understood himself to be

26 Frontier, vii.
28 “Introduction,” in Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse, and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire, ed. Mattingly, JRA Supplementary Series no. 23, (1997), 7. Also, Woolf, Becoming Roman: The Origins of Roman Civilization in Gaul, (CUP, 1998), 20. See, for example, where even Romans, such as Tacitus, can be understood in terms of “resistance,” in Paula James, “The Language of Dissent,” in Experiencing Rome, ed. Huskinson, 277-303.
an African under the Roman yoke? While some might reject such questions for being impossible to answer, a re-reading of Tertullian’s works reveals a great source for the expression of his views, including the example where he did, in fact, comment on Virgil’s passage.

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

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

Postcolonialism has awakened scholars from various disciplines to the problems of representations, even representations of the past. Lynn Meskell
speaks to such problems in the field of archaeology: “Presumably archeologists feel their subjects are dead and buried... and that they are not implicated in the representation and struggles of living peoples.”\textsuperscript{35} Such assumptions, Meskell illustrates, are false; examples abound of communities in the present struggling for “rights” to the past, as in the case of “Augustine the Algerian.” In light of postcolonial identity politics, can one speak of “Tertullian the Tunisian?”\textsuperscript{36}

If Patristic scholarship is going to engage in Postcolonial re-readings of the early Church documents, there are some immediate objections that should be answered. Many classics departments are still reeling from debates over Black Athena. Should Patristic scholars trade a Euro-centric reading for an Afro-centric one? While one could argue for the validity of such an approach, the present study will turn to another discipline for methodology.

In order to address the postcolonial history of Tertullian, an “African theologian,” this present work will turn to the discipline of Social Anthropology.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{1.2 An Anthropological “Writing” of Tertullian}

In order to succinctly survey the socio-political context of Tertullian and then in turn to allow the findings of said survey to provide a paradigm for interpreting the African theologian, the following chapters will embark on a Postcolonial reading of the sources using theories and methods from the field of Social Anthropology. It is suggested here that Social Anthropology provides theories that can aid the work of historical theologians in “rereading” a postcolonial setting. Although the assimilation of Postcolonial discourse into the discipline of Social Anthropology needs no defense in light of the amount of works produced in this genre by anthropologists, a few words explaining the correlation of the two fields will prove helpful. After doing so, some general comments will be made about Social Anthropology, especially in relation to historical studies.

\textsuperscript{35} “The Intersection of Identity and Politics in Archaeology,” \textit{ARA} 31 (2002), 280.
\textsuperscript{37} The distinction between Social Anthropology (British), and Cultural Anthropology (American), is often transcended in actual practice by anthropologists who read and cite scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, as is done in what follows.
1.2.1 Postcolonial Anthropology

Since anthropologists often carry out their fieldwork in Postcolonial contexts, some scholars have applied various understandings of such encounters. Olivia Harris outlines six “models” found, either explicitly or implicitly, in anthropological studies:

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

In this present work, the understanding of encounter will draw more from specific theories within the field of anthropology, all of which have responded and adapted in their application to postcolonial contexts. Before turning to those theories, however, a brief analysis of how the Postcolonial perspective has been incorporated into Social Anthropology is needed.

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

Although Postcolonial critics have in the past attacked Social Anthropology as an active enabler and participant of the colonial process – a fact rarely denied by anthropologists, many anthropologists have accepted the Postcolonial challenge and proactively amalgamated Postcolonial theory as a corrective into their own discipline to the point it could be considered mainstream. Social Anthropology has largely been a self-critical discipline, recognizing the need to analyze both the observed and the observer, a principle known as “reflexivity.”

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Therefore, when critics as far back as Said began to criticize anthropologists, many scholars responded with an introspection that resulted in the conjoining of Postcolonial theory to their own work. Many anthropologists readily align themselves with the aims and principles of Postcolonial theory, finding a like-mindedness inherent between the two fields. The confrontation of the two disciplines was inevitable in that Postcolonialism arose as a critique of the West’s portrayal of the “Other,” a blow for Social Anthropology because “anthropology’s historical concern has been largely with non-western peoples.” Alan Barnard traces the conjoining between the two disciplines back to the influence of E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Clifford Geertz. The influence, as Barnard sees it, began with “Evans-Pritchard in his rejection of the idea of anthropology as a science, in favour of an interpretive approach which placed anthropology firmly within the humanities.” Barnard also says Evans-Pritchard allowed for the historian’s diachronic approach over the traditionally synchronic approach of anthropology. Geertz expounded on the understanding of anthropology as an interpretive endeavor shifting the methodology from a linguistic understanding of “translating” a “grammar” (i.e. a “culture”), to a more complex “writing” of a “thick description” of a society and its values and practices. Commenting on the reflexivity prompted by Postcolonial critiques, Geertz asks and answers, What, after all, is one to make of savages? ...For the anthropologist, whose profession it is to study other cultures, the puzzle is always with him. His personal relationship to his object of study is, perhaps more than for any other scientist, 

24, for a discussion of how the ethnographer’s ethnic identity impacts the interaction with informants, and for a good survey of reflexivity and the discussions of the anthropologist as objective observer of subjects versus an active subject in the ethnographic interaction. For a comparison with the “reflexive sociology” of Bourdieu, see Simon J. Charlesworth, A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience, (CUP, 2000).

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


43 History, 158-164.


45 History and Theory, 162.

inevitably problematic. Know what he thinks a savage is and you have the key to his work. You know what he thinks he himself is and, knowing what he thinks he himself is you know in general what sort of thing he is going to say about whatever tribe he happens to be studying. All ethnography is part philosophy, and a good deal of the rest is confession.  

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

1.2.2 Social Anthropology – Past, Purpose and Method

Although some anthropologists trace their disciplinary descent back to Herodotus (c.484-c.431 BCE) as the founder of the discipline, Eriksen claims that Tertullian’s fellow Tunisian, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE), the author of the *Muqaddima* (“Introduction to History”), is a more credible methodological progenitor because Khaldun introduced “theory” into the discipline of observation. Most genealogies of anthropology, however, begin with European colonial expansion and the resulting need for “the classification of the ‘peoples’ of the world, the attribution of specificity to bounded populations.” While the entire history with all of the ranging debates need not – and could not – be recounted here, the following sections of this chapter will trace much of the disciplines past by reviewing the differing approaches to specific theories. One debate from early anthropological discourse that will prove to be a beneficial starting point is the relativist/universalist dispute first underscored by Franz Boas.

Boas understood much early fieldwork to be misguided in that it too often attempted to “fit” information into a universal theory of humanity, and so his emphasis on ethnography and data collection for its own sake became known as the particularist approach. Varying reactions arose after Boas including the

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47 *The Interpretation*, 345-6. “Ethnography” is traditionally defined as the anthropologist’s fieldwork, or the observing of “facts”; see, however, Geertz, “Thick Description,” 6.


49 i.e. Geertz’ “writing a thick description” of ethnographic interpretation; see more on Geertz below in section 6.1 on religion.


approach known as "structuralism" – the school of thought that replaced functionalism in anthropology – championed by Claude Levi-Strauss, which sought to form a universal theory of the human mind that under-girded the structures of all societies. Later, Edmund Leach claimed that a strict Boasian approach without the counterbalance of a "generalization" amounted to little more than anthropological "butterfly collecting." In current debates universalists and particularists remain at odds in their respective hope or skepticism regarding a meta-theory that can incorporate all variations in specific contexts and societies. Eriksen summarizes,

To what extent do all humans, cultures or societies have something in common, and to what extent is each of them unique? Since we employ comparative concepts – that is supposedly culturally neutral terms like kinship system, gender role, system of inheritance, etc. – it is implicitly acknowledged that all or nearly all societies have several features in common. However, many anthropologists challenge this view and claim the uniqueness of each culture or society. While some of the "many" challenges will be discussed further below, it should be noted how problematized any universalist stance – often characterized as "the phenomenological approach" – has become. F.C. Wallace eloquently lamented such a problematic: "It is always hazardous to set forth in search of the headwaters of human institutions. The unwary scholar is all too apt to find himself soon mired in a noisome bog of speculations, unable to extricate himself with dignity and subject to stoning by his more prudent colleagues on the bank." Although any universalist stance is argued by particularists to be unacceptable, many anthropologists argue that a phenomenological approach should nevertheless serve as a methodological ideal.

For present purposes, the method of balancing fieldwork with theory provides the primary benefit in understanding and accommodating Social Anthropology. As Joan M. Lewis insists, "I maintain that a continuous dialogue between theory and empirically observed data is the essential basis of a vigorous, substantive social anthropology." Ethnography – "empirically observe[ing] data" – allows any forwarded theory to be tested by other anthropologists. Even an interpretivist like Geertz notes the necessary evil of debated theory: "Anthropology... is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each

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53 Ibid, 19.
55 Small Places, 5-6.
other." Likewise, David Schneider, the self-lauded "culturalist," speaks of the centrality of debate between theory and fieldwork when he observes, "The aims and methods of anthropology have always been and are always being sharply criticized and generally overhauled." Whenever scholars forward theories in anthropology, they expect criticism from their peers; many theories can be reformulated and adapted; many are discarded. The cardinal sin, however, for an anthropologist is ethnocentrism.

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

1.2.3 Anthropology and History

Anthropology and history as academic fields have enjoyed a long and fruitful interdisciplinary relationship. Although many early studies within anthropology inappropriately sought to find the "origins" of humankind by studying the remnant of "primitive" peoples – some of which will be surveyed below, anthropology as a general discipline corrected this appropriating of the past and has now come full circle in that many anthropologists are critiquing the historiography of others. Kevin Yelvington, commenting on the "plethora" of anthropological studies of history, provides a helpful analysis of how anthropologists "construct relevant typologies" for the past. Yelvington argues that academic departments of history currently face a "crisis of epistemology" which can only be overcome through the supplementation of an anthropological understanding of history. Anthropologists, Yelvington suggests, are especially

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58 "Thick Description," 29.
59 A Critique of the Study of Kinship, (UMP, 1984), 201.
61 Several discussions of anti-essentialism will be outlined below in relation to specific theories.
62 For similar argument, cf. MacDonald, Early Christian Women, 14-5, where anthropology provides biblical scholars with a "sensitivity" to ethnocentrism as well as anachronism.
64 Ibid, n.5.
trained to examine "history as representation," because so many representations of the past involve "political" and "ideological" elements.\footnote{Ibid, 5-6.} Yelvington cites and reiterates the arguments of J. Friedman, who insists that history always involves a "construction" of the past.\footnote{Friedman, "The Past."} "Objective' history," Friedman declares, "...is just as much a social construct as any other history, and it cannot be simply accepted at face value."\footnote{Ibid, 854.} A particular element which problematizes any "objective" claims in historiography is that "history is the discourse of identity" – as seen in the example of Augustine above.\footnote{Ibid.} The importance of "identity" for any historical study, and in this case for Tertullian, once again highlights why anthropological theories provide the historian with an approach that assists in the safeguarding against anachronism – the historians' unpardonable sin – and against ethnocentrism – that which must be avoided at all costs by anthropologists. Whether or not Social Anthropology provides the only means of overcoming any "epistemological crisis" for historians, a number of researchers who have amalgamated the fields of History and Social Anthropology benefit from anthropological theory applied to history, especially the history of Postcolonial contexts.

Because often in Postcolonial contexts "the past is frozen as an eternal validation of the present," Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn address the need for focusing on identities in an anthropological history.\footnote{"Preface," in \textit{African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon}, ed. Fowler and Zeitlyn (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996), xix. Similarly, Bediako, \textit{Theology}, 426-7, suggests that "the question of identity constitutes a 'hermeneutical key.'"} Their argument claims to be especially apt for African examples: "Ethnography and history are nowhere more tightly bound up with identity and ethnicity than in the broad field of colonial and post-colonial African studies."\footnote{Fowler and Zeitlyn, "Preface," xviii.} While these authors speak especially in terms of the events of the last century, in light of the application of Postcolonial theory to Roman imperialism and in light of the identity politics that accompany studies of ancient individuals such as Augustine, their insights adequately depict the issues accompanying a Postcolonial re-reading of Tertullian which will rely on anthropological theories of identity. The present discussion, therefore, can now turn to these specific theories to understand how anthropologists have formulated anti-ethnocentric, anti-essentialist and anti-anachronistic ideas about social identity, kinship, class, ethnicity and religion.

Theories from Social Anthropology have enjoyed a renewed usage among archaeologists and ancient historians.\footnote{For discussion, see Laurence, "Introduction," 1-9.} It is true that a few scholars, such as K.J. Matthews, reject any "borrowing" of theory and prefer to claim their "roots are in the dirt of the archaeological site, the best foundation for a truly archaeological
However, despite the insistence of some to keep their methodological head in the sand, many archaeologists have turned to anthropological theory to assist in the interpretation of their findings. A strong proponent of anthropological theory among Classicists is S.C. Humphreys, who criticizes historians' presumptions about objectivity: "Historians and philologists share a bit of leaving their assumptions about psychology, culture and social relationships unstated – and even, for the most part, consider this a positive virtue." Explaining the usefulness of social theory, Humphreys explains, "Anthropologists are not likely to offer us help with filling in the blanks in our knowledge of Bronze Age kinship or religion. But they can offer a framework within which we can try to put together fragments of Greek culture and society studied in isolation, into a coherent whole. And this does seem to be a crucial need at present for Classical Studies generally." More recently, John Scheid promotes Anthropology for similar reasons in that it "offers an excellent school of thought and a methodology that will help to distance us from our ethnocentrism and to 'decolonise'" Roman studies. This decolonizing refers especially to the "Other" of ancient history, as is discussed by Simon Goldhill, the editor of a work similarly interested in identity in the Roman world, who bemoans the problem: "[Anthropology's] direct effect on classics has been small, in part because the opportunities of studying 'working class' (slave, helot, latifundia, poor man, even female) culture are severely handicapped by the largely elite evidence which survives." Similarly, Huskinson insists that historians should concern themselves as much with ethnocentrism as with anachronism in order "to hear the hitherto 'silent voices' in Roman society."

Analogously, the field of early Christian studies has started to integrate social theory into its re-presentations of the past. In what has become known as social-scientific criticism, biblical scholars in recent decades have begun to implement models and theories from Social Anthropology to the ancient near east in order to answer similar questions. A similar approach could add further insight into the
1.3 Patristic Readings of Tertullian

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


1.3.1 Tertullian’s Name

In the last line of the treatise De baptismo, remains one of the few of Tertullian’s direct references to himself: “This only I pray, that as you ask you also have in mind Tertullian, a sinner.” Beyond this humble self-designation as “sinner,” Tertullian felt no need to give the complete form of his name as found in Bardenhewer. In the only other time Tertullian offers his name in his writings, he adds his gentilicum, by concluding, “May peace and grace from our Lord Jesus Christ redound: as likewise to Septimius Tertullianus, whose this tractate is.”

The Septimii of North Africa were predominantly of humble status in Tertullian’s time, with the notable exception of those from Lepcis Magna, including the first Roman emperor of African descent, Septimius Severus (146-211). Tertullian’s full name including his cognomina is not found in the records until it appears on several of the medieval manuscripts. Barnes accepts these as reliable on the basis that there is no cause to suspect them, and from them he deduces that Tertullian’s family might have “occupied a low position on the social scale,” but he later admits that even this is conjectural and no real conclusion can be reached by Tertullian’s name. The only other information available in the witnesses regarding Tertullian’s name comes from the simple appellation, “Tertullian the African,” given by Jerome in his translation of the Chronicon. This title, however, is rarely discussed among Tertullian scholars. Since no biographical information can be deduced from Tertullian’s name, scholars have focused on other aspects of his life, such as his place of birth.

1.3.2 Tertullian’s Birth

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

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83 tantum oro, ut cum petitis etiam Tertulliani peccatoris memineritis. cf. De res. carn. 59.3, on his adultery.
84 De uirg. uel., 17: pax et gratia a domino nostro Iesu redundet cum Septimio Tertulliano, cuius hoc opusculum est.
85 Barnes, Tertullian, 242.
86 Ibid, 242-3.
87 16.23-4: Tertullianus Afer.
88 De uiris illustribus 53.1: provinciae Africanae, ciuitatis Carthaginiensis.
1.3.3 Tertullian’s Father

and scholars have not always found him reliable, as in the case of Tertullian’s father.

1.3.3 Tertullian’s Father

In the past, scholars such as Bardenhewer accepted Jerome’s claim that Tertullian’s father was a centurio proconsularis. Barnes, however, challenged this assertion, citing that this office did not even exist in the ancient Roman Empire of Tertullian’s era. The explanation for Jerome’s claim comes from a passage in Tertullian’s Apologeticum:

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

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

1.3.4 Tertullian’s Education

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

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89 Tertullian, 13-21.
90 Apol. 9.2: Infantes penes Africam Saturno immolabantur palam usque ad proconsulatum Tiberii, qui eosdem sacerdotes in eisdem arboribus templi sui obumbratricibus scelerum uotuis crucibus exposuit, teste militia patriae nostrae, quae id ipsum munus illi proconsuli functa est.
91 As represented in the translation given, wherein Souter notes the patriae nostrae in the text, but chooses the patri nostri reading. These exact variants are preserved in the Fuldensis manuscript of the Apologeticum. Similarly, the CCSL, which reads patri nostri relying on Jerome. For this textual tradition, see C. Becker, Tertullian: Apologeticum. (Munchen: Kosel-Verlag, 1961), 229ff.; for a general discussion of the manuscripts of Tertullian’s works, see the præfatio to CCSL, vol. 1, ed. Dom Eligius Dekkers, (1954).
93 See also Bray, Holiness, 33, on Jerome’s unreliability in this instance.
published several works in Greek, indicating a high level of education.\(^94\) Not only was Tertullian trained in the Greek language, but he was also schooled in the Greek classics. Jean Daniélou asserts, "Certainly, it was Greek Christian thought, both orthodox and heterodox, which was Tertullian’s primary antecedent."\(^95\) Tertullian, without necessarily declaring his own schooling, lists both the Roman and the Greek classical authors taught in the schools of Carthage and Africa.\(^96\) Because of his breadth of knowledge of Roman and Greek history and thought, and because of his abilities as a communicator, it should be assumed that Tertullian received a high standard of education.\(^97\)

### 1.3.5 Tertullian’s Occupation

One of the most controversial aspects of Tertullian’s life is the claim that he was a jurist, a claim which dates back to Eusebius, who stated that Tertullian was “a man well versed in the laws of the Romans, and in other respects of high repute, and one of those especially distinguished in Rome.”\(^98\) Adolf von Harnack in his attempts to trace the development of dogma from the New Testament found that Tertullian did not insert Platonist ideas into his Christianity like the many Eastern Fathers. Instead, Harnack found in Tertullian a reliance on Roman legalism, which to Harnack was supported by Eusebius’ witness.\(^99\) Agreeing with Harnack, A. Beck argued that the Christian Tertullian of Carthage was Tertullianus the Roman jurist who wrote at least one legal reference book, *De castrensis peculio*, and some eight books of *questiones*.\(^100\)

The conclusions of Harnack and Beck became the consensus among scholars until Barnes challenged the logic of the argument.\(^101\) According to Barnes, the mere coincidences of names and time periods do not merit the conclusion that the two Tertulliani were the same person.\(^102\) Moreover, Eusebius uses Tertullian on a point of law mentioned in the *Apologeticum* and so he exaggerates Tertullian’s expertise to make him more credible.\(^103\) Even without his arguments for the improbability of Tertullian the Christian having been a *iurisconsultus*, Barnes laid...

\(^{94}\) See *De bapt.* 15; *De cor.* 6; *De uirg.* vel. 1.

\(^{95}\) *The Origins*, xiii, and 272.

\(^{96}\) *Ad nat.* 2.7,13; *Apol.* 12, 14, 50; *De praes. haer.* 39; *De an.* 20, 42; *De res. carn.* 1.

\(^{97}\) Dunn, *Tertullian*, 5, an “elite” education.

\(^{98}\) *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.2.4: ταύτα Τερτυλλιανός τούς Ρωμαίων νόμους ἱκριβωκάς, ἀνὴρ τε ἄλλα ἐνδοξός καὶ τῶν μαλιστά ἐπὶ Ρώμης λαμπρῶν.

\(^{99}\) *Die Chronologie der Altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius II*, (Leipzig, 1904), 256ff; as reviewed by Bray, *Holiness*.

\(^{100}\) Römisches Recht bei Tertullian und Cyprian, (Aalen, 1930); referencing the *Digesta* and the *Codex Iustiniannae*, cited in Barnes, *Tertullian*, 22.

\(^{101}\) Barnes, *Tertullian*, 22ff.

\(^{102}\) Ibid, 24.

\(^{103}\) Ibid, 26.
bare the lack of evidence for such a claim which is why scholars are in general agreement with Barnes on this point.\(^{104}\)

Barnes' conclusion had a wide impact on the scholarly understanding of Tertullian, both in his life and in his writings. Because Tertullian was assumed to have been the Roman jurist, debate ranged over when he lived in Rome. J. Quasten summarized the pre-Barnes majority view that Tertullian did live in Rome, but he provides no conjecture as to the dates.\(^{105}\) Without the claim that Tertullian of Carthage was the Roman jurist, recent scholarship has largely ignored the question.\(^{106}\)

Gerald Bray has catalogued the trend of past scholars who followed the conclusions of Harnack and discovered legal terminology in Tertullian.\(^{107}\) The Sonderprache School, writing in Holland in the early decades of the twentieth Century, led by Mgr. Schrijnen, forwarded the theory of a special Christian language that adapted secular terms, such as \emph{persona} and \emph{substantia}. Many word studies of Tertullian found legal terminology in his writings and declared his theology formed by the legal context. After Barnes, however, scholars began to reevaluate the presuppositions of these word studies, concluding with different results.\(^{108}\)

With the option of jurist excluded from Tertullian's education and career, a majority of scholars have returned to the argument of Siegmund Schlossmann.\(^{109}\) Because he rejected Harnack's claim that Tertullian was a lawyer, Schlossmann was not widely accepted in his time. Instead of concluding Tertullian was a jurist, Schlossmann interpreted Tertullian as a rhetorician. Two scholars who more recently championed this understanding of Tertullian are R. Sider and Jean-

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

105 Patrology II, (1963), 246.

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


Claude Fredouille, and many now see Tertullian, not as a legal expert, but as a rhetorical genius capable of persuading with a whole range of imagery, including legal imagery.  

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

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

Arguing most vigorously for an understanding of Tertullian as a philosopher is Eric Osborn. To Osborn, philosophy is an integral aspect of theology, and he therefore denies that Tertullian’s “credible because it is inept” is a defense of irrationalism or fideism. Instead, he claims that this specific statement is an oratory device only applicable to the incarnation, not to all philosophical propositions. Osborn presents his case for Tertullian’s use of philosophy: “[Tertullian] knows his philosophers better than do most Greek fathers. Tertullian does not hide his sympathy for Seneca (An. 20.1) nor his genuine regret that all heretics have seasoned their works with Plato (An. 23.5). Yet Christian

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


113 De corn. Chris. 5: credibile est, quia ineptum est.

114 Bray, Holiness, 15ff.

115 Tertullian, First Theologian of the West, (CUP, 1997).

116 Ibid, 56.

117 Ibid, 51.
artisans readily find the creator God whom Plato declared to be so difficult of discovery and description (Ap. 46.9)." Tertullian's use of philosophy suggests to Osborn that Tertullian is himself a philosopher.

The objection to this understanding of Tertullian on which Osborn must expound is Tertullian's question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Osborn delineates four possible explanations of Tertullian's Athens/Jerusalem quote: (1) Tertullian is under psychological distress, and as a believer he rejected philosophy, but his own training in philosophy and rhetoric could never be discarded. (2) Tertullian was a product of cultural history. Tertullian is proud of his breadth of knowledge of cultural writers and uses them often, but insists that Christianity is over and above all that the culture can offer. (3) Tertullian is a philosopher who simply believes he has found a better philosophy. (4) Tertullian uses paradox and disjunction to clarify; they are rhetorical devices. Osborn chooses the last of these possible explanations and proposes that paradox and disjunction are Tertullian's way of "clarifying things" because Tertullian is in fact a Stoic philosopher.

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

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

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

118 Ibid, 31
119 De praes. haer. 7.9: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" [Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?]
120 Osborn, Tertullian, 29-37.
121 Ibid, 37; cf. Bray, Holiness, 34ff., who also understood Tertullian as borrowing Stoic ideas.
122 Barnes, Tertullian, 210.
1.3.6 Tertullian’s Conversion

Like most points of Tertullian’s life, scholars know very little from Tertullian’s writings about his encounter with Christianity: whether or not he was a convert, and, if so, when this came about. Tertullian’s rare and brief statements provided past scholars of Bardenheuer’s day with enough material to conclude that Tertullian was born of pagan parents and converted to Christianity. While Barnes did not completely reject the possibility of Tertullian’s conversion, he says that the evidence, even within his writings is dubious at best.

1.3.7 Tertullian’s Ordination

Again relying on the witness of Jerome, some scholars have declared Tertullian to have been a presbyter. Barnes, having demonstrated Jerome unreliable on other aspects of Tertullian’s life, challenged this assertion as well. Twice in his writings, Tertullian seems to indicate that he was a layman. In light of these readings and with the weight of Barnes’ arguments, most scholars agree that Tertullian remained a member of the laity, performing no clerical role. Scholars also agree that despite the fact that Tertullian served in no official office, he did wield tremendous influence through his writings on the Christian community, especially concerning his alleged schism.

1.3.8 Tertullian’s Schism

Despite the consensus view before his time, Barnes destabilized the notion of Tertullian as a schismatic, alternatively arguing that the North African writer never intended to sever with the Church officially. Tertullian was simply the “first great teacher of unimpeachable doctrinal orthodoxy who dared to enunciate

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124 Apol. 18.4; 50.15; De poen. 1.1; Ad Scap. 5.5; De res. carn. 59.3; De pat.1.1. More recently, Dunn, Tertullian, 4.
125 Barnes, Tertullian, 245-6.
126 Tertullian, 11, 117.
127 Exhort. cast. 7.3: “And are not we laypersons also priests?” [Nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus?] Rankin, Tertullian and the Church, 39, attributes French scholars’ affirmation of Tertullian’s ordination to a mistranslation of Tertullian’s question in French, reading, “Est-ce que, même laïcs, nous ne sommes pas prêtres?” cf. De mon. 12.1-4, where within a comparison of clergy and laity he seems to be placing himself among the latter.
128 Barnes, 117ff., does conjecture that Tertullian would have delivered sermons during the Christian meetings. cf. Bray, Holiness, 40-1, who argues that Tertullian was a presbyter, and Jerome actually preserves an example when presbyter and priest were not the same; i.e. the presbyter had no sacerdotal function.
129 See Bray, Holiness, 17ff., for the pre-Barnesian consensus.
an unpalatable truth: the church is not a conclave of bishops, but the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.”

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

1.3.9 Tertullian, Beyond the “Facts”

By focusing on various points of Tertullian’s life, the above presentation neglects to address a recurring element in the study of Tertullian, namely what many deem to be a strong anti-Roman sentiment in Tertullian’s writings. This sentiment is variously defined and discussed and therefore has remained a nebulous element in scholarly discourse, often evading direct elaboration. Whenever Tertullian’s anti-

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


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

133 See discussion in chapter nine.

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

135 See chapter eight.
Roman attitude is deliberated, it is usually in one of two categories: the debate over his so-called Montanism and his attacks on Roman paganism.  

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

More transparent in Tertullian’s writings is his apologetic against the paganism of the Roman Empire. Osborn comments, “Most of what he wrote was directed against someone. He took on the Roman establishment, Marcion, Praxeas, indulgent bishops, Hermogenes and Valentinitians; indeed he took on the world itself and insisted that things were going to be very different at the end.” Osborn represents the majority of scholars who accept Tertullian’s attack on the “Roman establishment” as a critique against idolatry and an attack on the unjust treatment of Christians. Some scholars, however, acknowledge in Tertullian a

137 See chapter four.
138 *Holiness*, 11, 21ff., and 37.
141 Tertullian, xiv.
broader criticism of Romanism.\textsuperscript{143} Did Tertullian attack aspects of the Roman Empire? If Tertullian opposed the Roman government, what were his reasons?

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

Given the lack of Tertullian’s biographical information agreed upon by scholars, any indication of self-identity evident in Tertullian’s writings invites attention. If Tertullian attacks Rome and Romans, then he evidently sees himself as non-Roman. If Tertullian is not Roman, to what category does he belong? One possible answer is that Tertullian wrote with the self-identity of an African. Therefore, in order to give an introduction to Tertullian and his North African context, the following section consists of a brief chronology of both Roman Africa and the Christianization of Roman Africa. Following the chronological surveys, the remaining chapters will employ theories of identity from Social Anthropology in order to re-read Tertullian’s context and his writings.

1.4 The Context of Tertullian: Colonization of Africa

Was Tertullian a Tunisian? While one level of discourse might allow scholars to apply such appellations, historians would typically deem such an identification anachronistic. What identities, then, were available to Tertullian, writing from the context of Roman Africa?\textsuperscript{144} In order to explore the possibilities, a brief chronology of Roman colonization of African will prove helpful.


\textsuperscript{144} e.g. British? See \textit{Adu. Iud.} 7.4: "...the haunts of the Britons – inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ" [...et Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca Christo uero subdita]. Or Indian? See \textit{Apol.} 42.1: "We are not Indian Brahmins or Gymnosophists..." [Neque enim Brachmanae aut Indorum gymnosophistae sumus...].
 Scholars know relatively little about North Africa before Roman colonization and must rely on the reports of Greek and Roman historians.\textsuperscript{145} The local populations, variously referred to as Libyans, \textit{Afri} (African) and Berbers, consisted of various pastoral and agricultural, urban and rural, as well as oral and literate societies.\textsuperscript{146} Long before Roman occupation, colonization of North Africa involved Phoenicians on their trade route to the Iberian peninsula who established sea ports along the North African coastline (c. 1000 BCE). The most famous and influential of these ports was Carthage, traditionally said to be founded (c. 814 BCE) by Dido. Punic language and customs expanded inland during the centuries before Rome, intermingling language, practices and gods among other indigenous peoples.\textsuperscript{147} With its military and naval superiority, Carthage expanded its own imperial endeavors through much of North Africa. Although peaceable trade with Rome existed as early as 509 BCE, Carthage conflicted with Rome resulting in its sequential defeats in the three Punic wars and the ultimate destruction of Carthage (146 BCE). Rome declared the territory around Carthage a Roman province, which became known as Africa Vetus.

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

Long into the Empire, natives of North Africa continued to speak both Punic and Libyan as their native languages and continued to worship both Punic and Libyan gods, and thus, the overlaying of Punic customs creates the first layer in a complex matrix of North African identities.\textsuperscript{148} Throughout North Africa, Punic

\textsuperscript{145} The following chronology is taken from Raven, \textit{Rome}; and Anthony R. Birley, \textit{The African Emperor: Septimius Severus}, rev. ed., (London: B.T. Batsford LTD, 1988); unless otherwise noted. For an archaeological survey of this period, see Quinn, “Roman Africa?”

\textsuperscript{146} On “Berber” as an Arabic loan-word from Greek, see Fergus Millar, “Local Cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic and Latin in Roman Africa,” \textit{JRS} 58 (1968), 128.

\textsuperscript{147} For “African accent,” see Millar, “Local Cultures,” 127; and Birley, \textit{The African Emperor}, 35.

\textsuperscript{148} On the problems of “Punicization” and the archaeological material data, see Quinn, “Roman Africa?”, 23-7.
influence assimilated into the indigenous societies to the extent that Raven remarks, "...it was the Libyans in the third [century] who finally transformed 'Tyrions into Africans' and, in turn, became the upholders of neo-Punic language and traditions for centuries under the Romans."\(^{149}\)

1.4.1 Romanization of Africa

Roman colonization of Africa can be understood as a process that penetrated the inland in stages, thereby increasing the grain supply for the empire.\(^{150}\) Carthage was refounded in 29 BCE by Octavian – soon to be Augustus, and Africa Vetus and Africa Nova were subsumed under the larger Africa Proconsularis. In the first century, as Rome grew stronger and the need for more grain increased, Roman settlements increased and pushed inland, furthering the acculturation of indigenous people with the Latin language and even Roman religions, largely by transplanting military veterans. Broughton insists that the amalgamation of language and customs came about by trade and not by imperial intent.\(^{151}\) By the end of the second century, Rome was well established in Africa, at least in economic terms. However, the inscriptions left by natives under Roman occupation reveal that comparatively few gave up their own language, cults, and customs for the Roman.\(^{152}\) Latin became the trade language because most of the colonizers came from Italy.

Despite the imposition of Roman trade, "the cultural situation in Africa was quite complex, much more so than that in most other provinces in the western Roman Empire. There was to begin with an indigenous culture which lasted well into the imperial period."\(^{153}\) Just as the Punic influence in no way voided the indigenous customs and practices, neither did the Roman victory over Carthage annihilate the Libyo-Punic.\(^{154}\) The Punic population returned to the now Roman Carthage of Augustus to form a large percentage of the lower classes.\(^{155}\)

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149 Raven, *Rome*, 31; it should be noted that Raven in no way discounts the enormous diversity within North Africa.
150 Broughton, *The Romanization*, the following outline is taken from his work. For the same pattern with other Punic settlements in the Mediterranean, see, for example, Peter van Dommelen, "Punic Persistence: Colonialism and Cultural Identities in Roman Sardinia," in *Cultural Identity*, ed. Laurence and Berry, 25-48. For further discussion of the process of grain supply from Egypt and Africa Proconsularis, see Phil Perkins, "Power, Culture and Identity in the Roman Economy," in *Experiencing Rome*, ed. Huskinson, 197-8.
151 *The Romanization*, 116ff.
152 Ibid, 119ff.
154 Millar, "Local Cultures," on the survival of Punic late into the imperial period.
As Roman trade created more of a Latin presence in North Africa, more Africans assimilated into Roman societal structures. In discussing the Romanization of Africa, Edwin Champlin states, “In Africa, as elsewhere, this [Romanization] was tantamount to urbanization. Therein the ancient cities of the East had a tremendous advantage, and a complementary disadvantage for Africa lay in the vestiges of its strong and alien Punic culture.” Colonists came to Africa for land with which to raise grain and olives, and with land ownership they hired native workers or re-rented portions resulting in “a society of unprivileged serfs.” Whether urban or rural, the new lower classes created by Roman colonization retained many of their indigenous (here meaning, pre-Roman) customs and practices.

1.4.2 Africanization of Rome

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

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

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

156 Fronto and Antonine Rome, (HUP, 1980), 12. For more on urbanization during this time, see Phil Perkins and Lisa Nevett, “Urbanism and Urbanization in the Roman World,” in Experiencing Rome, ed. Huskinson, 213-244.
158 Rome, 122.
159 See Birley, The African Emperor, 83, for examples of “the advance of Africans.”
160 Ibid, 126.
and Clodius Albinus, an African general in Britian, and he ruled by transferring power from senators to the military. His son and successor was murdered by Macrinus, a Mauretanian who briefly became emperor. Emperors who succeeded him also met untimely deaths, including Maximinus Thrax who was killed (238 CE) in an uprising that originated in Africa. Gordian I, himself probably of Roman descent and a proconsul of Africa, was named emperor by leaders of a revolt in Africa that consisted largely of indigenous and lower class peoples in and around Carthage. Although Gordian and his son, Gordian II, were defeated, Gordian III would be appointed emperor, only to be challenged by another indigenous revolt in Africa, led by the proconsul Sabinianus (240) who was swiftly defeated. Roman officials would also have to face repeated revolts on the borders of Africa Proconsularis for the following decades. Firmus, from Mauretania, led an indigenous revolt that was suppressed (375) by Rome with the help of Firmus' brother, Gildo. Later, Gildo himself rebelled against Rome (397), mustering a large following in Africa before being defeated by the emperor who was aided by Gildo and Firmus' brother, Mascezel.

The invasion of the Vandals (428) of the fifth century and the Byzantine reconquest saw the wealth and prosperity of the provincials depleted. The constant turmoil between the empire and the indigenous peoples preceded the Arabian re-colonization of Africa in the seventh century. Looking back over the entire period, Cherry states, "Putting even the best face on the Romans' actions in the region, it is hard not to conclude, with Broughton, that their only identifiable policy in the frontier-zone is one of 'exploitation'... resulting in] little immigration into the frontier-zone; hardly any change in native economic structures; limited interaction between the intrusive and indigenous cultures."161 Cherry is echoing the argument of Broughton, "The Romans adapted themselves to Africa; they gave her peace, and made her prosperous, but they never made her Roman."162 The historical data suggests that around and amidst the numerous Roman colonial centers in North Africa remained a vast plethora of indigenous communities that retained much of their pre-Roman practices and customs.

1.5 The Context of Tertullian: Christianization of Roman Africa

While Tertullian is the first Christian from the context of North Africa whose writings are extant, he writes from within an already prevalent Christian community. How was North Africa evangelized, and to what extent? What were the demographics of the first Christian churches and what changes did they undergo in their history?

161 Frontier, 73.
162 The Romanization, 227-8. Similarly, see Dommelen, "Punic Persistence," 25-48, for the Punic settlement in Sardinia, which was "Romanized" much earlier militarily, but remained Punic in "material culture."
The history of Christian communities in ancient Africa is known through sources that report conflict with Rome. The historical data fall into a broad outline that illustrates this theme: (1) late second to early third century, which includes the *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum*, the *Passio sanctarum Perpetueae et Felicitatis* and Tertullian's writings; (2) mid to late third Century, which primarily consists of Cyprian's treatises and letters; and (3) late antiquity to the early middle ages, consisting primarily of the so-called Donatist controversy. The scope of this chronology cannot extend to every aspect of North African Christianity; instead, it is hoped that the broad history, including what follows Tertullian, illuminates some factors that impacted Christian identities in North Africa.

Although the first evidence of Christianity in North Africa is the *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum* (c. 180), scholars agree that the document indicates a previously established Christian presence. The question scholars debate, however, is the mode by which the Christian religion entered North Africa. Although North African Christians used Latin, scholars have generally rejected Roman origins in favour of either Jewish influence or the claim to Greek missions. Lacking further information in the sources, scholars have not reached a consensus, other than acknowledging the difference between African Christian practices and the contemporary forms in Rome.

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164 e.g. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 63.


The historical data becomes more substantial with the account of the martyrs from the town of Scilli. Many scholars consider the surviving account to be one of the most reliable *acta* from early Christendom.\(^{168}\) In seventeen lines, it tells of seven men and five women who refused to recant their Christianity, and as a result they were beheaded on orders of the proconsul of Africa.\(^{169}\) Nothing is known of the town of Scilli from where the first recorded African martyrs came, nor is there explicit reference as to how or why the proconsul arrested the Scillitans. The image portrayed is of Christians who are not surprised by the pronouncement of their sentence, exemplified by their unanimous response, "*Deo gratias*."\(^{170}\)

Another famous account of African Christian martyrs, the *Passio sanctorum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, bears witness to the first general period of African Christianity.\(^{171}\) This *passio* is a much fuller and grander account of the incarceration, trial, torture and execution of Perpetua and her fellow martyrs. Like the account of the Scillitan martyrs, the witness of the *passio* is sufficiently contemporary to the events it portrays to be considered a credible source to most scholars.\(^{172}\) The date Perpetua and her companions were martyred is said to be the same day as *natale Getae Caesaris* (7.9) – the birthday of Geta, Septimius Severus’ son – which according to Tabbernee was on 7 March 203.\(^{173}\) The trial likely took place in Carthage, and no indication is given of the Christians’ background.\(^{174}\) Like the *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum*, the account portrays the Christians in Africa in conflict with the powers of the world.

Representing the second generation of North African Christians, Cyprian of Carthage is reported to have led a church also riddled with conflict.\(^{175}\) Soon after

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\(^{169}\) Stated to be on 17 July in Carthage during the consulship of C. Bruttius Praesens and Claudianus. On the proconsul, P. Vigellius Saturninus, see Tertullian, *Ad Scap.* 3.4.

\(^{170}\) *PSS* 17.


\(^{172}\) Barnes, "Legislation," 72.


\(^{175}\) See Jerome, *De uiris illustribus* 53.3, "...Cyprian was accustomed never to pass a day without reading Tertullian and would frequently say to him, 'Hand me the master,' meaning, of course, Tertullian" [*solitum numquam Cyprianum absque Tertulliani lectione unum diem praeterisse, ac sibi crebro dicere, Da magistrum: Tertullianum videlicet significans.*] For an overview of
his conversion, he took office as Bishop of Carthage (248/9), wherein he was challenged with one of the most aggressive campaigns against Christians to date under the Roman emperor Decian (249-51). Internal conflict arose after some Christians recanted their faith; they sought immediate forgiveness and restoration from the confessors awaiting martyrdom, a practice Cyprian opposed. In the Roman congregation, a dissension occurred where a certain Novatian held the view that the lapsed should not be allowed back into the Church, even at the point of death – another practice Cyprian opposed, and Novation eventually claimed for himself the bishopric of Rome and established rival congregations in Rome and in Africa. Later, another conflict arose, this time directly between the Roman and Carthaginian sees: Stephen I, bishop of Rome (254-7), declared those baptized by heretics could be accepted into the communion, while Cyprian and his fellow African bishops upheld their traditional stance against this view. The conflict was never fully resolved when the Valerian persecution resulted in Cyprian’s martyrdom (258).

For the third period of African Christianity, historians often look to the reign of Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313) as the beginning of the Donatist controversy. The beginning of the split between the Donatist party and the Catholics traces back to an internal dispute of the Christian congregation at Carthage, which resulted in Donatus, a “former bishop from the village of ‘Dark Houses’ (Casae Nigrae) in Numidia,” being appointed as a rival overseer in Carthage. The conflict climaxed in the Conference of Carthage (411) where both parties’ bishops convened, wherein, despite the portrayal of anti-Donatist accounts like Augustine and Optatus of Milevis, the council seems to have resulted in a stalemate. The Donatists, drawing on Tertullian and Cyprian, understood themselves to be at odds with the world, which was typified in the powers of Rome, seeing the collusion of the Roman church with the Roman state as foreign to the faith of the martyrs and antithetical to the impetus of African Christian tradition. Historians especially note conflict with Rome in the alliance of many Donatists to the revolts of Firmus and Gildo.

Cyprian’s life and dates, see G.S.M. Walker, The Churchmanship of St. Cyprian, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968); for a more recent treatment of some the issues surrounding Cyprian, see Burns, Cyprian.

176 Raven, Rome, 169.
178 Tilley, The Bible, 2ff.
The disappearance of widespread practice of Christianity in North Africa presents an enigma to the scholars of Christian history. Henri Teissier asked, “How can a Christianity established in some seven hundred different dioceses, some of them so closely neighboring on Christian Europe, with all their rich doctrinal legacy thanks to Augustine and Cyprian, a Christianity steeped in the blood of the martyrs, have simply and completely disappeared?” The Vandal invasion, importing a wave of Arianism, and later the Arab expansion, introducing an entirely new religion, both contributed to the complete eradication of Christianity from Africa Proconsularis, Numidia and Mauritania.

1.6 Conclusion

The above surveys of Patristic scholarship highlight an unexplored aspect of Tertullian’s writings, namely, his Africanity, which is now open for discussion. The Postcolonial and Anthropological challenges to “re-read” history permits Tertullian’s setting to be revisited and his oeuvre to be reinterpreted. The importance of context, moreover, for Patristic and Classical studies demands that the social landscape from which Tertullian wrote be extensively researched in order to better interpret this Church father from the continent of Africa.

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

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182 For discussion, see Frend, The Donatist Church. Cahal B. Daly, Tertullian the Puritan and His Influence: An Essay in Historical Theology, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), 72-3, blames Tertullian (via Cyprian) for what happened “at the hands of the Vandal and Mohammedan.”
183 See Barnes, Tertullian, vii, for a plea to focus on context. cf. John Dominic Crossan, The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 146-9, for his outline of an interdisciplinary methodology similar to that used here. Crossan begins with anthropological theory and historical context before approaching the text.
It should be noted that these theories do not serve as ultimate criteria in any sort of unquestionable "proofs" or "evidence." Instead, they provide hermeneutical tools that can explore the few remnants of Tertullian's self-expression found in his writings. Even the theories themselves, although they may appear at first glance as segmented categories that address individuated aspects of societies, are in fact implemented with the understanding that no one theory can adequately address the information without first being destabilized in an attempt to address the interconnectedness of any one of the categories with other scholarly constructs — including theories absent in the present discussion.\(^{184}\)

The order and presentation of theory and data, however, do not adequately reflect the concerns with reification that results from a linear approach. Discussing, for example, class theory in anthropology followed immediately with a presentation of sources on classes from North African society, North African Christianity and Tertullian would suggest that "class" or "classes" existed independently, or at least were structurally distinguishable, from kinship, gender, religion or innumerable other identity markers constructed by groups and individuals in ancient Roman Africa. Nevertheless, some reification is inevitable in any academic endeavor, and the most clear means of applying the anthropological theory to the context of North Africa and to Tertullian is in a linear fashion.

Patristic scholars in the past have largely been constrained by the non-African lens through which they viewed Tertullian. In order to provide a precise set of theories in which to circumnavigate the ethnocentricity of the past and to address the concerns raised in this first chapter, the discussion will now turn to the specific theories and categories of Social Anthropology that will be utilized in this project. With these issues and theories at the forefront, each chapter returns to Tertullian's context, namely the context of Roman Africa and the sources of the North African Christian communities. Finally, each chapter explores examples of Tertullian's own writings, applying the anthropological theories and contextual insights.

\(^{184}\) The most notable theory absent in this work is gender theory. The omission is regrettable in that much is to be gained by exploring gender in Tertullian's writings, yet such an exploration does not add much to the discussion of Tertullian as an African. Moreover, the theory has proved so influential that the material deserves an entire monograph, and it is believed that adding another section on gender could not have done justice to the discussion. Because there have already been numerous Feminist readings of Tertullian, it is believed that the omission is not entirely detrimental to this project. Additionally, because gender theory has proved so influential, the following chapters do speak to the way "kinship," "class," "ethnicity" and "religion" have been embodied and gendered, and so the omission is not as complete as it might first appear.
2 Social Identity

2.1 Social Anthropology and Social Identity

While early anthropological studies often focused on aspects of societies that can affect an individual or group identity, rather than speaking of "identity" itself, anthropologists in the past few decades have turned to "identity" as an analytical category especially useful in postcolonial contexts.¹ While the broader academic discourse understood "identity" in terms of "sameness," "fixed-ness" or "bounded-ness," such definitions have become problematic in anthropology.² Postcolonial encounters involve battles for the rights to represent and define "personhood," "citizenship," and "nationality" (especially by representing the past), and, therefore, anthropological theories of identity have arisen which address the ways in which such notions were ideologically and socially constructed. Postcolonial forms of identity often stem from polarized colonizer/colonized identities and the "hybridity" of those seen to be in the "third space" or "in-between-ness" created by postcoloniality.³ The emphasis on the discursive nature of identities suggests that "bounded" fixity or sameness regarding identity is a western conceptualization.⁴ Such a critique forces anthropologists to recognize that "cultural realities are always produced in

³ The various binary oppositions, such as colonizer/colonized, centre/periphery, white/black, etc., have been attacked by postcolonial critics for being themselves ethnocentric and derogatory (i.e. the first term implicitly favorable over the latter); see Ashcroft et al, The Empire Writes Back, 124-5, 155-6, who credit this attack to Franz Fanon; cf. Goldberg, Relocating Postcolonialism, xii. "Hybridity" has been presented favorably by Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1994); for a review of Bhabha and his critics, see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 118-21.
specific sociohistorical contexts and that it is necessary to account for the processes that generate those contexts in order to account for the... practice of identity....5 Such an understanding of identity, allows one to read Tertullian’s works within the postcolonial context of Roman Africa wherein many inhabited an “in-between-ness.” Those individuals’ identities, therefore, should be seen as complex and multifaceted.

Acknowledging the identities as socially constructed, most anthropologists recognize how groups and individuals inhabit multiple identities, the salience of which depends on the context. Because an individual or a group can hold multiple identities simultaneously (e.g. Scottish, British, European, Methodist, Protestant, Christian, female, black, worker, etc.), anthropologists have developed theories which enable them to interpret the various interplays and interconnections of those identities, rather than reifying the ethnographic data in terms of a “single” constricted understanding of an identity.6 The way in which an individual’s or group’s various identities “intertwine,” “collide” or “collude” depends upon context, and when individuals invoke a specific identity, it is to be read as a part of an array of factors which affect that individual’s self-understanding, such as ethnicity, gender and kinship.7 When turning to Tertullian’s works, the reading below will locate Tertullian’s Christian identity among the many possible self-constructions available to a writer from North Africa under Roman rule without necessarily privileging his Christianity over any

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other form of identity, such as Africanity. Without privileging or essentializing any aspect of a person’s or group’s identity, anthropologists can explore a particular form of identity in certain settings, particularly in the phenomenon of encounter.

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

Referencing the work of Frederik Barth, Bauman describes how many theorists define “communal” identities as by-products of feverish boundary-drawing.” In other words, identity is constructed in terms of difference or in contrast to the “Other”; whereas, the identification of otherness typically creates a boundary separating outsiders from insiders. The primary way identity will be...
Social Identity

used in the present work, therefore, will be in terms of social identity, that is, the way in which an individual or group defines itself by insider/outside distinctions. Additionally, since anthropologists generally delineate various aspects, forms or components of identity, the following chapters will review anthropological theories on kinship, class, ethnicity and religion with a view to understand how these categories are incorporated into theories of social identity – namely, kinship identity, class identity, ethnic identity and religious identity. Before incorporating additional theories, however, the anthropological approach to social identity will be shown to provide explanatory assistance to the ancient Mediterranean milieu, specifically to the context of Roman Africa, to African Christian writings and to the works of Tertullian.

2.2 Roman Africa and Social Identity

In the last two decades many historians studying the Roman Empire have turned their attention to individual and group identities. The shift, according to Richard Miles, correlates to an interest in identities in the wider academic discourse in light of events in the past century. Many classicists have undertaken works on identity, ethnicity and nationalism in the ancient context, partly in light of calls to shed the Classic’s disciplinary stigma as “the quintessential representative of elitism, the custodian of western tradition, the pillar of Eurocentrism.” More pertinently, identity theories have provided historians with a means of interpreting the identities of the ancients, including ancients from the periphery of the historical sources: non-Romans, non-conquerors, non-elites and non-literates.

“Identity as a Scarce Resource,” SA 7 (3 1999): 239-51, who illustrates how boundaries can be defined by similarity more than difference, given accusations of “piracy.”


16 Wells, “Identity,” 239. e.g. Jewish identities: Sian Jones & Sarah Pearce, “Introduction: Jewish Local Identities and Patriotism in the Graeco-Roman Period,” Jewish Local Patriotism
One way Roman historians employ identity theory is to begin with, what shall be deemed in this discussion, social identity, that is by forwarding the anthropological insight that identities are discursive. The resulting understanding is to focus on identities as social constructs which are fluid, dynamic and contextual, rather than ascribe a fixed essence based on birth, biology or some other naturalizing criteria. Most often, identities are understood as constructed in terms of difference, a dialectic of we/they, that is, by establishing an “Other” from which to differentiate the self or the group. Given this understanding, the historian can perceive various and multiple, sometimes even conflicting, identities attributable to, and/or held by, groups and individuals. These aspects of identity especially apply in the context of Roman colonization.

By expanding into other territories, Rome created circumstances of postcoloniality wherein varying groups came into conflict and various identities were formed. One example is the ancient near east, wherein, long before Roman colonization, Greek military expansion created what Doron Mendels has outlined as a three-tiered model of social identities: Greek colonists, natives and Hellenists. Similarly, Huskinson understands the social identities from the province of Asia to have been overlaid with waves of Greek and Roman colonization, creating “three different cultural layers: Roman officialdom, the local Greek-speaking elite, and an indigenous element which may or may not have preserved traditions of its own.” Such demarcations of social identities serve as theories that can be applied to a given context in order to explore the possible interchanges of differing groups and individuals. In order to interpret the social identities of North Africans under Roman rule, the following discussion


On “Roman,” “Greek,” “Barbarian” and other “problematic” labels, see Miles, “Introduction,” 4, 10-1; and see below.
similarly delineates three categories: Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans and new elites.\footnote{It should be noted that many other social identities could likely be listed for Roman Africa, such as Greek identity. The categories listed represent those of interest to this discussion. Some other elements of possible identities available to North Africans will be discussed in the remaining sections below.}

The use of social identity in this discussion will involve a more elusive referent than other theories of identity, such as ethnic or religious identity. The intention is to address the phenomenon that some identities are constructed in an imprecise manner, often involving several other elements of a person's or group's identity. It is beneficial to begin with social identity in order to specify that the discussion is not interested in personal identity, or any form of identity attributable to an individual's uniqueness or specific role. Moreover, although these three categories will be applied repeatedly throughout the sections on other forms of identity, this is done only as an organizing principle for the purposes of this present work, not as an indication of any primordial or essential nature of these categories.

In turning to the notion of Roman social identity, one immediately notes the problem of defining \textit{romanitas}, or Roman-ness.\footnote{Rives, "Roman Religion Revived," \textit{Phoenix} 52 (3/4 1998), 352.} As John Scheid begins, “Besides, even the term ‘the Romans’ covers a multitude of people, identities and cultures. What, after all, was a Roman? A citizen of Rome itself or of Latium? And in what period? At the time of the Punic Wars, at the beginning of the common era, or under the Empire?\footnote{Scheid, \textit{An Introduction}, 1. For civic identity in general in the Hellenized areas of the Roman empire, see Sheila L. Ager, “Civic Identity in the Hellenistic World: The Case of Lebedos,” \textit{GRBS} 39 (1 1998): 5-22.} One way scholars answer these questions is by describing general ideals Romans attributed to themselves, such as the importance of upholding Roman law or adhering to the images forwarded in Augustan propaganda.\footnote{For a recent example, see Erik Gunderson, \textit{Declamation, Paternity and Roman Identity: Authority and the Rhetorical Self}, (CUP, 2003). On “Augustan,” see, for example, Katherine Toll, “Making Roman-ness and the Aeneid,” \textit{ClAnt} 16 (1 1997): 34-56, for \textit{romanitas} deliberately broadened to incorporate Italians.} Another approach which has gained a large consensus among scholars is to understand how Roman identity was constructed in the process of colonization. Woolf discusses this political element of Roman identity:

\begin{quote}
Romans did not conceive of their identity as underwritten by a unique language or a common descent in the same way that some others (including Greeks) did, and their traditions of origin stressed the progressive incorporation of outsiders. Roman identity was based to an unusual degree on membership of a political and religious community with common values and \textit{mores} (customs, morality and way of life).\footnote{“Becoming Roman,” 120. Woolf's point about the Latin language is largely in relation to the Greek-speaking East; more on Latin in the province of Africa will be discussed below.}
\end{quote}
As Romans – Italian or otherwise – began to inhabit the provinces, much of their Roman identity was constructed in relation to the “barbarian” or provincial “Other,” especially in Western provinces such as Africa. In other words, those individuals and communities who immigrated to Africa to homestead and/or to trade understood themselves – and, it should be noted, were understood by others – as Romans, explicitly. Even in the later centuries, veterans from Italy or other provinces who came to Africa for the most part retained their Latin language and many of their Roman ideals.

The second category established in this study is the African indigenous identity. Since the vast majority of colonizers were Italian, they were to some extent a monolithic group, justifying a monolithic category, unlike the indigenous population, which was by no means homogeneous. The Romans, however, specifically those dealing with North Africa, easily identified all indigenous peoples as barbaric Africans by the very fact that they were not Roman. From the perspective of the African peoples, however, identity would likely have been constructed in terms of family, clan, municipality, language and/or religion. The fact that North Africans from any port, village or clan traveled throughout the northern parts of the continent encountering others of same or similar language and customs did not necessarily cause them to have an “African” social identity. When the Roman colonizers’ presence persisted, however, Africans faced a new category of Other-ness from which to distinguish themselves. The more contact an indigenous African person had with Roman colonizers and merchants, the more that person understood – and perhaps explicitly heard – that he or she was

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


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

31 Although the Hamito-Semitic or Afro-Asiatic language group consisted of many dialects, Punic was likely the trade language according to David Soren, Aicha Ben Abed Ben Khader, and Hedi Slim, Carthage: Uncovering the Mysteries and Splendors of Ancient Tunisia, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 46.
not Roman, but African. Therefore, while it is highly likely that indigenous Africans constructed their self-identity from other immediate factors (age, kin, religion, etc.), thereby making a widespread “African” identity somewhat unlikely, there was, consciously or otherwise, a new self-identity as “not-Roman,” resulting in an often de facto, yet sometimes explicit, African identity.

A third category of social identity in North Africa during the Roman Empire discussed here is that of the new elite, which refers to Africans who personally benefited under Roman colonization. By constructing a category of new elite, this discussion does not reify North African identities, but the opposite: the category of new elite demystifies modern constructs of “Roman” and “African” and underscores the complexity and multiplicity of identities in colonized Africa. By introducing a third analytical category of new elites, the former two are in a sense decategorized; they are destabilized; they are shown to be analytical paradigms consisting of individuals with fluid and competing social loyalties and self-perceptions. Moreover, since this study is interested in Tertullian’s African identity, there is a danger of essentializing “social identities” in terms of regional or ethnic identities. In an attempt to overcome this problem, the following chapters allow the somewhat arbitrary category of “social identity” to represent Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans and new elites as separate groups. Throughout the discussion, however, each of these are problematized and their distinctives are blurred, especially by setting each social identity within other theories of identity – namely, kinship, class, ethnicity and religion. By invoking such groups and categories, the sources inevitably are reified; it is suggested here, however, that these categories allow for a focus on non-Roman and African aspects of ancient group’s and individual’s identities which can in turn illustrate the complexity of those identities, especially in the case of new elites.

Throughout the Roman provinces, elites, although “hard to define,” are generally understood by scholars as individuals who have adopted a sense of romanitas through “cultural pursuits,” or accommodating to the “elite Graeco-Roman culture.” Rives argues, “Local elites in the west tended to refashion themselves as Romans, so that by identifying with the dominant culture they

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33 e.g. Augustine, *Epistula* 138.19: “Apuleius of whom I choose rather to speak, because, as our own countryman, he is better known to us Africans…” [Apuleius, enim, ut de illo potissimum loguamur, qui nobis Afris Afer est notior.] One should note, however, the polemical context. In a chapter entitled, “Augustine the African,” O’Donnell, *Augustine*, (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), 2, claims, “So a young man like Augustine could belong irretrievably to the world Rome had made, but still feel that he was living on the periphery of that world. Augustine set out to make himself more Roman than the Romans and to penetrate to the center of the culture from which he found himself alienated by his provincial birth.”

could use its prestige to reinforce their own social positions." Jane Webster has argued that the concept of "Romanization" is misleading and should be replaced with "Creolization" in order to highlight the distinction between those provincial elites who began accepting Roman practices and those indigenous provincials who did not.

The difficulty in interpreting new elites is the question of multiple identities and divided loyalties. Huskinson discusses how "evidence may need careful questioning to reveal its standpoint. Its agenda may be hidden: it may voice dissent as well as conformity, aspiration as well as actual ownership." Cherry provides an example from another province of how elites conformed, at least outwardly to Romanization, "It was Tacitus’ understanding (Agr. 21) that Britons who adopted Roman ways did so because they were eager to be promoted (honoris aemulatio)." To be accepted in the Roman system, the more "Roman," and less "barbaric," one had to become. Likewise, indigenous Africans began the process of "adopting Roman ways," and therefore, their social identity became extremely difficult to pinpoint, comprising a new category of identification, that of the new elites.

Hope cites the inscription of one new elite as an example: Marcus Servilius Draco Abucianus from Gigthis in North Africa, who "was honoured by a statue and an inscription which recorded his munificence and services to the town, which included several trips to Rome to promote the status of the community. No doubt he elevated his own profile in elevating that of the town." More examples of how new elites in North Africa traversed the boundaries between "Roman" and "African" identities will be discussed through the lens of specific theories in the section below.

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35 "Religion," 269.
37 "Elite Culture," 98. See Smith, "Cultural Choice," 56-93, for a discussion of this phenomenon in eastern provinces.
38 Frontier, 81; ref. Tacitus, Agricola 21, "...and the rivalry for his compliments took the place of coercion... As a result, the nation which used to reject the language began to aspire to rhetoric: further, the wearing of our dress became a distinction, and the toga came into fashion, and little by little the Britons were seduced into alluring vices: to the lounge, the bath, the well-appointed dinner table. The simple natives gave the name of ‘culture’ to this factor of their slavery." [ita honoris aemulatio pro necessitate erat... ut qui modo linguam Romanam abnuebant, eloquentiam concupiscerent. Inde et iam habitus nostri honor et frequens toga. Paulatimque descendsum ad delenimenta ulteriorum. porticus et balinea et conuiuiorum elegantiam. Idque apud imperitos humanitas vocabatur, cum pars seruitutis esset.] Also on elites and aemulatio, see Huskinson, "Looking," 21-2.
39 "Status and Identity," 137.
40 Brown, The Lord’s Prayer, 182, "...Africa Proconsularis appears to have fostered an environment wherein individuals could claim and nurture an identity that was both local and imperial."
Here it should be noted that unlike the previous two categories, it is highly unlikely that anyone would have actually used this category in ancient times. Instead, the category underscores the fact that neither the Roman colonizers nor the African indigenous knew exactly to which group these new elites belonged, and neither group would have uniformly reacted to the new elites with acceptance or rejection. Instead, group distinctions would begin to break down and identity would likely be determined on a case by case basis of difference and similarity. For example, a Roman colonizer who encountered a toga-clad new elite in the market spending large sums might assume the toga-wearer to be as Roman as her/himself. If, however, that same Roman-garbed new elite were then to speak to a merchant in a Punic accent, the colonizer might consider the new elite to be a member of the non-Roman/African/barbaric "Other." The new elites' identities were fluid, having both Roman and African aspects – to name only two.

Since many of the new elites had more opportunity for education, they often provided indications for their classification through their writings in a way that the illiterate masses were unable to produce, making elites "relatively accessible in the ancient sources (compared, for instance, with indigenous cultures in many parts of the empire)." Moreover, as people who in one sense could be classified as indigenous, the new elites also provided a witness for the self-identity of the second category, that is the indigenous Africans, the Roman "Other." Many of the individuals classified here as new elites provide a Rosetta Stone for interpreting all three categories of social identity in Roman North Africa.

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

The indigenous Africans throughout the empire retained much of their indigenous heritage, defying any description in terms of full-scale Romanization. While they were obviously impacted by trade with the wider empire, the evidence

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41 Although honoris aemulatio itself illustrates such a category in terms of process, if not of identification.
42 These and other indicators of ethnicity, class and other forms of identity will be discussed further below.
43 See Huskinson, "Elite Culture," 98.
44 Adapting the phrase "more English than the English" from postcolonial criticism: Aschroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back, 4. Also see O'Donnell, Augustine, 2, cited above.
does not support any theory that North Africans were amalgamated into the Graeco-Roman norm. Cherry argues, "It seems to me that what we ought to be trying to identify is the acculturation of ideas or values that were rooted or, in anthropological terms, ‘embedded’ in Roman culture. A Roman artifact that carried with it some religious significance, for example, will have been more difficult to acculturate than, say, a pot." The discussion about indigenous Africans can no longer be passively placed in Western or European terms. While the social identity of the various peoples of ancient North Africa may have been primarily based in local and familial identity, there was an awareness of the "alien-ness" of the Romans, and, therefore, an awareness of their own "nativeness."

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

To be sure, it has often been said that Romans did not impose their culture on other peoples. But that is true only if one takes “impose” in the crude sense of a hypothetical Roman official ordering Celtic barbarians (for example) to stop wearing trousers and don togas instead. It is more important to consider Roman attitudes toward Romanization and the fact that, in the geopolitical system dominated by Rome, inexorable social forces made Graeco-Roman culture a prerequisite for the individual’s full realization of his or her talents and potential.47

Cherry argues that whatever forces were at play upon the new elites, the new elites were certainly the minority of North Africans.48 Two examples of new elites with duplicitous loyalty are Marcus Cornelius Fronto from Cirta (c.100-166 CE) and Apuleius of Madauros (c.124-180 CE). Addressing Fronto’s allegiances, Champlin states, “...the role of his patria is clear. Despite continued residence in Rome and despite connections throughout the empire, Fronto retains an interest in his homeland, an interest closely confined to Cirta and its environs.”49 Contrary to this understanding of a new elite, Harrison understood Apuleius in different terms: “It is crucially important for a true appreciation of Apuleius to realize that he belongs not to an African subculture but to the mainstream of Latin culture and literature, with his much

45 Frontier, 82. More generally, see Gosselain, “Materializing Identities,” 188.
47 Romans, 127.
48 Frontier, 159.
49 Champlin Fronto, 15.
vaunted fluency in Greek acquired as it would be by a well-educated Roman."

The seemingly contradictory self-identity seen in these two representatives of African new elites signifies the tension in which people of this category found themselves. While these individuals were African in one sense and clearly understood themselves in terms of an African self-identity, the new elites also sought and often attained a Roman status.

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

2.3 Ancient African Christians and Social Identity

In exploring the historical data of Christians in ancient Africa the discussion will invoke the three previously established categories of social identities (Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans, and new elites). These will serve as perspectival categories for reviewing the sources on early Christianity in Africa. The Christianizing of Africa, however, introduces a new category of social identity, and, therefore, contributes to the complicated web of individual and group identity constructions.

Christian history in North Africa has been presented as an overall tradition of a community that understands itself to be in conflict with those designated as outsiders. The ancient African Christian sources - primarily from the first period of African Christian history and secondarily from the second and third periods as outlined above (section 1.5) - will be surveyed for elements of Christian self-expressions. First, the discussion of Christians' social identities includes a review of data illustrating how Christians were deemed by outsiders as the "Other.”

50 "General Introduction,” 1.
51 Dunn, Tertullian, 5; Stewart-Sykes, Tertullian, 14; and Wright, “Tertullian,” 1027.
52 Markus, “Christianity, 28, and 32-5. Also, Trevette, Montanism, 69-70, points out that African Christianity may not have suffered more actual persecution than other regions, but they did understand themselves as such in Tertullian’s time.
Robert L. Wilken explains how he came to write his book, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*: "The more I read the apologists... the more I realized that they could not be understood without first studying the attitudes of outsiders to Christianity." In an attempt to interpret the Christian social identities in North Africa, this section will outline the way in which Christians were seen by non-Christians in North Africa. With the three categories of social identity at the forefront, representatives of North African society will be surveyed to determine the various perspectives toward Christians.

The introduction of a Christian identity into North African society in a sense could require a duplication of the three categories: (1.a) Non-Christian Roman Colonizers, (1.b) Christian Roman Colonizers, (2.a) Non-Christian indigenous Africans, (2.b) Christian indigenous Africans, (3.a) Non-Christian new elites and (3.b) Christian new elites. Because, however, non-Christians tended to assume the monolithic constitution of Christianity, Christians can be construed as representing a new category of social identity in North Africa: (1) Roman colonizers, (2) Indigenous Africans, (3) new elites and (4) North African Christians. Although it is true that not all members of any one of these categories, such as Roman colonizers, thought and acted unanimously, general stereotypes did exist among certain groups which provide a frame of reference to which we can compare individual attitudes. The ancient context will be discussed with the understanding of a Christian community which sees itself at odds with the oppressive forces of the outside world, or more specifically, the forces of Rome, both "pagan" and Christian.

### 2.3.1 Roman Colonizers and Christians

Direct evidence for Roman views of Christians in North Africa is sparse at best, and so the historian must look to examples of Roman stereotypes of Christians elsewhere in order to suggest analogous perspectives in Africa. The fact that many in the Roman Empire did not welcome Christian proselytism goes without saying. The question, more specifically, is "How did non-Christian Romans view the members of this new and seemingly atheistic religion?" A few writers' comments are extant which present some possible answers to this question.

The first mention of Christianity by a non-Christian did not occur until eighty-years after the death of Christ. The Governor of the province in Bithynia-Pontus named Pliny the Younger (c.62-113) wrote to his emperor Trajan to inquire as to the proper treatment of Christians. Born in Italy and a citizen of senatorial class, Pliny represents a Roman colonial perspective in a Roman province. Moreover, the actions of Pliny towards the Christians set precedence

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54 *The Christians*, (YUP, 1984), xv.
55 Ibid, xii.
56 *Epistula* 10.96; (and Trajan’s response, 10.97).
for the Roman officials in Africa and served to inform the understanding of Romans in Africa Proconsularis. Wilken argues that the description of the Bacchic orgies in Livy’s history, written during the reign of Augustus, influenced later Roman attitudes such as Pliny’s towards Christians. Perhaps Pliny has excesses of the Bacchic sort in mind when he asks, “...whether it is the mere name of Christian which is punishable, even if innocent of crime, or rather the crimes associated with the name.” Pliny does not elaborate on what “crimes” had been associated with the Christians, but his account does indicate that he is drawing on a general stereotype available to him as a Roman colonizer.

Several non-Christian writers from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire attest to the sort of charges that shaped the stereotypes of many Roman colonizers. Writing in the mid-second century, Lucian, a Syrian who lived for some time in Athens, provides an account of a Christian stereotype available to inhabitants of the Roman Empire. In a work entitled, The Passing of Peregrinus, Lucian portrays Christians as gullible and ignorant. No crimes (flagitia) are mentioned, but the overall picture is negative. Barnes postulates that Lucian is intentionally countering the general understanding of Christians as culpable of horrendous crimes by showing them to be “credulous simpletons.” The sophist Aelius Aristides (c.117-c.180) expatiates on the stereotype by comparing Cynic philosophers whom he is denouncing to “those impious men of Palestine” who “do not believe in the higher powers,” and Aristides suggests that the Cynics resemble the Christians because they too “have defected from the Greek race, or rather from all that is higher.” In an Egyptian papyrus dating to the second century a certain Lollanus presents a more gruesome view of Christians where “initiates” (μνουμενο) are engaged in promiscuous intercourse and ritual murder. Towards the end of the second century, Christians were often portrayed as incestuous and cannibalistic in their secret meetings.

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57 See below, section 4.2.5.
59 Epistula 10.96.4: nomen ipsum, si flagitia careat, an flagitia cohaerentia nomini punitur.
63 For Christian defenses against such charges, see Justin, 1 Apologia 26.7; Athenagoras, Legatio 3.1ff.; 31-32; and Minucius Felix, Octavius 9. Wilken, The Christians, 19-20, conjectures that such charges actually have some warrant and probably represent early Christian sects that did practice “clandestine rites” that gave rise to the accusation against all Christians. As evidence,
In the third Century, the general accusations against Christians were both specified and generalized. They were specified in the writings of Celsus and Porphyry (232/3-c.305) who wrote treatises that moved beyond the accusations of hearsay and attacked particularities of the Christian faith. The accusations against Christians were generalized in that the persecutions required only the name “Christian” for arrest and trial, and no evidence of any crime was necessary for a conviction. Until the Edict of Milan, the predominant posture of non-Christian Roman colonizers towards Christians was one of suspicion.

The indigenous Africans’ perceptions of Christians are available to historians only through the accounts of Roman colonizers and new elites. While the views of the Romans did not undergo dramatic change until the third period of African Christian history, the view of the populus changed much quicker. Most inhabitants of North Africa in the early period of Christianity, like the inhabitants of the empire on a whole, were largely uninterested in the activities of the Christians. The views of non-Christian indigenous Africans begin to become perceptible, however, in the trials and persecutions of the Christian martyrs. In speaking of the masses outside of North Africa, Barnes comments,

After the first quarter of the third century, Christians were in practice rarely persecuted for their religion. Popular hostility toward them, however, may have continued to be widespread for a little longer. The attitudes of the inarticulate strata of any society are usually hard to measure, but the authentic Acts of the early martyrs provide an index of changing popular attitudes. In the second century, the crowd in the amphitheater at Smyrna demanded the arrest of Polycarp, asked the Asiarch Philippus to set a lion on him, settled for burning the bishop and finally constructed a pyre themselves, while popular agitation was behind the executions at Lyon.

While nothing is reported about the crowd in the Scillitan passion, Barnes portrayal of the role of the “inarticulate strata” is reflected in the African

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64 Celsus was believed to have written in the mid second century, but his works impacted later generations such as Origen through whom Celsus’ words survive.
65 See Barnes, “Pagan Perceptions,” 232, who says “Most inhabitants of the Roman Empire in A.D. 100 were either unaware of or uninterested in the Christians in their midst.” He then contrasts this to the “educated pagan attitudes” of Pliny the younger, Tacitus, and Suetonius.
66 Ibid, 237; ref. Martyrdom of Polycarp, 3.2; 12-13, and Eusebius, Historia ecclesiastica, 5.1.7ff.
indigenous populations present at the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions. The *Passio sanctorum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* reports, “At this [the martyrs’ words] the crowds became enraged and demanded that they be scourged.” As argued above, it is likely that the majority of the population of Carthaginian commoners – and even more so throughout the rest of North Africa – would have consisted of indigenous Africans, and therefore, the crowd’s actions in the *passio* probably portray the views of many indigenous Africans at the time of its writing.

The “changing popular attitudes” to which Barnes refers becomes apparent in the trials of the African Christian martyrs in the mid to late third century. Raven observes, “The crowd which had watched St Perpetua and her companions die in the amphitheater at Carthage had been hostile to them. Half a century later, the crowd which escorted St Cyprian to the scene of his martyrdom outside the capital had almost rioted in support of their bishop.” Although the picture of masses of indigenous Africans choking the streets of Carthage in support of the city’s Christian bishop may be rhetorical exaggeration, the views of the masses of indigenous Africans does seem to have significantly shifted during this period. Raven cites the archaeological evidence of the once numerous inscriptions in Punic to non-Christian gods which completely cease during the mid to latter half of the third century.

The views and attitudes of the indigenous Africans in late antiquity largely continue in the trajectory outlined above. Because of the complication the Edict of Milan presents for interpreting Roman views of Christians in North Africa in late antiquity, this subject will be revisited after other theories have been discussed. The views of the new elites of North Africa, however, are more transparent in the three periods of ancient African Christian history.

### 2.3.3 New Elites and Christians

Because of the new elites’ tenuous loyalties and varying modes of self-identification, no single stereotype of new elites in Africa towards Christians can represent the group on a whole. Those individuals who have more completely inserted themselves into the Roman system and mental framework most likely ascertained the same general stereotypes as many Roman colonizers. Specific views of African new elites on the other hand provide firsthand accounts of

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67 PSPF 18.9: *ad hoc populus exasperatus flagellis eos uexari ... postulauit.*
68 Rome, 167.
69 Imagery drawn from the account of Pontius, *Vita Cypriani*.
71 See chapter six.
individuals who interact with groups capable of adopting both Roman and African social identities.

One example is Fronto, the new elite who has been shown to be fully conversant in the Roman system and yet still loyal and connected to the people of his hometown in North Africa. Minucius Felix, the Roman Christian apologist writing in the third century, claims to be quoting an anti-Christian treatise written by Fronto. Champlin argues for the reliability of Minucius Felix in reporting Fronto, saying that Octavius 9.6-7 is “certainly Frontonian.” Champlin bases his arguments on the fact that Athenagoras and Eusebius both document the accusations against the martyrs of Lyon in terms of Oedipean intercourse and Thyestean banquets. Champlin states,

These precise references are something definitely and arrestingly novel in anti-Christian propaganda: they are a subtle refinement on the older and more simple standard allegations of cannibalism and sexual orgies. They may well suggest the influence of Fronto’s anti-Christian remark, the invention of a practiced orator turning naturally to myth for a striking and appropriate image, and there is some confirmation.

The accusations of Fronto being more aggressive in his portrayal of Christian flagitia, as Champlin argued, seem to indicate a heightened aggression towards Christians by a new elite than the common stereotype of the Romans. Although such a conclusion is still tenuous at this point in that (1) Fronto could have been referring to Christians in Rome, and (2) his statements could merely represent the artistic exaggeration of a rhetorician, the plausibility remains that Fronto represents a new elite utilizing his education and skills to attack Christians.

Another new elite from the early period of African Christian history whose comments on Christians are extant is Apuleius. Barnes, like many scholars, reads Apuleius’ account of a woman who practiced a private religion to be referring to a Christian. Similarly, Birley thinks Apuleius is referring to Sicinius Aemilianus in his Apologia as a “secret Christian.” Birley explains, “Apuleius...

72 Octavius 9.5-7; see G.W. Clarke, The Octavius of Marcus Minucius Felix, (New York, 1974), 221ff., for a discussion of the passage.
73 Champlin, Fronto, 160 n.18.
74 Athenagoras, Legatio 3.1; Eusebius, Historia ecclesiastica 5.1.14.
75 Champlin, Fronto, 160; cf. Barnes, Tertullian, 161, note 2, who believes Fronto did refer to Christians in a speech, but did not write an entire oration against the Christians.
76 Tertullian, 60; ref. Metamorphoses 9.14: “...she used the false sacrilegious presumption of a god, whom she would call ‘one and only,’ to invent meaningless rites....” [sacrilega praesumptione dei, quem praedicaret unicum, conflictis observationibus]. MacDonald, Early Christian Women, 7, comes to the same conclusion and discusses the implications of this view of Christian women for the Roman household.
77 The African Emperor, 32; ref. Apologia 16, “...whereas you in turn are kept out of my sight by your lowly life that shuns the light” [cum ipse humilitate abdita et lucifuga non sis mihi mutuo conspicuus.]
describes Aemilianus’ ‘secluded way of life’ with the word *lucifugus* – shunning the light of day – the very expression used about the Christians in the Octavius of Minucius Felix, where they are described as *latebrosa et lucifuga natio*. Besides this, the description in Minucius Felix of the Christians’ refusal to pay their tribute to the shrines of the gods closely matches Apuleius’ description of the behaviour of Aemilianus.”

Another scholar who has detected anti-Christian themes in Apuleius is P.G. Walsh, who suggests that the African new elite wrote the *Metamorphoses* as

a counterblast to the meteoric spread of Christianity in Africa in the later second century. ...It seems probable that in Rome he encountered Christian apologies proliferating there; that composed by Marcianus Aristides contains a scathing attack on Isis, who by this date had been accepted as an honoured inmate in the *curia deorum*. His return to Carthage coincided with the extraordinary flowering of Christianity in North Africa. Madauros, Apuleius’ own birthplace, is mentioned as the first focal point of Christian witness; more important, however, is evidence of Tertullian’s Apology, which claims that the whole province of Africa was in ferment in the 190’s because of the inroads made by Christianity.

Given the fact that so many scholars read Apuleius to hold negative and even aggressive views towards Christians, one could deduce that he represents a common trend among the new elites of Africa. As with Fronto, Apuleius traveled widely and could be referring to Christians in other parts of the empire. Given, however, Walsh’s argument of chronological correlation coupled with the fact that Apuleius returned to Africa and claimed Carthaginian identity, the most likely conclusion is that Apuleius is referring to Christians in North Africa, against whom he aimed portions of his rhetorical vitriol.

The views of Roman colonizers, African indigenous and new elites, while varying in intensity, reflect an overall pattern of suspicion. The level of intensity of animosity towards Christians in North Africa by new elites is notable when compared with the views of Roman Colonizers such as Pliny and with the indigenous Africans such as the fickle spectators of the Christian persecutions.

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78 *The African Emperor*, 57-8; ref. Octavius 8.4.


80 cf. *Flor.* 9.36-40, where Apuleius represents himself as a spokesman for the province of Africa, or at least the new elite of Africa, and *Flor.* 16 (esp. 16.35), where he appears to have regularly attended meetings of the Carthaginian senate.

81 Compare the emphasis on the *flagitia* by these new elites with the Roman emphasis on *superstition*: Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44, for Christians as simply “a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition” [*genus hominum superstitionis nouae ac maleficae*]; and Suetonius, *Vita Neronis* 16.2, where accusation of *flagitia* is made by the *uulgus*, but the only crime of the Christians is a “pernicious superstition” [*exitabilis superstitio.*]
At this point one can inquire whether or not the Christian sources from North Africa reflect a similar pattern.

2.3.4 Christians and Roman Africans

Having surveyed the North African Christian landscape, and having explored the stances of various social groups towards North African Christians, one can ask about how the Christians perceived, constructed and responded to the non-Christian “Other.” As Christian converts, Africans assimilated a new social identity into their former understandings of self. Moreover, many African Christians perceived that the threat to their existence came not only from members of other religions but specifically from Roman colonizers and the new elites loyal to them. In the context of North Africa where Christians are on trial or undergoing torture for their membership to the new religion, the “Other” is the non-Christian “world” which is understood to be allied with the devil. One complication, however, in identifying outsiders as such is the probability that most Christians in North Africa were indigenous Africans and most persecutors were Roman colonizers.

In the *Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum*, rather than preserving only the perspective of a Christian narrator or redactor, two parties have a voice: that of the proconsul Saturninus and of the Scillitans. The proconsul begins with an invitation to recant: “If you return to your senses, you can obtain the pardon of our lord the emperor” (*Potestis indulgentiam domni nostri imperatoris promereri, si ad bonam mentem redeatis*, 1.) The possessive pronoun, *nostri*, seems to be inclusive rather than exclusive, for two reasons. First, the proconsul invites the twelve individuals to “return,” not only to their “senses,” but to a previous state of allegiance. Second, any proconsul would have assumed that the reign of the emperor extended throughout Africa Proconsularis, Tripolitania, Numidia and Mauretania, making anyone in the provinces able to claim him as *domni nostri*. Therefore, in the view of the proconsul “*nostri*” includes all those faithful to the emperor. The proconsul’s words betray another indication of his inclusive social identity:

Saturninus the proconsul read his decision from a tablet: “Whereas Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Vestia, Secunda and the others have confessed that they have been living in accordance with the rites of the Christians, and whereas though

82 See above, section 1.5, for the reliability of this document and how it has been seen as reliant on official court transcripts.
83 cf. Tertullian, *Adu. Prax.* 11-12, and below, section 6.4.2, on scholarly attention to pronoun usage.
given the opportunity to return to the usage of the Romans they have persevered in their obstinacy, they are hereby condemned to be executed by the sword.\footnote{PSS 14: Saturninus proconsul decretum ex tabella recitauit: Speratum, Nartzahum, Cittinum, Donatam, Vestiam, Secundam, et ceteros ritu Christiano se uiuere confesses, quoniam oblata sibi facultate ad Romanorum morem redeundi obstinanter perseverauerunt, gladio animaduerti placet (emphasis added.)}

Saturninus’ construction of outsiders obviously includes the listing of the six who “have been living in accordance with the rites of Christianity.” However, the phrase, “usage of the Romans,” also signifies an identity which Saturninus does not, at least in this instance, place himself.\footnote{This reading is contrary to Musurillo’s translation of section 3: “Saturninus the proconsul said: “We too are a religious people, and our religion is a simple one....” [Saturninus proconsul dixit: Et nos religiosi sumus et simplex est religio nostra....] The use of “people” implies more than the Latin requires. Saturninus obviously wishes to place himself in the Roman group, i.e. the use of nos, but he does not claim to be of the same homines, populæ or gens. Moreover, the two passages illustrate an identity Saturninus could possess or discard at will.} The name of the proconsul also suggests African origin, and the use of the word Romanorum in outsider phraseology lends itself to the understanding that Saturninus was a new elite serving under the dual consulship of Praesens and Claudiens. Although such a conclusion could be challenged, the use of social identity highlights the data in the text and provides a consistent methodology for interpreting the proconsul’s construction of group identity.

The salient identity of the Scillitan Martyrs is repeatedly shown to be that of Christian, as seen in the repeated declarations of Christiana(-us) sum (9-13). The individuals involved construct their identity through the encounter with non-Christians, highlighted in the declaration of allegiance to Christ. Such a thin description seems insufficient, however, given Speratus’ immediate reaction to the proconsul’s offer of pardon from “our lord the emperor”: “We have never done wrong... for we hold our own emperor in honour” (Numquam malefecimus,... propter quod imperatorem nostrum obseruamus, 2.) One could interpret this statement as indicative of the Christian’s acceptance of the “pagan” emperor. Perhaps, Speratus is reflecting the understanding that Christians are to submit to governing authorities as established by God.\footnote{e.g. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17. North African Christians could procure such a stance if they desired; e.g. Tertullian, Ad Scap. 1.3; Apol. 30.} This approach does not seem to be primary in Speratus’ reaction, however, given his later statement. When asked to swear “by the Genius of our lord the emperor” (per genium domni nostri imperatoris, 5), Speratus declares, “I do not recognize the empire of this world. ...for I acknowledge my lord who is the emperor of kings and of all nations” (Ego imperium huius seculi non cognosco. ...quia cognosco domnum meum, imperatorem regum et omnium gentium, 14).\footnote{Evans, One and Holy, 5, deems this response “a clearly revolutionary spirit.” Similarly, Rankin, “Tertullian,” 215. cf. I Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; and Rev. 19:16.} Speratus seems to have
rejected Saturninus’ attempt to apply an inclusive “our lord the emperor” to the Christians by responding with an exclusive “our own emperor.”

When Saturninus missed this hint and continued to apply an inclusive first person plural a second time, Speratus explicitly clarifies the opposition between the two groups. A natural reading of the social identity for Speratus seems on the surface to highlight the contrast between the “Lord” of the Christians and the “lord” of the world. Such a conclusion, however, does not take into account the description Speratus gives of his lord as over *omnium gentium*, a phrase often used in ancient Latin to describe the non-Roman peoples. As indigenous Africans who could take on the broad social identity of *omnium gentium*, the Scillitans also recognize the Romans and any supporters of Rome as outsiders in conflict with the African (Christian) collective.

A reading of the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and her companions finds both similarities and differences with the account of the Scillitan martyrs. Like the earliest Christian martyrs, Perpetua, Felicitas and the other martyrs are characterized “as one against a single foe, the Devil, aided by his minions the Romans.” Moreover, in two sections the narrator gives voice to the martyrs themselves in what purports to be autobiographical accounts of imprisonment. Listening to the voice of the narrator involves more than a simple observation of pronoun use in order to determine the social identities of the martyrs, as when, for example, the narrator can speak of the martyrs in the third person and still claim that “they” are part of the shared Christian identity. The narrator’s identity is primarily the Christian community who adhere to the same faith as the martyrs. Instances also arise, however, where the narrator indicates other social identities salient for the Christians.

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88 Musurillo evidently attempts to emphasize this aspect in Speratus’ response by the translation “our own emperor” despite the absence of any emphasizing reflexive in the Latin.
89 e.g. Cic., *De div. 1.11, 1.12, 1.36, 1.46, 1.84, 1.95, De haruspicum responso* 19; cited in Krostenko, “Beyond (Dis)belief,” 361. Similarly, in Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 6, Caecilianus declares the Romans worship the gods of *uniuersarum gentium*, and *(8) omnium gentium* are in agreement with Rome’s religious/military superiority. cf. Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.15.7, where *omne gente* is used in contrast with Rome. Also, *Apol. 21.6*, where in a chapter invoking explicitly Roman imagery, after mentioning Tiberius (21.1), Tertullian distinguishes how Christ choose “from every race, community and region” [ex omni iam gente et populo et loco]. Elsewhere, Tertullian characterizes his opponent’s argument, contrasting Rome (via Tiberius) and “all nations”: “Marcion lays it down that there is one Christ who in the time of Tiberius was revealed by a god formerly unknown, for the salvation of all the nations” [Constituit Marcion alium esse Christum qui Tiberioniis temporibus a deo quondam ignoto reveletus sit in salutem omnium gentium, *Adu. Marc.* 4.6.3]. cf. *Adu. lud.* 7.4: “universal nations” [*uniuersae gentes*] in reference to the list from Acts 2:9-10 which includes “inhabiters of the region of Africa which is beyond Cyrene” [*regions Africae quae est trans Cyrenen inhabitants*] and “Romans” [*Romani*]. Tertullian can also use similar phraseology when distinguishing “all nations” from the Jews or Samaritans: *Adu. lud.* 2.1; 9.20; and *Adu. Marc.* 4.16.11; 5.5.7.
90 Tilley, *The Bible*, 43.
91 e.g. *PSPF 1.6*, and 16.2-4.
92 See esp. the final paragraph.
The narrator's "Other" is evident in three passages of the account of the martyrs' trial and persecution. When the catechumens are confined to the dungeon, the narrator tells of the confrontation that occurred:

While they were treated with more severity by the tribune, because, from the intimations of certain deceitful men, he feared lest they should be withdrawn from the prison by some sort of magic incantations, Perpetua answered to his face, and said, "Why do you not at least permit us to be refreshed, being as we are objectionable to the most noble Caesar, and having to fight on his birth-day? Or is it not your glory if we are brought forward fatter on that occasion?"\(^{93}\)

The narrator, via Perpetua, portrays those who are influencing the arrest and treatment of the Christians as not only devious but treacherously allied with the Roman officials. The sarcasm of *nobilissimus Caesaris* and *tua gloria* should not be missed in this passage. The account expresses more than the notions that non-Christians are outsiders; the passage intonates animosity specifically towards individuals – be they new elites or colonizers – in allegiance with "Caesar" and Rome.

The very next paragraph of the *Passio* indicates further the social identity of the narrator by distinguishing a "We" from a "They." When describing the "last supper" of the martyrs, the narrator insists on redefining Roman colonizer phraseology:

Moreover, on the day before, when in that last meal, which they call the free meal, they were partaking as far as they could, not of a free supper, but of an agape; with the same firmness they were uttering such words as these to the people, denouncing against them the judgment of the Lord, bearing witness to the felicity of their passion, laughing at the curiosity of the people who came together.\(^{94}\)

\(^{93}\) PSPF 16.2-3: *cum tribunus castigatius eos castigaret, quia ex admonitionibus hominum uanissimorum uerebatur ne subtraherentur de carcere incantationibus aliquibus magicis, in faciemi ei Perpetua respondit: Quid utique non permittis nobis refrigerare noxis nobilissimis, Caesaris scilicet, et natali eiusdem pugnaturis? aut non tua gloria est, si pinguiores illo producantur?*

\(^{94}\) PSPF 17.1: *Pridie quoque cum illum cenam ultimam quam liberam uocant, quantum in ipsis erat, non cenam liberam sed agapem cenarent, eadem constantia ad populum uerbam iactabant, comminnantes iudicium Dei, contestantes passionis suae felicitatem, inridentes concurrentium curiositatem. (Wallis' translation is again used over Musurillo, who translates uocant, "it is called.")*
What "they call" [uocant] the free meal, the narrator abrogates as an Agape feast, as if to say "in spite of the fact that it comes from the Romans." The sentence resonates with the same tone towards the Romans as the previous paragraph for "they" does not simply mean the non-Christians, but suggests Roman colonizers who have imported foreign phrases and terms. In this instance, rather than "certain deceitful men" who must be new elites or Roman colonizers, the populus is portrayed as allied with the Romans, at least in the level of morbid curiosity. Later in the narrative, the crowd takes a clearer defined outsider role, especially in the final scenes.

During the account of the torture and killing of the Christians, the narrator again highlights the role of the populus. Revocatus, Saturninus and Saturus enter the arena preaching to the crowd about the judgement of God that is to come. Only after the Christians rebuke the Roman official, however, does the narrator state, "At this the crowds became enraged and demanded that they be scourged before a line of gladiators" (ad hoc populus exasperatus flagellis eos uexari per ordinem uenatorum postulauit, 18.7-9). In this scene, the narrator not only portrays the populus as non-Christian but as defenders of Roman colonizers.

Although the sources of the second and third period of Christian history in North Africa are too numerous for the present discussion, we can deduce from the outright disputation of Cyprian and the African bishops against the decisions of Stephen of Rome and the complete schism between the Donatists and the Catholics that anyone with connections to Rome could be considered "Other" for many African Christians. The history of Christianity in North Africa highlights the perennial recurrence of groups whose social identities include a posture of conflict with the powers of Rome.

From this analysis of African Christian social identities, one can inquire as to what factors constitute Tertullian’s identity as an African Christian. The following reading interprets Tertullian as a part of the Christian trend in ancient North Africa which perceives outsiders in terms of the "world" that has not accepted Christ as Lord, which simultaneously allows Tertullian to understand himself as an indigenous African rejecting the Roman colonizers as puppets of the devil as well as denouncing the pursuits of the new elite who supported them.

2.4 Tertullian and Social Identity

From the survey of North Africa under Roman colonization, the resultant understanding is that of conflict between two social groups, Roman colonizers and

95 It should be noted that the martyrs are in the Roman "military camp" [castrense, 7.9-10.] On "abrogation" as a subversive strategy often utilized by indigenous writers under colonization, see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 38-9.

indigenous Africans, with a third group, new elites, functioning as intermediaries in various ways. The new elites of North Africa represent the unclassifiable demographic in that those individuals' loyalties and identities depended on an array of factors. Correspondingly, an exploration of Christian sources from North Africa during Roman imperialism renders a reoccurring theme of conflict between North African Christians and Romans. New elites more invested in Roman colonization provide examples to the historian of vitriolic attacks on Christian communities which consisted largely, though perhaps not entirely, of indigenous Africans from the lower-classes. Tertullian wrote from within a community which understood itself to be at odds with the forces of the “world,” typified by the Roman colonizers, but the question arises as to whether or not Tertullian should be classified as a Roman colonizer, an indigenous African or a new elite.

The previous two sections presented themselves as “explorations” or “surveys” of the data as perceived through the lens of anthropological theories of identity. The current discussion will now incorporate the previous material regarding Roman socio-political forces in order to view Tertullian as an individual with an African identity who in many instances exhibits an anti-Roman sentiment. Such an understanding is a theory; that is, Tertullian will not be “proven” to be an African, but “read” as an African. This reading, it is suggested here, provides explication assistance for many aspects of Tertullian’s writings.

With no information about Tertullian’s birth or parentage, one could argue that he was just as likely to have been a Roman colonizer as any other classification of identity. At the least, with his high level of education, as indicated by his rhetorical skill, Tertullian would seem to belong to the category of the new elites. Moreover, he could have claimed for himself both a Roman and an African identity. Had Tertullian claimed the former, such a claim would in no way negate the possibility of the latter – although it seems telling he did not claim the former. A re-reading of Tertullian in light of his context, however, could also interpret him as an indigenous African who entered for some time into the Roman system following the pursuits of the new elites, only later rejected or was rejected from the process of Romanization and therefore became subversive to the socio-political forces in power during his lifetime.

Applying theories of social identity to Tertullian’s writings entails exploring some of the possible identities and personas the author could have inhabited. The aim of the following discussion is to allow the theoretical emphasis on difference to indicate who Tertullian considered to be his “Other” at any one time, thereby indicating his own various social identities. With subject material ranging from clothing to Christology and with genres including apologetic, didactic and polemic Tertullian constructs various opponents and interlocutors correlating to his specific task in each treatise.97 For the present purposes two of his works, the Ad

97 e.g. Minge’s division in the PL into “Pars prima: Opera a Tertulliano catholico scripta continens” and “Pars secunda: Opera a Tertulliano montanista scripta continens”; CCSL.
nationes (1 and 2) and the Apologeticum, will serve as case studies for his social identity.

A comparison of Ad nationes and Apologeticum provides especially helpful data for framing Tertullian’s self-identity as contextually constructed. Although other comparisons could be made that would add to any understanding of Tertullian’s identities, they would be less homologous in various ways and therefore not contribute the same dynamic as the selected treatises. For example, Tertullian’s Ad Scapulum is close in genre, tone and material to Ad nationes and Apologeticum, but it is widely agreed to have been written much later and would entail other contextual concerns. Other apologists, such as Minucius Felix, whose tract Octavius involves a dialogue explicitly invoking African referents, or Arnobius, an African whose work Adversus gentes seems to betray little or no African identity, could also provide comparative material but would beg the question as to the African identities involved in those writers.98 The following, therefore, will com-

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98 e.g. Frend, The Donatist Church, 106, who emphasizes the indigenous consistency of early African Christianity, comments on one parallel passage (Tert. Ad nat. 2.1/Minucius Felix, Octavius 25.5): “In this instance, the attack may perhaps be discounted as formal polemic designed to discredit the argument that Rome had grown... strong through her loyalty to the worship of the pagan gods. It is, however, hard not to believe that deeper feelings inspired the denunciations of Cyprian and Tertullian.” Comparing both of Tertullian’s works to Minucius Felix has proved beneficial in the past. To do so here, however, would not contribute to the discussion of Tertullian’s African identity. Since there is a literary relationship, the comparison of one over the other could be interpreted both ways. If Minucius Felix is prior (see below), Tertullian would still have adapted the material for his own purposes. Conversely, if Ad nat./Apol. are prior, as G.W. Clark, The Octavius of Marcus Minucius Felix, (New York: Newman Press, 1974), 7-8, states, the “Africanisms” in the Octavius can be attributed to a reliance on Tertullian. For priority of Tertullian’s Apologeticum, see J. Beaujeu, Minucius Felix: Octavius, (Paris: Collection des Universités de France, 1964), liv-lxvii; Barnes, Tertullian, 192; Michael M. Sage, Cyprian, (Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975), 53; George L. Carver, “Minucius Felix and Cyprian: The Question of Priority,” TAPA, 108, (1978): 21-34, who even attributes Cyprian priority to the Octavius; and Wright, “Tertullian,” 1030. Michael E. Hardwick, Josephus as a historical source in Patristic literature through Eusebius, (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989) 22, who claims, “The priority of Minucius Felix rests upon the coherence and style of his narrative while Tertullian’s priority depends upon the assumption that his is the more vigorous and therefore more creative work. Both sides employ a priori considerations regarding what characterizes creativity. Therefore, the results are predetermined.” Similarly, Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 112. Note that Bray, Holiness: Daley, Tertullian; Rankin, Tertullian; and Dunn, Tertullian, 10, make no comment on the matter. For bibliography of earlier discussions, Beaujeu, Minucius Felix, liv-lxvii; and Hardwick, Josephus, 20-2. On Arnobius, see Jer., De siris illustribus 79, “Arnobius, under emperor Diocletian, famously taught rhetoric at Sicca in Africa” [Arnobius sub Diocletiano princepe Siccæ apud Africam floréttissime rhetoricam docuit], O.P. Nicholson, “The Date of Arnobius’ Adversus gentes,” in SP 15, (1984), 100-107; Mark Edwards, “The Flowering of
pare ways in which Tertullian constructs identities in two of his works, specifically through the encounter of insiders and outsiders for himself and his audience.  

Introducing his work on philosophy in Tertullian, Osborn confesses, “Fifteen years ago, I wrote that Tertullian ‘never stops to think what his opponent might mean.’ Now I am mystified by the way in which he listens to what his opponent says.” Many scholars such as Osborn recognize Tertullian’s sensitivity to his audience as important in shaping both the tone and the content of his works. Tertullian’s adaptability, according to Mark S. Burrows, is due to the fact that Tertullian uses propositions and authorities his interlocutors would have accepted as credible in order to strengthen his argument.

Despite this general consensus on the importance of audience for Tertullian’s method, there is little agreement on who the actual audience is for Tertullian’s

Latin Apologetic: Lactantius and Arnobius,” in Apologetics in the Roman Empire, (OUP, 1999), 197-221.

99 cf. Fredouille, Tertullien, 20, “Tertullien a écrit une œuvre qui est presque tout entière une oeuvre de combat, où domine la polémique”; Nicola Denzey, “What did the Montanists Read?” HTFR 94 (4 2001), 429, comments, “[Tertullian] did not refute movements per se, but rather theological opponents such as Marcion and Valentinus.”; Dunn, Tertullian, 10, “In everything he wrote, however, there was some point in dispute, some quarrel to be had and some error to be corrected” and how Tertullian’s debate “promotes the notion of ‘us and them’”; and Wright, “Tertullian,” 1035, declares him “combative by nature.” Although Tertullian’s works often address the “Other” implicitly, he was capable of expounding on the importance of an “Other” (alius) for one’s identity explicitly, as in the case of the Logos: Adu. Prax. 21. On Tertullian’s construction of his “Other” in relation to his use of pronouns and the third person, two things need to be said: (1) Close attention has been given in the past to Tertullian’s pronoun usage as a means of interpreting his self-identity and his identification of outsiders (e.g. in regards to Montanism; see, as examples, Barnes, Tertullian, 43-4, Rankin, Tertullian, xv; and more generally, see the following paragraphs; and (2) since individuals can refer to a group in the third person and yet understand themselves to belong to that group, the following section focuses on examples where Tertullian’s references to groups in the third person can be compared with other usages of similar material as an attempt to contextualize his rhetorical aims. In this understanding, Tertullian can refer to groups such as “Believers,” (Ad ux. 1.4.7) and “Phoenicians” (Apol. 19.5) in third person without necessarily excluding himself from those groups (see De cor. 7.2 and De pall. 2.1, respectively). This is not found to be the case, however, with the “Romans.”

100 Tertullian, xvii; ref. to his work, The Beginning of Christian Philosophy, (CUP, 1981), 272.

On his tone, for example, see Evans, “On the Problem of Church and Empire in Tertullian’s Apologeticum,” in SP 14 (1976), 25, says “…works intended for pagan readers have a less hostile attitude towards them than that found in works designed for Christian readers.” Dunn, Tertullian, 8, concurs, saying, “In apologetic works written to imperial officials, he was not as critical of the Roman system…” and “…sometimes it is not a question of him changing his mind over time but of writing with particular readership in mind.” On his content, Osborn, Tertullian, 194, not only believes Tertullian borrowed concepts and terms from Stoic philosophy, he even surmises that Tertullian borrowed many terms, including persona, substantia and trinitas, from the Valentinians. See Barnes, Tertullian, 45, for his content and rhetoric as determined by audience.

102 “Christianity,” 222.
various works. In fact, the present discussion in no way intends to deny the possibility of multiple audiences (e.g. Christian and non-Christian) for any one work; instead, the idea is congruous with the possibility of multiple identities. When taking into account literary license and rhetorical device, the primary strength of exploring Tertullian’s social identities is the focus on encounter and conflict with stated insiders and outsiders, regardless of their status in relation to audience or authorial intent.103

2.4.1 Social Identities in Ad nationes

Ad nationes is widely accepted as prior to the Apologeticum in chronologies of Tertullian’s writings.104 Various reasons are given for this order, usually having to do with the “remodeling” of the ideas in the former work which are “refined” for the Apologeticum.105 Because of the close relationship in form and content of these two works, both are generally considered to be addressed to the same audience. The following examination of the writer’s social identities, however, reaches an alternative conclusion.106

Addressing the anxiety growing over “the increasing number of Christians” (adolescentem numerum Christianorum, 1.1.2), Tertullian speaks against the “ignorance” (ignorantiae, 1.1.1) of many people and the resulting injustice in the trials of Christians (1.2; see also 1.6-7). After addressing some of the accusations made against Christians (1.3-9), Tertullian turns each charge back on the accusers (1.10-19), and ends book one with an “imaginary confession” (simulata confessio, 1.20), mocking the accusers for being Christians themselves by being guilty of each accusation. In book two Tertullian shifts to offensive rhetoric, by attacking “natural” gods (2.2-6), gods of “myth” or “poetry” (2.7) and provincial gods (2.8), and he then devotes approximately half of book two to “Roman” gods (2.9-12) and “Roman” religion (2.13-17).

From the outset of Ad nationes, Tertullian addresses the audience in the second person and as outsiders. Speaking directly to the audience, he states, “You grieve over it as a calamity, that each sex, every age-in short, every rank, is passing over from you to us” (ommem sexum, ommem aetatem, ommem denique digni-
tatem transgredi a uobis quasi detrimento doletis, 1.2). Tertullian, it follows, perceives the declared audience as outside of his community or group, and, as would be expected in an apologetic work, the Other-ness of the audience is defined by its non-Christian constituency. The audience constructed by Tertullian can be further described, however, in that one can inquire as to the descriptions of the social identity Tertullian projected onto the outsider target group. Did Tertullian perceive that he was writing to a local or a foreign audience? Did he indicate whether he was writing to Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans or new elites? Further examples of Tertullian’s outsider language will help in suggesting answers to these questions.

Several passages in Ad nationes indicate that the audience is educated and therefore either Roman colonizers, new elites or a broader audience consisting of elites throughout the empire. Accusing the non-Christian audience with punish-

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107 For the “métaphore militaire” in this sentence, see André Schneider, Le premier livre Ad Nationes de Tertullien: introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire, (Rome: Institut Suisse de Rome, 1968), 118.

108 The “heathen” or non-Christian audience can not be deduced from the title, Ad nationes, alone for two reasons: (1) the title, according to Borleffs is not found in the Codex Agobardinus, the only surviving manuscript of Ad nat. Moreover, Jerome, Epistula 70.5 refers to this treatise as Contra gentes libri; (2) scholars are not in agreement regarding Tertullian’s use of the term nationes in relation to gens, gentilis, and ethnicus; see the various translators and I.L.S. Balfour, “Tertullian’s Description of the Heathen,” in Studia Patristica 17, (2 1982): 785-789; and MacMullen, “Tertullian.” In Ad nat. Tertullian uses natio to refer to a people group; e.g. as defined by language (1.8.2), in contrast to the whole human species (1.16.6), in specific examples of Parthians, Medes, Germans and others conquered by Rome (1.17.3), as well as non-designated “nations” (2.12.3; 2.17.18). Only in three instances can the word be read exclusively to mean “non-Christian” (1.7.29; 1.20.1; and 2.1.1); contra Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 108, who claims natio to be a “conveniently neutral (apolitical) term.” Tertullian is fully capable of blurring regional and religious categories (see esp. 1.8 and even 1.20.4). cf. Lewis and Short, s.v. natio, for its usual application in Cicero “to distant and barbarous people.” As for gens, the reference is explicitly and exclusively a regional, not religious, classification in this treatise. The same is true of gentilis, explicitly meaning “non-Roman” (2.1.10-11; 2.8.1; 2.9.1). Contrast this usage with the terms in Apol. where natio, gens, genus and gentilis are never designators of non-Christians, but instead indicate either the whole of humanity (19.2; 21.6; 25.8; 26.1; 27.1; 37.8; 37.10; 40.10; 41.3; 48.12), specific people groups contrasted with Rome (9.9; 9.17; 16.2; 18.6; 19.5; 21.4; 25.3-4; 26.3) or all people groups contrasted with Rome (21.29; 25.15; 32.2). Two variants include Romans as a “nation” (25.8) and the contrast between any one people group with Christians who inhabit the “whole world” (totius orbis, 37.4). Ethnicus is omitted in both works. This comparison supports the conclusion, argued here, that Tertullian aims Ad nat. to provincials, namely of Africa Proconsularis, and Apol. to Romans; similarly, see Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 110. cf. Justin, I Apologia 1, who somewhat ambiguously begins on behalf of the nations, but later explains to his audience what the Jews meant by “gentile” (53.) For the past view of nationes as “pagan” exclusively, which does not discuss the postcolonial context of Tertullian, see Schneider, Le premier livre, 10-5.

109 Tabbernee, “To Pardon”, 383, believes that Tertullian’s works were intended to be read aloud for an oral society, and therefore, a local audience. If Tabbernee is correct, one need not assume an educated audience (i.e. Roman colonizers and/or new elites), but the declared audience could also include illiterate individuals (i.e. foreign or indigenous.)
ing Christians solely for bearing the name Christian, Tertullian ridicules the notion. For “unless indeed it has a barbarous sound” (nisi cum quid aut barbarum sonat), a name is harmless (1.3.7). The name only has a “barbarous sound” when “you call us ‘Chrestians’ (for you are not certain about even the sound of this noted name), you in fact lis out the sense of pleasantness and goodness” (cum corrupte a uobis Christiani pronuntiamur {nam ne nominis quidem ipsius liquido certi estis}, sic quoque de suauitate vel bonitate modulatum est, 1.3.9). While many Romans could mock Christians with the name chrestus, a slave name, Tertullian’s audience seem to be unaware of this, because Tertullian claims that they have ignorantly – not purposefully – mispronounced the appellation. To commit a “barbarism” would have been avoided by any educated individual in the Roman empire and especially by new elites seeking to acquire romanitas. Tertullian assumes this literate status, or at least the desire for literate status, of his audience throughout book two in referencing not only mythic legends of gods, but also quoting specific examples of “your literature” (litteras uestras, 2.12.26).  

Beyond the erudition of the audience, however, Tertullian directly indicates the non-Roman makeup of his audience by depicting Romans as the audience’s – and his own – “Other.” After mocking Diogenes’ treatment of the gods, he references “Varro, that Diogenes of the Roman cut” (Romani stili Diogenes Varro, 1.10.43). Throughout the tract, he speaks “of the Romans” (de Romanis) in the third person (esp. throughout 2.9) and of “their fond father Aeneas, in whom they believed” (Patrem Diligentem Aenean crediderunt, 2.9.12) – in other words, not “whom you believed.”

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110 See above, section 2.2. cf. Apol. 3.5. On Tertullian’s defense of “Barbarian philosophy” [orig. emph.], i.e. Jewish teachings and the “Syriac” content of the Gospel,” see Bediako, Theology, 428-30. However, Tertullian can rhetorically attack Marcion as “barbarum” (e.g. Adu. Marc. 1.4) or claim “for Christ is also among the barbarians” [apud barbaros enim Christus, De cor. 12.4].

111 Tertullian is capable of distinguishing between Christian and “secular literature” (litteras saeculares, Adu. Marc. 5.19.7), but such a phrase, it seems, would exclude one of his present purposes. cf. Adu. Marc. 1.9.2, “Roman superstition” (superstitio Romana.)


113 Where Holmes reads <di>igitem, Borleff suggests, <ind>igitem for the corrupted text. Also, note that Holmes inclusive language in 1.10.3, “the general charge of divorcing ourselves from the institutions of our forefathers” (emphasis added) is not required by the Latin: in nos generali accusatione dirigitis, duorium ab institutis maiorum; nowhere in the tract does Tertullian claim his own group’s ancestors (i.e. “our”) worshiped Roman gods; similarly, see 2.1.7. Also, out of the six instances where Holmes translates “your ancestors/forefathers” (1.10.5, 1.10.6, 1.10.7, 1.10.8, 1.10.13, 1.10.19), only two instances contain the possesive pronoun “your” (uestra/is, 1.10.6, 1.10.19; note that 1.10.7 is corrupted in the manuscripts and may have contained the pronoun, but it would require a different word order.) Tertullian, however, does seem to connect his audience with Roman tradition (e.g. laws, 1.10.4; senate, 1.10.14, and Lares, 1.10.20), which could indicate a Roman audience, a mixed audience of Roman and new elite or simply a new elite audience who wished to construct for themselves a Roman identity. While it is tempting to delineate Roman/African as “either” or “or,” Tertullian
Tertullian concludes his treatise with what seems to be the most shameful charge to both Tertullian and the audience: that the audience accepts the claim “that the Romans have become the lords and masters of the whole world, because by their religious offices they have merited this dominion” (*propterea scilicet Romanos totius orbis domin<us atque arbitros factos fuis>se, quod officiiis re- ligionum meruerint dominatum orbis sic, ut nulli hostes eis praevalearant, 2.17.2).* To Tertullian, and to the audience he constructs in his works, Romans are outsiders, and Tertullian uses the embarrassing distinction to ridicule his audience who have a tenuous relationship with them. While Tertullian’s ridicule could apply to the empire at large – i.e. *nationes* other than Africa, Tertullian assumes his audience’s familiarity with information specific to Africa.

The intensity of Tertullian’s tone increases throughout *Ad nationes*, as does the specifically African rhetoric. The mask of objectivity falls from Tertullian at the end of book one, when he compares Egyptian and Athenian enemies of Rome who have, like Christians, endured “swords” (*gladios*, 1.17.2), “crosses” (*cruces*), “beasts” (*bestias*) and “torture” (*tormenta*). He then lists, among others, two of the greatest examples of anti-Romanism available to his audience: “the Carthaginian woman, who in the last extremity of her country was more courageous than her husband [Has]drubal, only followed the example, set long before by Dido herself, of going through fire to her death” (*ignes post Carthaginensem feminam Asdrubale marito in extremis patriae constantiorem docuerat inuadere ipsa Dido, 1.18.3.*).

Tertullian highlights the examples of Hasdrubal’s wife and Dido, two women said to have resisted Rome even unto death as types or *exempla* which indicates a more complex understanding of the relationship between a Roman identity and “the Romans.” In this instance, Tertullian identifies Aeneas as something peculiarly “Roman.” Elsewhere Tertullian both indicates that his new elite audience worship Roman gods (e.g. 1.10.20, 2.12.5) and cites gods who oversee daily tasks, explaining, “Although, it is true, the gods which we have enumerated are reckoned as Roman peculiarly, and as not easily recognised abroad” [*immoc cum privatum apud Romanos deputentur, quos supra signauimus, 2.15.7.*].

114 See Borleff’s critical notes on this passage for the deteriorated condition of the only surviving manuscript, *Codex Agobardinus*, which requires an insertion (<>). Oehler’s text from which Holmes was translating is given here. In his 1625 edition Gothofredus counted less spacing, inserting “domin<us factos fuis>se.” Also, “dominatum...hostes” is a correction made by Gothofredus, followed by Oehler, on the original blotted out: “diuturn<. . .> eis.” Borhleff is unconvinced and would prefer the reading “diuturn<um regnum nec ulli pietate> eis” based on *Apol.* 25.2 and Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 25.1.

115 When Carthage was burned and destroyed by Rome, Hasdrubal’s wife – nameless in the historical accounts – rebuked her husband for surrendering before committing suicide by jumping from the city walls into the flames; the account is recorded by Appian, *Pun.* 131. On Dido, see discussion below, section 6.4.1. Tertullian often refers to this event as a model of chastity: *Ad nat.* 2.9.13; *Ad mart.* 4; *Apol.* 50.5; *De an.* 33.9; *De exh. chast.* 13.3; and *De mon.* 17.2. Note, however, that to the Romans, as Barbette Stanley Spaeth, *The Roman Goddess Ceres*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 115, notes, Dido is “the paradigm of the woman who abandons *castitas*.” On other persons mentioned by Tertullian in this section, see the discussion below, section 6.4.1 on a parallel list in the *Ad mart.*
may serve as common ground between Tertullian’s Christian congregation, who are willing to die at the hand of Roman torturers, and Tertullian’s African audience, many of whom would retain an anti-Roman sentiment to varying degrees.

In book two Tertullian regains his objective persona as though speaking to all the provinces, listing among other regional gods the “African Mopsus” (Mopsus Africanus, 2.7.1), the “African Caelestis” (Caelestem Afrorum, 2.8.5), and the man “whom not Egypt only, or Greece, but the whole world worships, and the Africans swear by” (quam non iam Aegyptus aut Graecia, 20erum totus orbis colit et Afri iurant, 2.8.9). Towards the end of Tertullian’s work, however, he allows more specifically African rhetoric to illustrate his point when he says, “The green fig of Africa nobody at Rome had heard of when Cato introduced it to the Senate, in order that he might show how near was that province of the enemy whose subjugation he was constantly urging” (Ficem uiridem Romae nemo nouerat cum Cato senatui intulit, ut quam prope prouincia hostilis esset, cui subigendae semper instabat, exprimeret, 2.16.4).

Tertullian’s talent and capability as a rhetorician allow him to use irony and insult pointedly, as in the case of reminding a Carthaginian audience of a Roman’s repeated call for their city’s destruction. In both books of Ad nationes Tertullian constructs an audience which is different from his own social identity yet shares a common enemy, or “Other”: the Roman colonizers. Tertullian can invoke politically charged imagery such as Dido and Hasdrubal’s wife as positive examples of African resistance to Rome, and he can provoke such sentiments by recalling Cato’s perennial cry, “Carthaginem delendam!” The identification of Tertullian’s stated audience as new elites

116 “Serapis” may be an allusion to Septimius Severus, who became devoted to the Egyptian god, and who is often portrayed, according to Birley, Septimius Severus, plate 11(a), with a “forked Serapis-style of beard and corkscrew curls.” “Mopsus” is a correction agreed upon by all the editors of Cod. Agobardinus: “mox.” While non-African religions could indicate a wider provincial audience, one could understand his inclusion of various provincial gods as indicating his awareness of various immigrant groups residing in Carthage. Moreover, residents of Africa Proconsularis could practice Eastern religions, another famous example being Apuleius’ worship of Isis.

117 On the corrupted manuscript, Oehler and Borleff are substantiated in their restoration <Africanam cu>m by comparisons with other ancient accounts of Cato’s speech in the senate: see Plutarch, Marcus Cato, 27, the “Libyan Fig” [σύκα τῶν Αφρικών]; and Pliny, Naturalis historia 15.20, “African fig” [Africanam]: cf. in this passage Pliny’s statements on how Carthage “was overthrown by a single fruit” [unius pomi argumento uersam], and “so much nearer did Cato bring Carthage to us by means of a single fruit!” [tanto prope Carthaginem pomo Cato admouit]. The scene Tertullian refers to is where Cato shows a green fig which everyone agrees is so ripe that it must have been picked within a day or two. He then declares it came from Carthage proving the proximity of Rome’s rival city and inciting the Senate to declare the war which eventually resulted in Carthage’s destruction.

118 Cato allegedly ended every speech on the senate floor with this call; see Pliny, Naturalis historia 15.20, “Carthage must be destroyed” [Carthaginem delendam] and Plutarch, Marcus Cato 27, “In my opinion, Carthage must be destroyed” [Δοκεί δέμοι καὶ Ἀραβηδόνα μη εἶναι.]
becomes even more plausible for *Ad nationes* in comparison with his *Apologeticum*.

2.4.2 Social Identities in *Apologeticum*

Like *Ad nationes*, Tertullian begins his *Apologeticum* attacking the “ignorance” (1) about Christianity and questioning the legality of the Christian trials (2, see also 46 and 50). He also mentions various accusations against Christians (2), addresses how the “name” of Christian itself is hated (3) and states his intent to turn each accusation against the accusers (4), but this time Tertullian inserts a longer discussion about law and justice (4-7). After doing so, he can speak to some of the accusations made against Christians (7-10; also 16) before attacking various aspects of non-Christian religions (11-6). Tertullian then explains a few beliefs of the Christian religion (17-21), including belief that non-Christian “gods” are actually “demons” (22-3), after which he turns to an extended engagement with Roman religion specifically (24-38), especially the Christian posture towards Caesar (28-37). In the latter chapters, Tertullian relates Christians to society in general, describing them as a college or club (39, 45), answering accusations that they cause catastrophic events (40-1) or economic recessions (42-4) and comparing them to philosophers (47-50).

In the *Apologeticum*, Tertullian uses very similar material as in *Ad nationes* but employs it in much different ways. Scholars have investigated at great lengths the “forensic nature” of the work through rhetorical analysis. Barnes claims that Tertullian composed the Apology in 197 and that he “seeks throughout to make common cause with the cultured and educated classes of Carthage against the ignorant urban mob.” Such conclusions differ from the findings of Burrows who noticed aspects such as Tertullian’s reference to “your historians” (commentarios uestrts, 5.3) who Burrows understands to be the Roman Tacitus. From such observations, Burrows concludes that a Roman audience was intended and he concludes,

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119 For possible revisions of the treatise by Tertullian, see Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 107-8.
120 Bediako, *Theology*, 430, comments, “Since all that was of the world (saecularia) was of demons, it followed that the entire outfit which sustained the cultural and political life of the Empire – in other words everything which lay outside of Christian self-consciousness and of the Christian community thus conceived – was to be rejected.”
121 For recent survey of the arguments, see Dunn, “Rhetorical Structure,” 47-55, who agrees that the purpose of the work is the “cessation of persecution” (51); cf. Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 22-3, 34, and 37.
122 Barnes, “Pagan Perceptions,” 236.
Thus, Tertullian subtly inverts the argument against Christians by defining "justice" rather than blind obedience as the basis of Roman law. Unlike Justin's argument, which contented itself with challenging the specific accusation against Christians, Tertullian answers the nominis odium (3.5) by launching his attack upon the very fiber of Roman legal practice insofar as it came to exert "...an unjust tyranny from the citadel" (4.4).124

Specific examples of Tertullian's social identities and social identifications support Burrow's findings.

Tertullian once again locates his rhetorical "Other" in the direct address to the audience. Unlike the Ad nationes, where only passing mention is made to the conductors of trials (1.2.2), the Apologeticum contains many addresses to "you, who are the governors of the Roman Empire" (uobis, Romani imperii antistites, 1.1).125 Tertullian declares, "I shall first, in this matter of the laws grapple with you, as their chosen protectors" (de legibus prius concurraram ut cum tutoribus legum, 4.3, cf. 4.7-8), and he confronts directly "you [who] have restored... Serapis, now a Roman" and "...Bacchus, now an Italian" (uos restitutis... Serapidi iam Romano ...Baccho iam Italico, 6.8-10).126 Whether Tertullian actually intended to speak directly to "ye excellent governors" (boni praesides, 30.7, 50.12) and to "ye who daily preside over the trials of prisoners" (qui cottidie iudicandis custodiis praesidetis, 44.2), or whether this is another rhetorical device which gives Tertullian a platform to defend his Christian community is disputable.127 More passages, however, strengthen the conclusion that Tertullian's interlocutors are not only Roman officials in general, including provincial officials, but an audience located specifically in Rome.

Beyond the Roman officials addressed in the opening and closing of the treatise, Tertullian constructs the specific makeup of his audience as Roman throughout Apologeticum. As referenced above, he calls upon "your histories" (commentarios uestros, 5.3) and proceeds to explain: "Such as this have always been our persecutors - men unjust, impious and base, of whom even you yourselves have no good to say and the sufferers under whose sentences you have been wont to

124 “Christianity in the Roman Forum,” 217; ref. Justin, 1 Apologia 3-4. cf. Burrows comments on the issue of the “mob” (n. 31): “We can only suggest at this point that Tertullian’s opposition to ‘the mob’ was one which struck at the heart of the Roman fear of anarchy, on any disintegration of the stabilitas which the law was meant to maintain”; ref. Tacitus, Annals 15.44, on “the crowd” and public affairs.
125 The translation is Souter’s; Thelwall translates the vocative without the pronoun of direct address: “Rulers of the Roman Empire.” cf. Justin, 2 Apologia 1, addressed to “Romans” [α Ρωμαίοι {Romani}]. However, Wright, “Tertullian,” 1036, suggests “the magistrates of Carthage.”
126 In 4.3 concurram is in Oehler and the majority of manuscripts. Dekker’s follows the Codex Fuldensis to read consistam; see Dekker’s introduction for an explication of the different collections. The wording “now a Roman” is also from Souter; Thelwall misses Tertullian’s irony with “now a Roman deity... Bacchus, now a god of Italy”; cf. Glover, “Serapis, Romanized... Bacchus, Italianate.”
127 Buck, “Justin Martyr’s Apologies,” 57, for homologous problem.
Social Identity

"restore" (Tales semper nobis insecutores, iniusti, impii, turpes, quos et ipsi damnare consuestis, a quibus damnatos restituetere soliti estis, 5.4). After mocking the audience for not deifying Romans instead of Greeks (11.15-6), he claims, “you are the persons... who censured a certain Seneca” (iidem estis, qui Senecam ... reprehendistis, 12.6). After making his case through various arguments, he declares, “I appeal to the inhabitants of Rome themselves, to the native population of the seven hills” (Ipsos Quirites, ipsam vernaculam septem collium plebem conuenio, 35.6). The stated audience, therefore, is depicted as non-Christian and, more specifically, Roman; something especially noteworthy when comparing this work with Ad nationes.

2.4.3 Social Identities in Comparison

Many passages provide examples where both works present similar arguments but the arrangement differs according to the stated audience. One such example is where Tertullian responds to the charge that Christians worship the sun. In Ad nationes, he turns the charge on his opponents, showing how their practices of taking a day of rest (otium 1.13.3) and celebrating purity (cena pura) are similar to Jewish rites (1.13.4). While mocking the audience’s gods (diis uestris, 1.13.4), Tertullian claims that “We are not far off from your Saturn and your days of rest” (non longe a Saturno et sabbatis uestris sumus, 1.13.5). Tertullian makes no such application of this practice in regards to his Roman outgroup in the Apologeticum. Instead, he assumes the outgroup would classify this practice as Persian (ad Persas... deputabimur, 16.9), and explains how there are some “who devote Saturday (Sabbath) to idleness and feasting, and who also deviate from the Jewish custom of which they are ignorant” (qui diem Saturni otio et uictui decernunt exorbitantes et ipsi a Iudaico more, quem ignorant, 16.11). Tertullian’s “Other” in Apologeticum requires a different presentation than the African new elites targeted in Ad nationes.

In the next paragraph of Ad nationes, Tertullian continues down the list of charges made against the Christians and answers the claim that Christians wor-

128 The reading reprehendistis is from Oehler and the majority of manuscripts. Borleff, however, follows the Codex Fuldensis reading probetis.
129 Note the importance of Saturn worship in the interpretatio Romana of indigenous gods by African new elites; see section 6.2, and Rives, Religion, 133. For commentary on this “mock-confession” contrasted with the same material in the Apol., see John Nolland, “Do Romans observe Jewish customs, (Tertullian, Ad nat 1.13; Apol. 16),” VC 33 no 1 (1979), 1-11.
130 The translation is Souter’s; Thelwall inserts: “those of you who devote...” which indicates a different “Other” than the Latin requires. For Roman awareness of the Sabbath, see Horace, Satirae. 1.9.69, “Today is the thirtieth Sabbath. Would you affront the circumcised Jew?” [hodie tricesima sabbata : un tu curitis ludeas oppedere?]; Juvenal, Satira, “Some who have had a father who reveres the sabbath...” [Quidam sortiti metuentem sabbata patrem]; and Ovid, Ars amatoria 1.76, “…nor [let escape] the seventh day that the Syrian Jew holds sacred” [Cultuque ludeo septima sacra Syro].
ship a donkey, an accusation discussed in chapter four as made by new elites of North Africa. In the *Ad nationes* Tertullian reminds the outgroup, “Not so long ago, a most abandoned wretch in that city of yours” (*Noua iam de deo nostro fama suggestit, et adeo nuper quidam perditissimus in ista ciuitate*, 1.14.1) mocked the Christians in a play. Carthage which is the new elite audience’s city (*ista ciuitate*) in this work, is described differently in the *Apologeticum*. There Tertullian gives a more elaborate explanation of the play to Romans who did not see the portrayal in “the city next to yours” (*in ista proxime ciuitate*, 16.12). The differing description of Carthage correlates to the “Other” constructed for each work: the *Ad nationes* addresses the new elites of Africa and the *Apologeticum* specifies a Roman audience.

Later in *Ad nationes* Tertullian answers the accusation of refusal to worship the emperor, which is said to make Christians “enemies of the people” (*hostes populi*, 1.17.3). Tertullian’s sardonic response declares, “Well, be it so; yet at the same time (it must not be forgotten, that) the emperors find enemies amongst you heathen” (*Ita uero sit, cum ex uobis nationibus*). Schneider comments on how the stated audience (*ex uobis*) remains the non-Christians, but more specifically, Tertullian uses *nationibus* in “ambivalence” in that his audience would likely have understood this in political – i.e. “provincials” – rather than religious – i.e “heathens” – terms. Such an understanding of Tertullian’s response explains the next sentence, wherein Tertullian alludes to the emperors’ titles, such as *Parthicus, Medicus* and *Germanicus*, which are awarded to conquering emperors and by which, Tertullian explains, “the Roman people must see to it who they are amongst whom there still remain nations which are unsubdued and foreign to their rule” (*Romana gens uiderit, in quibus indomitae et extraneae nationes*). Before alluding to the revolt of Albinus, Tertullian then declares of the African new elites, “But, at all events, you are of us [i.e. “us Africans”], and yet you conspire against us [i.e. the same “us” who are also Christians]” (*Vos tamen de nostris adversus nostros conspiratis!*, 1.17.4). This interpretation of Tertullian’s argument finds support in the comparison with the parallel passage in the *Apologeticum*.

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131 Souter’s translation; Thelwall, “that great city”; cf. Glover, who only supplies “this city.” The word order in the manuscripts varies in the *Codex Fuldensis* which reads *ciuitate proxime*.

132 See discussion in Rankin, “Tertullian,” 204-16. Schneider, *Le premier livre*, 288, comments on how only the emperor or the senate could declare someone guilty of treason, a right Septimius Severus recently enacted at this time against his enemies; ref. Lact. *Mort.* 14.2.

133 Schneider, *Le premierlivre*, 289, “Le sophisme du raisonnement (ou son habilité) consiste à confondre le point de vue national... et le point de vue religieux...”

134 For the title *Parthicus*, see *Scriptores historiae augustae, Severus*, 9. “For this exploit [against Pescennius], after [Septimius Severus] returned home, he was given a triumph and the names Arabicus, Adiabenicus and Parthicus. He refused the triumph, however, lest he seem to triumph for a victory over Romans; and he declined the name Parthicus lest he hurt the Parthians’ feelings.” [*atque ob hoc resuvers triumpho delato appellatus est Arabicus Adiabenicus Parthicus. Sed triumphum respuit, ne uideretur de ciuili triumphare victoria. Excusauit et Parthicum nomen, ne Parthos lacereret*].
In the *Apologeticum* when Tertullian answers the charge that Christians are "public enemies" (*publici hostes*, 35.1) because they refuse to worship the emperor, he declares that the emperor’s enemies — namely, supporters of Cassius, Niger and Albinus (*Cassii et Nigri et Albini*, 35.9) — "were Romans; that is they were not Christians" (*de Romanis... id est de non Christianis*). Here, Tertullian’s audiences is stated to be the Romans, and he responds with the same tactic as in the *Ad nationes* passage, to return the charge on those non-Christian outsiders, but in this instance outsiders are not African new elites (*nationibus*) who can be rhetorically incorporated under a different social identity; they are Romans.

Another example of Tertullian’s tailoring his material to his audience is his treatment of Aeneas. In the second book of *Ad nationes* Tertullian ridicules the plethora of gods found among the Romans and alludes to the *fasces*, a symbol of Roman power, to attack the new elites’ acceptance of Romanization: “another forest must be felled” (*immo silua caedenda*, 2.9.2). Tertullian then extends a long attack on the Roman progenitor,

Their fond father Aeneas, in whom they believed, was never glorious, and was felled with a stone — a vulgar weapon, to pelt a dog withal, inflicting a wound no less ignoble! But this Aeneas turns out a traitor to his country; yes, quite as much as Antenor. And if they will not believe this to be true of him, he at any rate deserted his companions when his country was in flames, and must be held inferior to that woman of Carthage, who, when her husband Hasdrubal supplicated the enemy with the mild pusillanimity of our Aeneas, refused to accompany him, but hurrying her children along with her, disdained to take her beautiful self and father’s noble heart into exile, but plunged into the flames of the burning Carthage, as if rushing into the embraces of her (dear but) ruined country. Is he “pious Aeneas” for (rescuing) his young only son and decrepit old father, but deserting Priam and Astyanax? But the Romans ought rather to detest him; for in defence of their princes and their royal house, they surrender even children and wives, and every dearest pledge.

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135 Note how Tertullian is capable of identifying non-Christians specifically, calling into question the common translation of *nationibus* as “heathen.” For the import of these references to Albinus and Niger for dating these works, see Barnes, *Tertullian*, 33.

136 The Roman *fasces* or bundle of rods with a protruding axe head symbolized the power and authority of the Roman officials; e.g. Tacitus, *Annals* 3.2, where the soldiers bore the ashes of the fallen Germanicus with *fasces* proceeding through every colony; and Livy 2.7.7, where a Roman official who had become suspect by the “mob” [*volgi*] entered a council with “fasces lowered” [*submissis facsibus*], to which Livy adds, “It was a welcome spectacle to the multitude when they beheld the emblems of authority there abased before them in acknowledgment that the people’s majesty and power were superior to the consul’s” [* Gratum id multitudini spectaculum fuit, submissa sibi esse imperii insignia confessionemque factam populi quam consulis maiestatem uimque maiorem esse*]. cf. *Apol*. 25.7, *De an*. 30.4 and *De cor*. 13.1-3, where the *fasces* are alluded to in anti-Roman rhetoric.

137 *Ad nat.* 2.9.12-4: *Patrem Indigentem Aenean crediderunt, militem numquam gloriosum, lapide debilitatum. Quod telum quantum ulgare atque caninum, tanto ignobile volnus. Sed et proditor patriae Aeneas inuenitur, iam Aeneas quam Antenor. Ac si hoc uerum nolunt, Aeneas certe patria flagrante dereliquit socios, feminae Punicae subiciendus, quae maritum Hasdrubalem, Aeneae timiditate in his supplicatim hosti, non comitata, raptis secum filiis
When Tertullian discusses the sacrificing of children among his own ingroup in *Apologeticum*, a charge often aimed at the Christians, Tertullian again alludes to Aeneas.

In the *Apologeticum*, Tertullian feels the need to explain to the audience facts about his own social context. “In Africa” (*Africam*) Tertullian reports, “the soldiers of our country still can testify (teste militia patriae nostrae, 9.2) that “babes were sacrificed publicly to Saturn” (*Infantes penes... Saturno immolabantur*). After citing other non-Christian examples of child-sacrifice, Tertullian subtly returns the charge to the non-African audience, who live “in that most religious city of the pious descendants of Aeneas” (*in illa religiosissima urbe Aeneadarum piorum*, 9.5). In this openly sardonic reference to Aeneas, there is no extended ridicule of his character like that found in *Ad nationes* because the difference in audience inhibits the jest in the *Apologeticum* wherein the audience would not laugh along with Tertullian, as would the African new elites addressed in *Ad nationes*.

One more example of contrasting usage of similar material in both *Ad nationes* and *Apologeticum* is found in Tertullian’s treatment of the origin of the gods, starting with Saturn. In a long explanation of the legend of Saturn’s origin, Tertullian explains in *Ad nationes* part of the local confusion regarding how “they suppose” (*deducunt*) Saturn is known as both Time (*Χρονος*) and Crop-bearer (*sationibus* as a cognate of *Saturnus*, 2.12.17-8). In mocking disbelief at the new elites, he retorts, “I wish that you would explain this metaphorical statement” (*Quae, oro, huius translationis ratio? Nempe uelim exponas*, 2.12.20). Tertullian then cites accounts of Saturn settling on the hill in Italy which came to be called by his name, as did all of Italy, adding, “Such is the testimony derived from that country which is now the mistress of the world” (*tali teste terra, quae nunc dominatur orbi*, 2.12.29). No such reference is given to Italy in the *Apologeticum* where Tertullian also explains Saturn’s origin (10.6-8). There, the account repeats almost verbatim, but without the sentence quoted above. Instead, Tertullian argues in categories of binary opposition natural to Roman thinking: “Shall I now, therefore, go over [the gods] one by one, so numerous and so various as they are, new and old, barbarian and Graecian, Roman and foreign, captive and adopted, private and common, male and female, rural and urban, naval and military?” (*Nunc ergo per singulos decurram, tot ac tantos, nouos veteres, barbaros Graecos, Romanos peregrinos, captiuis adoptiuos, proprios communes, masculos formam et patrem sibi habere non in fugam sapit, sed in ignes ardentis Carthaginis ut in amplexus patriae pereutis incubuit, Pius Aeneas ob unicum puerum et decrepitum senem Priamo et Astyanacte destitutis? Atquic Romanis magis detestandus, qui pro salute principum et domus eorum aduersus liberos et coniuges et omne pignus suum deierant.* For more on Hasdrubal’s wife, another symbolic heroine of Carthaginian resistance to Rome, see section 6.4.1.

138 For the textual variants, see the discussion in section 1.3.3.
139 See Rives, “Tertullian.”
feminas, rusticos urbanos, nauticos militares?, 10.5). In an earlier section of Ad nationes, Tertullian supplies a similar list, but for a non-Roman context:

For how many, and indeed what, gods shall I bring forward? Shall it be the greater ones, or the lesser? The old ones, or the novel? The male, or the female? The unmarried, or such as are joined in wedlock? The clever, or the unskilful? The rustic or the town ones? The national or the foreign? For the truth is, there are so many families, so many nations, which require a catalogue (of gods), that they cannot possibly be examined, or distinguished, or described.

Tertullian shaped his rhetoric specifically for the target audience in each treatise so as to be more palatable and persuasive.

Focusing on social identities in the two examples of Tertullian’s works explored above illustrates some of the possible identities from which he can write. In both instances the author writes predominantly from the perspective of a Christian. The differing aims and audiences of the two treatises, however, indicate more specifically how Tertullian perceives himself and outsiders. In Ad nationes Tertullian writes to new elites of North Africa, thereby placing himself in a distinct group. By comparing the work with Apologeticum, in which Tertullian constructs his identity as separate from Romans and as one who claimed Africa as his homeland (patria), one can understand Tertullian to retain for himself multiple identities, including Christian, non-Roman and African. Tertullian, furthermore, can be interpreted from this initial analysis as one who had the education and ability to be considered a new elite but preferred, at least in these two examples, to be classified in a separate category. While some would insist on Tertullian’s Christian identity as primary, it is suggested here that identities are fluid, discursive and manifold, and therefore there is an encounter in him of Africanity and Christianity.

The social identities outlined and discussed throughout this chapter, Roman colonizer, indigenous African and new elite, illustrate the complexity of attempting to describe and define persons’ self-ascribed loyalties and group affiliations. These three categories each entail elements such as ethnicity and

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140 Thelwall’s commas have been modified for consistency: whereas he only place “and” between four comparisons (“new and old, … male and female, rural and urban, naval and military”), Dekker’s punctuations indicate the binary nature of each comparison in the text. On “captive and adopted,” which refer to provincial gods legally incorporated by Rome, see Georg Wissowa, “The Historical Development of Roman Religion: An Overview,” in Roman Religion, ed. Ando, trans. Christopher Barnes, 337-8; originally published as Religion und Kultus der Römer, 2nd ed. (Munich: Beck, [1912] 1971); Tertullian refers to such phenomenon elsewhere: Adu. Marc. 1.18; Ad nat. 1.10; and Apol. 5.1.


142 As Fredouille, Tertullien, 481, finds “la rencontre, en lui, de l’Antiquité et du christianisme.”
religion, which have been discussed explicitly, and they encompass aspects such as gender and political allegiances which have been addressed circumspectly. In order to avoid reifying the social landscape of African identities one must keep these labels in constant juxtaposition with other demographic and sociological factors. Therefore, other forms of individual and group identity construction must be incorporated into this study, namely those of kinship, class, ethnicity and religion.
3 Kinship Theory

3.1 Social Anthropology and Kinship Identity

In 1871 with the publication of his work, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, Lewis Henry Morgan, “the father of American anthropology,” and, more specifically, “a founder of kinship studies,” influenced the way in which many anthropologists would approach kinship: via biological relatedness (consanguinity) or via marriage (affinity). A radical shift in kinship studies came in the works of David M. Schneider who advocated a “cultural” approach to kinship, which entails the ethnographer striving to capture the significance, meaning or symbolism of the insider perspective, commonly known as an “emic” understanding. After his own ethnographic work had been harshly criticized,

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Schneider concluded that his fieldwork had filtered and misrepresented, what he thought were, "ethnographic facts." Schneider later argued that all fieldwork involves, at best, the “shadow of translation,” and, at worst, anthropology has seen many things at one period only to decide later either that they were never there at all or that they were not what they were thought to be. The theoretical framework that Schneider questions is that of biological “facts.”

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

After Schneider’s denial of kinship as an analytical category anthropologists either ignore kinship altogether – as Schneider suggests – or develop further his destabilizing of “biological” kinship. One way in which scholars have attempted to circumvent Schneider’s denial of kinship as an analytical category is by replacing the notion of biological kinship with alternate demarcations, such as

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3 Schneider’s doctoral dissertation (1949) on the Island of Yap was published in various works from 1953 to 1962; see bibliography and his own review of his critics in Schneider, Critique, 5ff.
4 Critique, 3-4.
5 Ibid, 193. On Morgan and others, see Schneider, “What is Kinship All About?”
6 Critique, 193.
7 Ibid, 4. See his earlier paper, “What is Kinship all about?” 269, where he calls kinship a “non-subject” which “exists in the minds of anthropologists but not in the cultures they study.”
8 Critique, 199. For an earlier debate over “biological kinship,” see Needham, “Descent Systems and Ideal Language,” Philosophy of Science 27 (1960), 96-101; Ernest Gellner, “The Concept of Kinship,” Philosophy of Science 27 (1960): 187-204. Needham’s rejection of “biological kinship” is generally recognized as the consensus over Gellner; see John Beattie, “Kinship and Social Anthropology,” Man 64 (1964): 103, who criticizes Gellner, especially for his “wild goose chase in pursuit of an ideal kinship language.” cf. Schneider, Critique, vii, for his remarks on Needham and where they differ. Other reasons for abandoning kinship exist as well: e.g. Johannes Fabian, Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 75, says the term connotes “primordial ties” when used by western anthropologists “to measure degrees of advancement or modernization.” Anderson-Levy, “Colliding/Colluding Identities,” n. 2, uses “the terms kin, kin networks, family and family systems interchangeably as a way of demystifying or de-exoticizing the term kinship. My fluid usage is an attempt to destabilize or denaturalize this meaning.”
“relatedness” and “shared substance.” Another attempt to salvage kinship studies has been the “neoevolutionists,” who recognize that earlier studies assuming evolutionary principles—that is they placed European “civilization” as the most advanced of all societies—have been dismissed as ethnocentric, yet reintroduce a revised evolution and/or biological understandings into the discussion of kinship. The primary critics of such approaches have been feminist scholars who argue that any attempt to naturalize kinship or gender unavoidably results in chauvinistic understandings of sexes. Moreover, many agree that “scientific ‘facts’ are not ‘pure truths’ waiting to be discovered, but cultural creations of the scientist.” The feminist approach has further destabilized “kinship” as a category so that anthropologists now incorporate issues of gender and power into their discussions. Louise Lamphere articulates how feminist and political economists insist on “new ways of looking at societies,” which she summarizes by saying,

Research on kinship has shifted over the exploration of reproduction and sexuality, the analysis of new forms of family, and the impact of colonialism and transnational forces on populations across the globe. We are studying kinship through examining

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ideologies, using narratives, and placing the anthropologist among his or her subjects (rather than as an aloof analyst).13

Many scholars agree with Schneider's insights on kinship as a social construct and yet disagree with any deduction that the analytical category of kinship is obsolete.14 Kathey-Lee Galvin declares, “I would argue... that while the Schneiderians have exposed Western biases in anthropological kinship and demonstrated the value of emic approaches to 'kinship,' it does not follow that on another level etic concepts and cross-culturally valid models cannot be


14 This is not to say that Schneider himself discounted the possibility of all cross-cultural comparisons; for a review, see Stone, “Introduction,” 5.
developed." While debate continues over the validity of any universal
analytical category, most ethnographers can concede to Schneider’s suggestion to
allow a qualified understanding of kinship to serve as a model which can be tested
empirically in other societies.

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

The division of the sociocultural world into institutions, domains, or rubrics of
kinship, economics, politics and religion which are presumed to be universally vital,
distinct functions and the major building blocks out of which all cultures or societies
are made assumes a priori what should be the question: of what blocks is this
particular culture built? ...We then approach a particular culture and describe it first
in terms of one, then another of these institutional entities. And then comes the great
discovery! All of these institutions are inextricably interrelated and intertwined so
that in any particular case they cannot be distinguished!

The resulting trend allows scholars to move fluidly between what were once hard
and fast theoretical distinctions. Issues of power, politics, class and economics
now regularly fall under the study of kinship. Not only have feminists
intertwined kinship and gender, many anthropologists view gender identity,
ethnic identity and class identity as inextricable from kinship. When turning to
kinship in the Roman Empire and to Christian understandings of kinship in North
Africa, these insights will allow questions of marriage and descent to be seen in
conjunction with gender, power and other ideological constructs. The aim will be
to focus less on Tertullian’s biological or affinal relationships, and more on how
Tertullian portrayed his relationships and his kinship identity.

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

16 A Critique, 197.
18 e.g. Anderson-Levy, “Colliding/Colluding,” 185-203.
3.2 Roman Africa and Kinship Identity

“Family trees: what do they give rise to?” Juvenal asks in the first line of a satire on Roman aristocracy.19 His answer, according to one commentator, is “They grow Romans.”20 In the last two decades the study of Roman kinship has flourished among historians, producing helpful insights on the nature of kinship identity under the empire. While early anthropologists drew from Roman history, recent Roman historians have returned to anthropological kinship theory.21 Although some Roman historians allow anthropological insights to infiltrate their practice, others impose the western understanding of kinship as something biological onto their studies.22 The following section will limit itself to a few important elements of Roman kinship, namely, the two primary kinship patterns (domus and familia), and some specific kinship ideals embedded within these kinship frameworks.

It is important to note when surveying Roman kinship that there is no Latin equivalent for the English word, “family.”23 Roman historians recognize the need to explore the term familia alongside its counterpart, domus (house, household,

19 Satire 8: Stemmata quid faciunt?
22 e.g. M. Golden, “Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?” *G&R* 35 (1988): 159-60, who argues that the ancients did “care” because they shared the same psycho-somatic emotions as individuals today. More recently, see E. Dickey, “Literal and Extended use of Kinship Terms in Documentary Papyri,” * Mnemosyne* 57 (2 2004), 132-3, who struggles to explain the use of kinship terminology that is “not merely exotic; they are biologically impossible.” This is not to say that no Roman understood any form of kinship as biological or based on “blood.” The Stoics for example invoked “nature” as the formal cause of kinship (e.g. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.54). Stoics, however, often tend to explain phenomenon in terms of ‘nature’ and, therefore, should not represent Roman conceptions of kinship at large. Although Tertullian himself could invoke “blood” imagery (e.g. *Adu. Marc.* 4.19.1) in matters of descent, a biological model of kinship, it is argued here, should not predetermine or limit any reading of the sources in light of anthropological theories of kinship. Matters of kinship, much like gender, were not fixed, or essentialized in the Roman context; see Huskinson, “Looking,” 10-1. It should be noted, moreover, that recent Roman historians typically do emphasize the complex interconnections of kinship, economics, religion, etc., especially regarding “identity”; e.g. Shelley Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity*, (CUP, 2003), 1-3.
etc.), in order to better understand Roman kinship. Both of these kinship structures are based on legal and social bonds and not, necessarily on biological consanguinity. The Roman familia is best understood in terms of descent and inheritance and is defined, in anthropological terms, as inclusive of all agnatic or patrilineal kin. Therefore, a woman would remain in her father’s familia even after marriage and her children would remain in her husband’s familia even after divorce. The domus, on the other hand, is closer to the English term “household,” in that anyone living in the estate of a dominus (lord, master, head of house, etc.) is considered kin, meaning that kinship by domus includes spouses/concubines, children, clients and slaves. Here, the concept of “dependents” is helpful in that a domus often includes all – things and persons – under the dominus. On the double application of domus to both people and physical property, Nathan’s assessment of two models is helpful: (1) Nathan criticizes the “legal model,” wherein the domus encompasses the property of the dominus (children, slaves, goods, etc.), as too rigid and limiting; (2) he also criticizes the “sociological model,” that is the domus as space consisting of a physical house and inhabited by individuals, for “confusing family with space.”

If, as Nathan suggests, both models are inadequate, they do, nevertheless, help to underscore the physical or legal referents sometimes indicated by the term domus.

Although much could be said about the institutions of the domus and the familia, for present purposes their symbolic importance in Roman identity needs delineating. Gardner has argued that the familia, defined as “Roman citizens,

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26 It should be noted that these are legal constructs of the familia and may not completely represent all Roman kinship networks; see below. On sine manu marriages, see Gardner and T. Wiedemann, The Roman Household: A Sourcebook, (London: Routledge, 1991), 17 and 57. This practice was especially prevalent in the Principate. Whereas, in the Republic, more marriages included the legal transfer of the daughter/wife from the father’s familia to the husband’s familia.
28 Sailer, Patriarchy, 81; or, less often, under the dominus (lady, mistress, head of house, etc.)
29 Nathan, The Family, 8.
30 Sailer, Patriarchy, 80.
joined in lawful matrimony and producing legitimate children, and (usually) with some property to transmit by inheritance,” served to perpetuate the status quo of the upper classes. Moreover, the legal use of familia, and often the common parlance, represented one’s status in society in the sense of being “well-born” – a phenomenon of great importance to many Romans. Regarding the domus, Sailer notes that one could have multiple domi (in the sense of physical places of residence), or, alternately stated, multiple places of residence could fall under one dominus and technically be considered his domus, and he suggests that the primary home “might be distinguished from his other houses by a sacred quality (the lar) and a practical managerial function (the account books).” Sailer further elaborates on how “the sacred quality of the domus made it an especially emotive symbol for generals to employ in appeals to their soldiers. ...Romans were called on to fight for patria domusque.”

The symbolism of the domus is also important in terms of one’s identity and place in society: “In terms of their perception of their place in the world, [Romans] symbolized their leading position in society, not by representing themselves as head of a clan or family – Roman kinship relations were not hierarchical in this sense – but by representing themselves as lords (domini) of wealthy and powerful houses (domus).” Both the domus and the familia, therefore, represent aspects of Roman kinship and symbolize status and wealth.

Romans valued several other ideals in their construction of kinship and kinship identity, including the authority of the father, the importance of pious heirs and the hierarchical symbolism of the domus. In the legal and literary sources, the pater/paterfamilias/dominus held absolute authority over his dependents, and his right over children, patria potestas, is depicted as including even the right to take their life. Women on the other hand, especially women as

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

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


36 Gardner and Wiedemann, The Roman Household, 5. Past understandings of a strict paterfamilias with absolute authority have been challenged: Dixon, The Roman Family, 45-8; Dixon “Conflict,” 152; Saller, Patriarchy; a consensus of scholars now understand the
wives, were not highly valued, as seen in the high rate of divorce and remarriage, but they were deemed important in producing heirs for their husbands.\textsuperscript{37} While some valued the practice of *uniuira* (life-long allegiance to one spouse, even after the spouse’s death) during the Republic, the ideal had all but disappeared by Tertullian’s day, especially under the Augustan laws penalizing celibacy.\textsuperscript{38} Children, as both heirs and status symbols, were expected to uphold *pietas* (duty or respect) in relation to their *pater*, a value propagandized in the Anchises-Aeneas-Ascanius model.\textsuperscript{39} These values formed an image of the home as a microcosm of larger society, wherein the patron/client roles extended to everyone within the empire.\textsuperscript{40} The correlation between the household religion and the imperial cult: each member of the household is expected to honour the *genius* of the *dominus*, as the empire at large is expected to do the same for the emperor.\textsuperscript{41}

Since Roman historians know practically nothing about the kinship practices of the lower classes in Rome and Italy, it is no surprise that the same can be said of Carthage and Africa Proconsularis. In reference to areas outside of the Roman center of power – namely the areas of Spain and Gaul, Nathan asserts, “native systems of family and community may well have endured or even prevailed.”\textsuperscript{42} In reference to the relatively late periods of the empire, Jonathan Barlow argues

\textit{paterfamilias} to have had authority over *familias* – parallel of *dominus* in the *domus* – and that this authority was a highly valued ideological construct of ancient Rome: Nathan, *The Family*, 27; and Shaw, “Raising and Killing Children: Two Roman Myths,” *Mnemosyne* 54 (1 2001): 31-77. Moreover, scholars recognize the *paterfamilias* to symbolize “property owner”: Gardner and Weidemann *The Roman Household*, 113; Saller, *Patriarchy*, 155; Saller, “*Pater Familias, Mater Familias, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household,*” *CPh* 94 (2 1999): 182-197.


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


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


*The Family*, 7.
against the notion that the Franks’ “kinship structures break up as a result of Romanisation,” maintaining that Franks kept close ties to kin regardless of whether kin were inside or outside of the empire. Barlow, moreover, views the kinship networks of Gauls and Germans within the broader discourse on identity, asserting that such peoples would hold a “multicultural identity.” Even within certain provinces kinship structures would have varied widely, as in Egypt where urban and rural households differed. The variations in kinship throughout the empire is reflected in North Africa as well.

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

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

Extant accounts of African new elites indicate that many individuals assimilated kinship practices and ideals of Romans in order to help improve their

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44 Ibid.
45 Saller, Patriarchy, 4.
46 Frontier, 20; ref. Herodotus, 4.172, and Sallust, Bellum Jugurthinum 80, and J.A. Ilevbare, “Family and Women in North Africa from the Fifth to the First Century B.C.” Nigeria and the Classics, 10 (1967-8), 36; cf. Cherry, “Marriage,” 71-83, where he finds the marriages between “Roman(ized) and un-Romanized” uncommon.
47 Cherry, Frontier, 102-3, notes, “There is, however, no evidence, of any kind, to show that soldiers (or the Roman civilians who took up residence in the frontier-zones) routinely married indigenous women (in North Africa or in any of the other provinces). The marriage-patterns attested on the surviving epitaphs of the Algerian frontier-zone, which are examined below, would seem to indicate that the opposite is more likely to have been true – few of the soldiers or Roman(ized) civilians who are attested appear to have married indigenous women.”
status in society. Both Fronto and Apuleius invoked *hospitii iura* (the rights of friends) in terms of kinship in order to further themselves and fellow Africans in Roman society. Both Apuleius and a supposed African and former slave, Publius Terentius Afer (or “Terence the African”; c.195-159 BCE), employ Roman imagery from the Roman wedding in their writings, although this would be natural when writing for a Roman audience. The more prominent aspect of new elites’ assimilation of Roman kinship is found in reference to the *domus*.

The *domus* as a symbol of status and wealth was highly valued by many new elites in Africa. Dixon understands Apuleius’ “defense” as primarily regarding the accusation of opportunistic marriage made by his new stepson: “...the stereotype of the scheming stepfather is the core of the case which he must demolish.” This understanding of Apuleius’ strategy, Sailer observes, explains where he returns the accusation on the stepson, whose *domus* is said to be “drained and full of children” (exhausta et plena liberis). Apuleius, like many new elites, subsumed the Roman understanding of the *domus* as patrimony of the *familia*. Another example of the *domus* as symbolic of Romanization of African new elite is in the “Mactar Harvester.”

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51 *Patriarchy*, 9; ref. *De nepote amisco* 2.1-2; and *Ad amicos* 1.12, where Fronto wrote to his son-in-law Aufidius Victorinus, legate of Germany early in Marcus Aurelius’ reign, that with the favor of the gods *nostra familia* would be increased “by children and grandchildren” [liberis ac nepotibus]. On this last quote, Sailer notes that it is one of only three times that *familia* refers to cognate kin. Another being Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 5.28 who included Cupid in the *familia* of Venus. The last occasion is a “carelessly” presented example by Suetonius, who elsewhere only used *familia* agnatically. Unfortunately, no one has explored these African new elites’ alternate usage of *familia*.
54 Ibid, 171, 195-204.
55 “Conflict,” 163; for more on the step-father, see Dixon, “Conflict,” 155.
56 *Patriarchy*, 86; ref. *Apologia* 76.
that lacked nothing" (nullis opibus indiget ipsa domus).\textsuperscript{58} The emphasis of the inscription, according to Sailer, is his domus which signified his status, which in turn provided him with upward mobility in Roman society. New elites represent individuals with kinship networks bound up in indigenous society, but with kinship ideals reflective of Roman colonizers, ideals which emphasized the economic ramifications of the familia and the domus, a topic discussed further under the heading of class theory.\textsuperscript{59}

3.3 Ancient African Christians and Kinship Identity

Few scholars have examined the North African Christians in terms of kinship, a fact largely due to the lack of extensive sources.\textsuperscript{60} One exception is Michael Penn's use of performance theory to examine the ritual of kissing among early Christians, including those in North Africa.\textsuperscript{61} Penn finds that Christians incorporated the kiss on the lips, an act performed between kin, in order to realign the group boundaries of its members, as shown by the many examples of converts who refused to kiss members of their own domus or familia after receiving the "kiss of peace."\textsuperscript{62} When examining the sources from North Africa, Penn notes that the familial kiss among Christians crossed class boundaries, as when Perpetua, "well-born" (honeste nata, PSPF 2.2) kisses other martyrs who are slaves.\textsuperscript{63} This analysis of North African Christian practices in terms of kinship is one example of the insights gained from this approach.

The Passio sanctorum Scillitanorum preserves little information on any level, including that of kinship. A more complex understanding of kinship which includes economic and religious aspects, however, assists in interpreting the account of the first known martyrs in Africa. The proconsul presiding over the

\textsuperscript{58} Patriarchy, 88.
\textsuperscript{59} See section 2.3.4.
\textsuperscript{60} See for example, the study on North African Christian marriages by David G. Hunter, "Augustine and the Making of Marriage in Roman North Africa," JECS 11 (1 2003): 63-8, who finds no specifically Christian form of marriage in North Africa from Tertullian through the time of Augustine. For studies of early Christian kinship, see Halvor Moxnes, ed., Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor, (London: Routledge, 1997), incorporating anthropological theory; and Balch and Osiek, eds., Early Christian Families, a dialogue of Christian origins and Roman scholars. For women's roles in early Christian communities, see MacDonald, Early Christian Women, who employs anthropological theory.
\textsuperscript{62} Lucy Grig, Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity, (London: Duckworth, 2004), 21 n.95, comments more generally on the imagery of "a world turned upside-down."
\textsuperscript{63} "Performing Family," 162; ref. PSPF 21.7. For the slave designation as ambiguous, see Trevett, Montanism, 181; and Tabbernee, Montanist Inscriptions, 111. However, most scholars accept the slave status of the martyrs; e.g. Dunn, Tertullian, 16.
trial specifies that the Christians should swear by the "genius" (per genium, 3 and 5) of the emperor and offer prayers for his health. Speratus and the others refuse with the cognizance that to swear by or offer sacrifices to someone's genius is to acknowledge that person as a dominus in whose domus the sacrificer belongs.64 The Christian spokesperson responds to the proconsul's use of domni for the emperor (3 and 5), insisting that he obeys the governing official and even pays taxes, and he then adds, "I serve... my lord (servio... domnum meum, 6).65 Although the Christian use of dominus, which could refer to God, is common among Christians - even biblical, the specific use of kinship terms and concepts by both proconsul and martyrs should be taken seriously and seen in light of other North African Christian sources, like the account of Perpetua and Felicitas.

The much more elaborate record of the Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitiatis contains many terms and constructs of kinship, as illustrated in the opening address by the narrator, who speaks to "brethren and little children" (fratres et filioli, 1.6). Another possible kinship reference is when Felicitas is introduced as Revocatus' conserva (2.1), a title often used to refer to slave kin or marriages, not formally recognized by Roman law.66 The most elaborate portrayal of kinship, however, is in reference to Perpetua.

Vibia Perpetua plays the leading role in the entire account of the passio, allowing various glimpses into her life, background and even her kinship network.67 She is "newly married" (matronaliter nupta, 2.1), has a nursing filius,

64 Gardner and Weidemann, The Roman Household, 32; and discussion above, sections 3.2.  
65 More on this exchange below, section 2.3.4.  
a living pater and mater, two fratres (2.2) one of whom is a catechumen, and an aunt (matertera, 5.3). The mention of a matertera could simply be a close relationship with a cognate kin, a relationship Bettini argues was typical but which Sailer challenges. The reference, however, could entail something more intrinsic to Perpetua’s kinship network in that several points in the narrative place prominence on the cognate side, a feature atypical for Roman kinship.

The husband, most conspicuously, is never mentioned in any explicit reference. Although the husband could be a non-Christian, absent on account of shame, he most certainly would have kept his heir, Perpetua’s filius. Instead, Perpetua gives the infant to her mater and frater (3.8), and her pater later claims the child himself (6.7). Even if Perpetua’s husband is dead or awaiting death—i.e. as a martyr, his familia would have the right to claim the filius for themselves, unless his entire paternal kinship network is also dead or absent.

Another element of the passio that highlights the maternal aspects of Perpetua’s kinship identity is a title she bears. When Perpetua’s brother suggests she solicit a vision from God, he begins, “Dear sister” (Domina soror, 4.1). While the use of domina could be a general appellation for a respectable woman—as Musurillo translates, the fact that the slave, Felicitas, receives no such honor implies that the designation refers to her role as a head of a domus. Later in the narrative, Perpetua’s father pleads a second time for her to recant, after which Perpetua narrates, “...he no longer addressed me as his daughter but as a woman” (me iam non filiam nominabat sed dominam, 5.5). Again, the title, domina, could merely be descriptive of honorable womanhood, but the potency of the domus and dominus in socio-political and theological senses suggests something more.

Like the Scillitan martyrs and Christians on a whole, Perpetua and her companions strongly resist any form of submission to the emperor as dominus. Although there is no explicit reference to the emperor’s genius in this account, the


68 See also the vision of Dinocrates, her “brother according to the flesh” (frater... carnalis, 7.5) who died at age seven. Trevett, Montanism, 182, notes that these martyrs “were part of a family which was bound not by blood but by the Spirit. ...Felicitas’ natural family may indeed have been dead, or long separated from her...." 69 See above, section 3.2.

70 David M. Scholer, “‘And I Was a Man’: The Power and Problem of Perpetua,” Daughters of Sarah 15 (September-October 1989), 11, cited in Robeck, Prophecy in Carthage, 16, suggests the editor of the PSPF to be a woman; Robeck believes that Scholer’s suggestion “merits further consideration in light of the feminist concerns of Perpetua, the obvious leadership role she is granted in the vision of Saturus, and the redactor’s own personal interest to convey the story of this young woman so vividly.”

71 See, however, Osiek, “Perpetua’s Husband,” JECS 10 (2002): 287-290, who argues that Saturus is not explicitly named as the husband because of some embarrassment over his absence in the initial arrest. Tilley, “The Passion,” 844, conjectures that matronaliter nupta (2.1) should be interpreted in light of her title “wife of Christ” (matrona Christi, 18.2). Also, Lefkowitz, Heroines, 57, infers that Perpetua’s father might also be the father of Perpetua’s filius.

72 For the title as one of “utmost respect,” see Tilley, “The Passion,” 838.
procurator Hilarianus asks the Christians to “sacrifice” (fac sacrum, 6.3) to the emperors. Perpetua, again in accordance with the actions of the Scillitans, insists on referring to the emperor as Caesar (7.9) instead of dominus, a title reserved for the “Lord Jesus Christ” whose “throne” (thronum, 12.5) is housed in a “place whose walls seemed to be constructed of light” (locum cuius loci parietes tales erant quasi de luce aedificati, 12.1). While Westerners typically understand “lordship” in socio-political or religious terms, those in the Roman Empire in Perpetua’s time made no such distinction between politics, religion and kinship.

Other concepts often associated with the domus appear in the passage where Perpetua claims to be a domina (5.5, as mentioned above). First, she explains her father’s behavior in terms of pietas, when commenting, “This was the way my father spoke out of love” (haec dicebat quasi pater prope sua pietate, 5.5). The notion of pietas encompassed the Augustan ideal of political and familial loyalty. Another important element of the domus invoked by Perpetua is the rights of the father, or patria potestas. Perpetua explains to her father the change in her status: “…for you may be sure that we are not left to ourselves but are all in [God’s] power” (…scito enim nos non in nostra esse potestate constitutos, sed in Dei, 5.6). The shift of potestas from Perpetua’s earthly pater to God highlights the importance of kinship terminology in the passio.

The most perplexing element in the passio in regards to Perpetua’s kin is the statement Perpetua makes after her pater begs his daughter to recant. Perpetua states her compassion for her father, because “he alone of all my kin would be unhappy to see me suffer” (…solus de passione mea gauisurus non esset de toto generere meo, 5.6). The use of genus – which can mean race, kind, familia, etc. – is problematic, given the mention of Perpetua’s other kin in the Passio; would not they also “be unhappy” to see her suffer? Who does Perpetua reference in this statement? The following represent some of the possibilities:

73 For uses of dominus, see 1.4, 1.5, 1.6(2x), 3.4, 4.2, 7.2, 11.4, 11.10, 15.1, 15.4, 18.9 and 21.11(2x). cf. PSS 2-6, 8-9, and even in the New Testament: Mt. 22:21/Mk.12:17/Lu. 20:25, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” [ἀπόδοτε οὖν τα χάριτα Διόκτορος Καίσαρι καὶ τα του Θεοῦ τω Θεοῦ {dicunt ei Caesaris tunc ait illis reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris Caesari et quae sunt Dei Deo}]; and Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 12:3, “…no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” [καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν Κύριος Ἰησοῦς εἰ μή ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ {…et nemo potest dicere Dominus Iesus nisi in Spiritu Sancto.}]. cf. Jn. 19:15, where the Jewish leaders declare, “We have no king but the emperor” [οὐκ ἔχουμεν βασιλέα εἰ μὴ Καίσαρα {non habemus regem nisi Caesarem.}]
75 Tilley, “The Passion,” 837, declares Perpetua “not an independent person.... She was in patria potestate legally and in fact.” Tilley believes Perpetua would be subject either to her father or to her husband, citing the practice of in manu mariti. For the rarity of in manu marriages by this time, however, see above, section 3.2. Also, Bal, “Perpetual Contest,” 232, notes the importance of the presence/absence of Perpetua’s father for the literary structure of her visions.
77 Amat, SC417: “une exaggeration."
3.3 Ancient African Christians and Kinship Identity

1) *genus* as "race," "kind" or "people" – This meaning would not account for Perpetua's mother and brothers, presumably of her own "kind." Earlier in the narrative, Perpetua states, "I spoke to my mother..., I tried to comfort my brother" (*adloquebar matrem et confortabam fratrem*, 3.8). Moreover, surely some individuals in the amphitheatre in the final scenes would belong to Perpetua's "kind" – whatever "kind" she may be. Therefore, this definition seems implausible.

2) *genus* as "kind" in the sense of "class" – A similar objection could be made regarding Perpetua's mother and brother as in option one. However, one could understand Perpetua's *mater* to be a concubine of her *pater* and claim that Perpetua's brothers are half-brothers on her mother's side which would allow them to belong to a different class. Nevertheless, some members of the mob who witness Perpetua's "suffering" would almost certainly be *honeste nata*.

3) *genus* as *familia* – Because the legal definition of a *familia* is patrilineal, Perpetua's *mater* would be excluded. This explanation does not, however, account for her brothers. Again, it would have to be argued that her brothers are not "legal" brothers in some sense.

4) *genus* as ancestral *familia* – Since scholars agree that the legal use of *familia* did not always reflect Roman kinship practices, Perpetua could be understood to employ a specialized understanding of a *familia* that would refer to one's ancestral line. However, because of her father's plea to "think of your mother and your aunt" (*aspice matrem tuam et materteram*, 5.2), the ancestral referent could only refer to the patrilineal kin and must exclude Perpetua's maternal kin, namely her *matertera*. This usage would, therefore, revert back to a legal understanding and would also ignore the matrilineal aspects of Perpetua's kinship.

In order, therefore, for *genus* to mean "kin" in any traditional Roman constructions of kinship, the following, it seems, would have to be true: (1) Perpetua's brothers would have to have been born to another man – their mother's first husband, and their father and all his *familia* would have to be dead and not have appointed a *tutor* to guard Perpetua's half-brothers and the estate, leaving them to their mother's, but not in Perpetua and her father's, *familia*; and (2) Perpetua's husband is either dead or a Christian in prison and all of his *familia* is dead and unable to claim Perpetua's *filius* (3.8 and 6.7). While such sets of phenomena are not impossible, the elaborate explanation leaves much to be desired.

Some of the confusion over Perpetua's statement that her father alone of all her *genere* "would be unhappy" to see her suffer lies with the assumption that the rejoicing would be done by non-Christians, like the crowd in the amphitheatre in

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78 Note that the brother mentioned here, appears to be the catechumen who then suggests that she request a vision from God (4.1). Tilley, "The Passion," 838, notes this "brother" is "not necessarily a sibling from her earthly family."

79 e.g. the procurator (18.9), perhaps even the imperial family (16.3). However, Birley, *Septimius*, 221, believes, "The imperial party would have been otherwise occupied."

80 For instances of ambiguous usage of *familia*, see Sailer, *Patriarchy*, 76-7, and section 3.2.
the final scene of the *passio*, while her “kin” on the other hand would mourn Perpetua’s suffering. This assumption, however, is incorrect.

The narration of the final scenes indicates that it is the Christians who rejoice, not the crowd. The only hint of the crowd’s pleasure is when Saturus is so drenched in blood that the non-Christian spectators unanimously chant, “Well washed! Well washed!” (*Saluum lotum! Saluum lotum!,* 21.2), which gives the narrator opportunity to note the irony of this chant by commenting, “The mob roared in witness to his second baptism” (*populus... illi secundi baptismatis reclamauerit, 21.2*). Otherwise, no evidence is given in the entire account that the non-Christians rejoiced at the martyrs’ deaths; it is only presumed by the modern reader.  

Instead, it is for the martyrs and for the Christian onlookers that “the day of their victory” (*dies uictoriae illorum, 18.1*) consists of numerous instances of rejoicing. As the martyrs enter the arena “with joy” (*gaudio*), Felicitas especially is said to be “glad” (*gaudens*, 18.3). When the martyrs receive scourges, “they rejoiced” (*gratulati sunt*, 18.9). Likewise, in the next paragraph, after Perpetua had been attacked by the cow, she reportedly had “to fasten her untidy hair... lest she might seem to be mourning” (*dispersos capillos infibulauit; ...ne... plangere uideretur*, 20.5). The martyrs’ joy is shared by all the Christians, as evidenced when Perpetua “in ecstasy” (*in extasi*, 20.8) told the catechumens and her “brother” (*fratrem*, 20.10), “You must all stand fast in the faith and love one another, and do not be weakened” (*In fide state et inuicem omnes diligite, et passionibus nostris ne scandalizemini*).  

The catechumens along with other Christians, perhaps perplexingly to modern presumptions, are in fact “happy” to see Perpetua suffer. Recalling Penn’s conclusion that Christian’s performatively created new kinship ties with each other through ritual kissing, one can perceive the realignment of Perpetua’s kinship network in that her mother, brother and aunt all seem to be converted.
Christians who are “happy” to see Perpetua suffer. While the rest of Perpetua’s kin are not said to be Christians explicitly, one of her two brothers is listed as a “catechumen” (\textit{catechumenum}, 2.1). Moreover, her mother, though not called a Christian, gains access by the deacons’ bribes (3.7-8). Even Dinocrates, Perpetua’s dead brother is envisioned as realigned to Christianity, postmortem (8). Perpetua’s father, however, is “angered by the word ‘Christian’” \textit{(…Christiana. tunc pater motus hoc verbo, 3.2-3)} after his “diabolical arguments” (\textit{argumentis diaboli}) failed to persuade Perpetua to recant. Her father is the only member of Perpetua’s earthly “kin” (\textit{genere}) who does not rejoice: “he alone of all my kin would be unhappy to see me suffer.”

With this understanding of who “would be unhappy,” one can readdress Perpetua’s kinship. Her choice of words can now be appreciated in that she is referencing a kinship network that would not be included in either the Roman terms \textit{familia} (i.e. because \textit{familia} would exclude her mother, who would be happy to see her suffer) or \textit{domus} (i.e. because \textit{domus} would likely exclude her \textit{matertera} and \textit{fratri}, who would be happy to see her suffer; moreover, she may be a \textit{domina} herself). Perpetua references a notion of kin which cannot be encompassed by either of these Roman patterns.

In summary, the use of kinship theory highlights several themes in the \textit{passio} of the martyrs that would otherwise go unnoticed:

1. The resistance of early African Christians to align themselves agnatically under the \textit{domus} of the emperor, preferring the alternative title of \textit{Caesar}, instead of \textit{dominus}, which in the Roman context fell under the rubric of kinship and not exclusively religion or politics.
2. The realignment of the social universe – which even includes the constructions of kinship networks – that comes about by conversion to Christianity, as in the abolition of class boundaries and the deconstructing, at least partially, of one’s \textit{genus}.
3. The evidence of a non-Roman type of kinship network for Perpetua that defies categories such as \textit{domus} and \textit{familia}, evidencing, perhaps, indigenous forms of kinship networks.

\textsuperscript{84} On kinship realignment from a different theoretical vantage point, Lefkowitz, \textit{Heroines}, 54, who concluded that the martyrdom represents a new religion which offers “encouragement to the convert to break traditional family patterns...”; Tilley, “The Passion,” 838, 841 and 843, for comments on the “confusion in familial relations”; and Susanna Elm, “Virgins of God”: \textit{The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity}, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 374, argues for this model in early monastic communities, esp. in the case of women. For non-Christian perspective on kinship realignment in Christianity, see Fronto \textit{apud} Minucius Felix, \textit{Octavius} 9: “a promiscuous ‘brotherhood’ and ‘sisterhood’ by which ordinary fornication, under cover of a hallowed name, is converted to incest” \textit{[ac se promisce appellanti fratres et sorores, ut etiam non insolvens stuprum intercessione sacri nominis fiat incestum]}.

\textsuperscript{85} Dunn, \textit{Tertullian}, 16, doubts these kin to be Christian.

\textsuperscript{86} However, Trevett, \textit{Montanism}, 182, refers to Perpetua’s “non-Christian family.”

\textsuperscript{87} In the later Greek version the martyrs are arrested “In the city of Thuburbo Minus” \textit{[Ἐν πόλει Ῥωμαίων τῆς μικρότερα, 2.1]}, present-day Tebourba, approximately 20 miles West of
By demystifying western categories of “class,” “kin” and “ethnicity,” historical-theologians could understand the martyrs – both Scillitan and in Carthage – to resist aligning themselves within the *domus* of the emperor because they are Africans who retained non-Roman constructions of kinship networks and an African identity.

### 3.4 Tertullian and Kinship Identity

Although Tertullian leaves few indications about his own kin, his relationship to his wife provides material for two of his works, *Ad uxorem* 1 and 2. In reviewing the argument of the two works, one notes the predominance of not only the subject of marriage and widowhood but also the multiplicity of kinship terminology used throughout the tracts. *Ad uxorem* 1 and 2 provide, therefore, a case study for kinship in Tertullian in which one can explore – at least partially – his understanding of kin and kinship networks.

#### 3.4.1 Kinship in *Ad uxorem* 1

From the initial sentence of *Ad uxorem* 1 Tertullian portrays the discussion in terms of a last will and testament to his wife which is written “to provide for the course which you must pursue after my departure from the world, if I shall be called before you; (and) to entrust to your honour the observance of the provision” (*quid tibi sectandum sit post discessum de saeculo meum, si prior te fuero uocatus, iam hinc prouidere, ut prouisum observes, mandare fidei tuae, 1.1.1*). The direct address to his *conserui* (1.1.1; cf. 2.1.1), however, seems to be a rhetorical device, one which Tertullian uses to speak to “posterity” (*posteritati, 1.1.2*), which does not seem to imply physical children (1.5), but, as Tertullian concedes, could apply to “you, or to any other woman whatever who pertains to God” (*tibi uel cuicumque alii feminae ad Deum pertinenti, 1.1.6*).\[88\] The specific

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88 Dunn, *Tertullian*, 4. However, Hoffman, *The Status*, 161, assumes the letter is simply to his wife. Additionally, Tertullian implies that he is writing from an early period in their marriage (*iam hinc, 1.1.1, 1.8.5*). On *conserui*, which “within slave society the terms ‘conservus’ and ‘colliberus’ undoubtedly had all the force of kinship designations,” see Fiory, “Family in *Familia,*” 89, and discussion above; Nathan, *The Family*, 46, interprets Tertullian’s use of this title to indicate that “a wife’s function was to serve her husband to the best of her ability, preferably in his attempt to uphold the tenets of their faith. The husband’s rule, it may be
content of his will is the desire that his “wife” (audience?) “after our departure, renounce nuptials” (post excessum nostrum renunties nuptiis, 1.1.4). Once the premise has been set forth, Tertullian supplements his will with arguments for why women should value the practice of uniuitra (1.7.4).

Tertullian first clarifies that his request, renunties nuptiis, has no benefit for him personally, for “no restoration of marriage is promised in the day of the resurrection” (nulla restitutio nuptiarum in diem resurrectionis repromittitur, 1.1.4; ref. Lu. 20:36). He then gives a biblical-historical account of marriage first in Adam and Eve (1.2.1), followed by polygamy in the patriarchs (1.2.2), which was superceded by the Law (1.2.3), which in turn was “lopped off” (amputari) in Christ’s “spiritual circumcision” (circumcisionem ...spiritalem). This line of reasoning sets up Tertullian’s next (chrono-)logical step of agreeing with the Apostle Paul “who permits marrying indeed, but prefers abstinence” (permittente quidem nubere, sed abstinentiam praeferente, 1.3.2, ref. 1 Cor. 7). From this biblical account of marriage, Tertullian defends the ideals of virginity and uniuitra.

Several objections face Tertullian’s argument, and he, therefore, meets each of them so as to convince his wife/audience not to remarry. Among these objections are the claims that “the flesh is weak” (carnem ...infirmam, 1.4.1; ref. Mt. 26:41), that is a “fleshly concupiscence” (concupiscentia carnis, 1.4.2; cf. 1.4.3-5), and in turn a “worldly concupiscence” (concupiscentia saeculi, 1.4.2; cf. 1.4.6-7). After answering each of these objections, Tertullian provides examples from non-Christian religious practice where virgins and widows enact the ideals of continence (continentia, 1.6.5). Finally, Tertullian argues that uniuitra is the “will of God” (Dei uoluntate, 1.7.1), “even if you do not ‘sin’ in re-marrying” (etsi non delinquas renubendo, 1.7.3), because of “the honours which widowhood enjoys in the sight of God” (de uiduitatis honoribus apud Deum, 1.8.1, ref. Is. 1:17-18).

In book one, Tertullian writes didactically, arguing for the proper course of action for a Christian widow. He gives no indication that there is a person or party with whom he is disputing. Instead, Tertullian contrasts the Christian understanding of uniuitra with the ideals of “the world” (saecula). The first sense in which Tertullian employs the concept refers to the sphere of departure for the Christians. He explains what his wife should do after his “departure from the world” (discessum de saeculo meum (1.1.1), which applies to all “Christians, after their departure from the world” (Christianis saeculo digressis, 1.1.4; cf. 1.7.1). The term has both spatial and temporal meanings, thus Tertullian speaks of the

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89 These ideals do not seem to be identical with the alleged “celibacy” of Montanus, Prisc(ill)a and Maximilla. Trevett, “Gender,” 16, claims Eusebius (ref. Historia ecclesiastica 5.18.3) documents how Prisc(ill)a and Maximilla left their husbands and rejects the testimony (Historia ecclesiastica 5.18.2) that Montanus sanctioned marriage annulment.

90 cf. 1.7.1-4; ref. 1 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:6; and 1 Tim. 5:9-10.
“age of ages” (saecula saeculorum, 1.1.3) and “the last days of the (Jewish) age” (in extremitatibus saeculi, 1.2.4).

For Tertullian the spatio-temporal saecula generally includes the realm of ungodliness taken from biblical usage (e.g. 1.5.4; ref. 1 Cor. 10:11). Thus, he descriptively deems it “this most wicked world” (iniquissimo isto saeculo, 1.5.1), which marks a turn in the usage of saeculo in this treatise: from merely the sphere of departure and from the stronger, yet still non-specific, adjective, such as “worldly concupiscence” (saecularis concupiscentia, 1.4.2, 1.4.6, 1.5.3, 1.5.4), to the realm of wickedness explicitly ruled by Satan (satanae, 1.6.3) himself. The contrast between the Christian understanding of uniuita and that of the saecula invokes specific examples from “numbers of Gentile women” (pleraeque gentiliumfeminarum, 1.6.1; cf. 1.5.2, 1.6.3), namely,

At Rome, for instance, they who have to do with the type of that “inextinguishable fire,” keeping watch over the omens of their own (future) penalty, in company with the (old) dragon himself, are appointed on the ground of virginity. To the Achaean Juno, at the town Aegium, a virgin is allotted; and the (priestesses) who rave at Delphi know not marriage. Moreover, we know that widows minister to the African Ceres.91

Although Tertullian lists examples from Greece and Africa to illustrate the practice among many “gentiles,” his Roman example seems to be the most important, for he returns to the capitol for further elaboration claiming that in Rome “the king of heathendom, the chief pontiff” (Regem saeculi, pontificem maximum, 1.7.5) reigns.92

By interpreting Tertullian’s contrast of Christian uniuita with non-Christian or “gentile” practice as a contrast with Roman practice specifically one can better appreciate his comments on “worldly concupiscence” (saecularis concupiscentia).93 Tertullian describes it as “anxiety for posterity, and the bitter, bitter pleasure of children” (sollicitudine posteritatis et liberorum amarissima voluptate, 1.5.1), both of which are values of the Roman familia.94 On this

91 1.6.3-4: Romae quidem quae ignis illius inextinguibilis imaginem tractant, auspicia poenae suae cum ipso dracone curantes, de virginitate censentur. Achaiaeae Iunoni apud Aegium oppidum virgo sortitur, et quae Delphis insaniunt nubere nesciunt. Ceterum uiduas Africanae Cerei adsistere scimus. On the rest of this quote, where the “widows” are said to “withdraw from their still living husbands” (in uita uiris ..decedunt), see Charlotte Methuen, “The ‘Virgin Widow’: A Problematic Social Role for the Early Church?” HTR 90 (3 1997), 286; cf. Tertullian’s rebuke of a “virgin widow” (uirgo uidua) in De virg. vel. 9.

92 Note that Tertullian seems to be distinguishing the “Achaean Juno” from the Carthaginian goddess. Moreover, by emphasizing “African Ceres” his audience may understand the Libyan goddess which has undergone interpretatio Romana; on this phenomenon, see below, section 6.2.

93 See Sider, Ancient Rhetoric, 130, for some of these themes in the classical rhetorical schools.

94 Dunn, Tertullian, 5, doubts this to be hyperbolic. cf. Tertullian’s comments in De mon. 16.5-6, “What if a man thinks on posterity, with thoughts like the eyes of Lot’s wife; so that a man is to make the fact that from his former marriage he has had no children a reason for repeating
passage Nathan comments, “Tertullian was the first to thoroughly castigate the Roman ideal of wedded unions as a means to produce children. He rejected the notion of posterity and worldly ambitions as reasons for begetting offspring. ...This was the clearest rejection of traditional Roman marriages that had yet been voiced. ...A second marriage was tantamount to adultery, since it was, in Tertullian’s eyes, associated with attraction of a worldly sort.”

Tertullian elaborates on the motive to remarry, namely “glory, cupidity, ambition, want of sufficiency” (gloriam, cupiditatem, ambitionem, insufficientiam, 1.4.6), which “trumps up the ‘necessity’ for marrying” (necessitatem nubendi subornat). In other words, the Christian understanding of uniüira stands in opposition to the Roman values of familia.

Although uniüira can be found among “Gentile” religions, even Roman priests and priestesses, this is from

the devil given to his servants, and he is heard! He challenges, forsooth, God’s servants, by the continence of his own, as if on equal terms! Continent are even the priests of hell! For he has found a way to ruin men, even in good pursuits; and with him it makes no difference to slay some by voluptuousness, some by continence.

The Christian, according to Tertullian, must reject such understandings of familia and marriage, and she must embrace the practice “which scorns the world” (quae saeculum spernit, 1.8.3). Tertullian’s use of kinship, especially marriage, in book one of Ad uxorem illustrates the centrality in his thought of Rome as symbolizing all things “gentile” which the “believers” (fidelibus, 1.4.7) of his Carthaginian congregation must reject.

Beyond epitomizing Rome as the realm of iniquity, Tertullian’s use of kinship also presupposes an inherent connection between his understandings of kinship and class. In book one Tertullian connects widow’s “marriage” to the Lord (dominus, 1.4.4, passim) with the economic implications of marriage in society at large. Christian widows are “wedded to God” (Deo nubere, 1.4.4),

...
and, to continue the analogy, to God “they assign their prayers as dowries” (Orationes suas uelut dotes ...assignant), and in so doing, they “are already counted as belonging to the angelic family” (de familia angelica deputantur).

The image of Christian widows transferring “dowries” to their new dominus stands in stark contrast to those of the “world” (saeculorum, 1.4.6) motivated by gloriam and ambitionem (1.4.6), who, upon entering into second marriages, wish “to lord it, (namely,) in another’s family; to roost on another’s wealth; to extort splendour from another’s store, to lavish expenditure which you do not feel!” (dominari in aliena familia, alienis opibus incubare, cultum de alieno extorquere, sumptum quem non sentias, caedere). Moreover, God provides for the needs of “his servants” (seruorum suorum, 1.4.7), who do not desire “ponderous necklaces, not burdensome garments, not Gallic mules nor German bearers, which all add lustre to the glory of nuptial” (monilium pondera, non uestium taedia, non Gallicos mulos, nec Germanicos baiulos, quae nuptiarum gloriam accendunt). As recent anthropologists such as Schneider have found, isolating kinship from economics and other analytical categories artificially separates the informants’ categories of meaning. In Tertullian, kinship and class coexist in thought and practice, because marriage includes dowries, wealth and the inheritance of one’s familia.

3.4.2 Kinship in Ad uxorem 2

In book two, which Tertullian apparently wrote soon (proxime, 2.1.1) after Ad uxorem 1, the voice of the author again speaks directly to his “best beloved” (dilectissima) wife. Although Tertullian still emphasizes the preference for uniuita (2.1.2), he now “turns to the next best advice” (ad secunda consilia, 2.1.1): remarriage “in the Lord” (in Domino, 2.1.1), as opposed to, what Nathan called, “mixed marriages.” Allegedly, “in these days a certain woman” (quaedam istis diebus, 2.2.1) has married outside of the faith; therefore, in order that none may “deny that any formal warning has been given them” (negabunt si non sentias, caedere). Moreover, God provides for the needs of “his servants” (seruorum suorum, 1.4.7), who do not desire “ponderous necklaces, not burdensome garments, not Gallic mules nor German bearers, which all add lustre to the glory of nuptial” (monilium pondera, non uestium taedia, non Gallicos mulos, nec Germanicos baiulos, quae nuptiarum gloriam accendunt). As recent anthropologists such as Schneider have found, isolating kinship from economics and other analytical categories artificially separates the informants’ categories of meaning. In Tertullian, kinship and class coexist in thought and practice, because marriage includes dowries, wealth and the inheritance of one’s familia.

The argument throughout book two deals with the problems of marrying a non-Christian, and so Tertullian begins by clarifying the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Corinthian congregation, saying that “there is no scripture which holds forth a licence of this deed” (nulla scriptura eius facti licentiam profert, 2.2.1). Theologically, such marriages harm, not only the body of the woman, but the

97 The Family, 145.
98 However, Ad ux. 2.3.2 could be read to indicate that at least one man was either marrying a non-Christian woman or supporting such marriages: “What did that man mean who said that ‘to wed a “stranger” was indeed a sin, but a very small one?’” (Quid sibi uoluit ille, qui dixit delictum quidem esse extraneo nubere, sed minimum...?)
flesh and “blood of God. In hurting this flesh of ours, therefore, we hurt Him directly” (sanguine Dei. Laedentes igitur carnem istam, eum laedimus de proximo, 2.3.1). Spiritually, such marriages harm one’s own “faith [which] undergoes a daily process of obliteration by unbelieving intercourse” (obliterari quotidie fidem commercio infideli, 2.3.3). Practically, the Christian would be unable to “discharge her duties” (officia pendent, 2.4.1) both to her husband and to God. Even tolerant husbands cause problems for the Christian woman eventually because of the suspicion and secrecy between the Christian and non-Christian (2.5). Ritual, “on all the memorial days of demons, [and] at all solemnities of kings” (illos omnibus honoribus daemonum, omnibus sollemnibus regum, 2.6.1) the spouse of a non-Christian will participate in idolatry, and in so doing she will “recognize a prejudgment of her own damnation” (praediudicium damnationis suae agnoscet). Therefore, the Apostle Paul correctly distinguishes between those already married before conversion and Christians who marry outside of the faith (2.7). The final point of his argument, wherein Tertullian contrasts Christian marriage practices with those of non-Christian (2.8.1-5), concludes that the latter cannot compare to “the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements” (felicitatem eius matrimonii, quod ecclesia conciliat, 2.8.6).100

In book two of Ad uxorem a polemic replaces the didactic nature of book one, and, moreover, where the argument juxtaposed the familia of God with that of the saecula in book one, here Tertullian must speak more in terms of Christians and gentiles. The sixteen times Tertullian refers to “gentile matrimony” (matrimonio gentili) or some variant, such as a gentile husband, in contrast to the twice used saecula in book two, in that marriage to “unbelievers” (infidelibus, 2.2.2) is problematic “to a Christian” (Christiano), indicates the importance of the term.101

When Tertullian does invoke saecula in book two, however, he again indicates no disconnect between kinship and class. The spiritual harm arising from Christians marrying gentiles includes the concupiscientia saeculorum referenced in book one: “For in obeying a Gentile she will carry out Gentile practices – personal attractiveness, dressing of the head, worldly elegancies, baser blandishments” (Gentilem enim observando gentilia exhibebit: formam, extractionem, munda saeculares, blanditias turpiores, 2.3.4). In his final remarks, Tertullian returns to this theme accusing any who marry gentiles as seeking “the concupiscences of worldly joys” (concupiscentias saeculorum gaudiorum, 2.8.2), which, he explains,

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99 Nathan, The Family in Late Antiquity, 145, says this is because the Christian wife “inevitably becomes a slave of her husband and thus must act as a pagan to be an obedient wife.”

100 On the bishop’s role in blessing a marriage, see Tert., De mon. 11.1; and De pud. 4.4.

101 For gentilium and variants in book two, see 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.6, 2.2.7(2x), 2.2.9, 2.3.1, 2.3.4(3x), 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.7.1, 2.7.2(2x), 2.8.2 and 2.8.4. Compare this usage with book one, where gentilium only occurs in 1.5.2, 1.6.1 and 1.6.3, but saecula occurs sixteen times: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 (2x), 1.1.4, 1.2.1, 1.2.4, 1.4.2, 1.4.6, 1.5.1, 1.5.3, 1.5.4 (2x), 1.7.1, 1.7.5 and 1.8.3. Nationes occurs only once in each work (1.7.5 and 2.8.1).
is chiefly found among the wealthier; for the more any is rich, and inflated with the name of “matron,” the more capacious house does she require for her burdens, as it were a field wherein ambition may run its course. \[From where can such a one seek\] a husband apt for maintaining their sedan, and their mules, and their hair-curlers of outlandish stature?\[102\]

The salience of the kinship/status connection in Tertullian becomes especially observable when taking account of his use of kinship imagery.\[103\] Even apart from the use of *concupiscencia saeculorum*, Tertullian often attacks wealth. As proof that non-Christian husbands disrupt the practices of the Christian wife, Tertullian argues that when the woman wishes to be “visiting the brethren” (*uisitandorum fratrum*, 2.4.1-2) the husband insists on taking care of “family business” (*familiae occupatio*), especially when the visitation involves crossing lines of class or status, that is “indeed to all the poorer cottages” (*quidem pauperiora quaeque tuguria*).\[104\] Tertullian’s framework is the clash between the Christian *domus*, wherein the “Lord’s Supper” (*conuiuium dominicum*, 2.4.2) is celebrated and “brethren” (*fratrum*, 2.4.3) may “kiss” (*osculum*), and the “alien home” (*aliena domo*, 2.4.3), which has no “guestchamber” (*hospitium*) for a “brother” (*frater*).\[105\] Therefore, Tertullian elevates the risks of *matrimonium gentilie* by suggesting that the husband may use the “dowries” (*dotes*, 1.5.4) as blackmail, resulting in either “the extortion of their property, or else by the loss of their faith” (*aut re excruciata aut fide perdita*). In discussing “marriage of this

102 2.8.2: *quidem plurimum in lautioribus deprehensum est. Nam quanto diues aliqua est et matronae nomine inflata, tanto capaciorem domum oneribus suis requirit, ut campum in quo ambitio decurrat, ... maritum petant idoneum exhibendae sellae et mulabus et cinerariis peregrinae proceritatis.*


104 For *frater* in *Ad ux.*, see 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 2.4.2(2x), 2.4.3, 2.8.7, where the usage seems to be borrowed from the Apostle Paul (see esp. 1 Cor. 7:24). Contrast this usage with the single occurrence in book one, where the “seven brothers” (*septem fratribus*, 1.1.5) who married one woman of Lu. 20:27-40 are referenced.

105 For comments on the familial kiss mentioned here by Tertullian, see Penn, “Performing Family,” 156 and 162; cf. Penn’s comments (159) on how husbands kissed their wives to check their breath for wine, a practice mocked by Tertullian, *Apol.* 6.4: “Under Romulus indeed one who had touched wine was put to death with impunity by her husband Metennius. For the same reason they were also even obliged to offer kisses to their kinsfolk, that they might be judged by their breath. Where is now that happiness of married life so successful in point of morals at any rate, the result of which was that for about six hundred years after the foundation of Rome a writing of divorce was unknown? But now in the case of women every part of the body is weighted with gold, no kiss is free owing to wine, and divorce is now the object of prayer, as the natural fruit of marriage” [*sub Romulo vero quae vinum attigerat impune a Metennio marito trucidata sit. Idcirco et oscula propinquus offerre etiam necessitas erat, ut spiritu iudicarentur. Ubi est illa felicitas matrimoniorum de moribus utique prosperata, quae[e] per annos ferme sescentos ab urbe condita nulla repudium domus scripta? At nunc in feminis prae auro nullum leve est membrum, prae vino nullum liberum est osculum, repudium vero iam et votum est, quasi matrimonii fructus*]. cf. Tert., *De praed. haer.* 41, where only the baptized kiss.
kind” (*huiusmodi matrimonium*, 2.7.3), which “can in no case be carried to a prosperous end” (*qua non dubites nullum ...prospere decurri*), Tertullian transitions to his final point of comparison between Christian and non-Christian households.

In the closing lines of book two Tertullian explicates the comparisons of *domus* that will culminate all he has said heretofore. He describes how “even among the nations” (*etiam penes nationes*, 2.8.1) the heads of house, or “strictest lords” (*seuerissimi ...domini*), prohibit “their own slaves from marrying out of their house” (*seruis suis foras nubere*) as a means of protecting the household “goods” (*dominica*). Moreover, Tertullian invokes the right of the *dominus* to sell “such women” (*quae*) at large, for they “may be claimed as slaves” (*seruituti uindicandas*). The practice correlates, according to Tertullian, with Christian servants who “conjoin themselves with the devil’s slaves” (*diaboli seruos sibi coniugant*, 2.8.2). Likewise, in reference to the *concupiscientia saeculorum* and those seeking *ambitio*, “the churches look paltry” (*sordent ...ecclesia*, 2.8.3) and no “rich man” (*diues*) is available in the “house of God” (*domo Dei*) but one may only be attained “from the devil” (*a diabolo*).

Tertullian counters such motives – ironically – with some of “the examples of Gentiles” (*gentilium exempla*, 2.8.4) who are not ashamed to marry “the ignoble and the mean” (*ignobilibus et mediocribus*) including “their own slaves and freedmen” (*libere et seruis suis*). Spiritually/economically/domestically, marriages to “the poor whose is the kingdom of heaven” (*pauperum sunt regna caelorum*, 2.8.5) benefit the woman, for “she will be dowried” (*dotabitur*) – ultimately – by “God” (*in Deo*). The analogy is then completed with the imagery of a wedding ceremony:

Whence are we to find (words) enough fully to tell the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements, and the oblation confirms, and the benediction signs and seals; (which) angels carry back the news of (to heaven), (which) the Father holds for ratified? For even on earth children do not rightly and lawfully wed without their fathers’ consent.

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106 A slightly different understanding from Nathan, *The Family*, 46, who says, “But Tertullian was not concerned with the *domus*. He was concerned with fidelity and conduct.”

107 cf. a non-Christian husband as a “servant of the devil” [*diaboli seruum*, 2.4.1]. For Christians as *serui* of God, see 1.4.2, 1.4.7, 1.5.1, 1.5.3, 1.6.5 and 2.8.7; cf. the Christian spouse as a *conservus*, in 1.1.1, 1.8.5, 2.1.1 and 2.8.7; for the verb, see 1.7.2, 2.1.2 and the quotation, “serve two lords” [*duos dominis servire*, 2.3.4]; ref. Mt. 6:24/Lu. 16:13. In addition, a Christian woman is to be a “handmaid of God” [*Dei ancilla*, 2.6.1]. On *serui* and *conserui*, see Flory, “Family in *familia*,” 89.

108 2.8.6: *Vnde sufficiamus ad enarrandam felicitatem eius matrimonii, quod ecclesia conciliat et confirmat oblatio et obsequiat benedictio, angeli renuntiant, pater ratio habet? Nam nec in terris filii sine consentu patrum rite et ture subunt*. For other mentions of the ceremony by Tertullian, see *De idol*. 16.3, for the wedding ring; *De cor.* 13.4, for the prohibition to wear crowns during the ceremony; *De uirg.* uel. 12.1 and *De or.* 22.4, for the kiss of the bride and groom – which
Regarding this passage – one of the first references to any formal ceremony in Christian writing, Hunter warns, “We should not assume that the parallels Tertullian drew between Roman and Christian marriage practices should be taken literally. In Ad uxorem 2.8 Tertullian certainly wished to contrast a marriage between Christians with a marriage between a Christian and a pagan, but it is far from clear that he was describing a specifically Christian ritual of marriage.” Tertullian allows Christian marriages to be analogous to “gentile,” or Roman, marriages, but simultaneously stresses the dissimilarity.

The North African ensconces his argument of marriage within the wider discourse on the domus, which permeates familial, economic, religious and political spheres. In order to further explore Tertullian’s understanding of his identities and the identities of his community, the discussion will now turn to class theory.  

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102 Kinship Theory

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104 Treggiari, Roman Marriage, 147–53, disputes as a common practice. cf. discussion in Hunter, “Augustine,” 89; and Ad ux. 2.3.1 and De uirg. uel. 12.1 for the marriage contract.

109 “Augustine,” 70.

110 F. Forrester Church, “Sex and Salvation in Tertullian,” Harvard Theological Review 68 (1975): 83-101, discusses several of these passages to argue that wealth was rejected by Tertullian for soteriological reasons (99); it is unclear if “soteriological” reasons exclude or outweigh socio-economic ones.
4 Class Theory

4.1 Social Anthropology and Class Identity

While early anthropologists largely focused on social organization in terms of kinship, early founders of class theory were reading anthropological studies. According to Donald L. Donham, Karl Marx developed his approach to class by reading “extensively” in anthropology: “If the Iriquois got along perfectly well without private property, the possibility of socialism seemed all the more real.”\(^1\) While the entirety of class theory outside of the discourse of anthropology need not be recounted here, it is important to understand how the key elements of Marx and Weber’s theories have been accommodated by anthropologists. Marx’s classical dichotomy between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie primarily applied to industrialized nations where property and the means of production became the essential differences between classes.\(^2\) Marx’s primary interest, however, was not so much a universally applicable theory of society, but rather a mobilizing ideology. As Ortner claims, “Indeed, the political (specifically, revolutionary) question in the classic Marxist framework has been precisely that of getting people to see their ‘objective’ positionality and to act upon it.”\(^3\) In other words, Marx’s class theory often focused on class identity.\(^4\) As opposed to forwarding a meta-theory of property as a polarizing force, Weber understood class as one of many possible forms of social stratification, others of which include status and ethnicity.\(^5\) While Marx focused on duality and conflict with an end towards class awareness and mobilization, Weber problematized class, focusing on its fragmentation and contradictory nature.\(^6\)

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1 History, Power, Ideology: Central Issues in Marxism and Anthropology, (CUP, 1990), 4-5; following closely to Maurice Bloch, Marxism and Anthropology: The History of the Relationship, (OUP, 1985).
2 Ortner, “Identities,” 2. Although Marx himself considered these classes sub-dividable (e.g. petite-bourgeoisie, etc.), he never systematized his understanding of the relationship between classes and subclasses; see Stephen Edgel, Class: Key Ideas, (London: Routledge, 1993), 2-10.
3 “Identities,” 3.
4 For later developments in Marxist theories of class, see Edgel, Class, 17.
5 Ibid, 15.
Anthropologists began incorporating class theory in the 1960s by way of appropriating Marxism into their discourse. Many anthropologists had ignored the colonial encounter of the recent era which led to omissions and even misunderstandings of the class make-up of many ethnographic subjects. Anthropologists, therefore, began incorporating Marxist class theory, while critiquing the Marxist practice of privileging economic factors. Explaining the deconstruction and contextualization of the Marxist understanding of societies and the resulting relevance to anthropology, Donham opines, "...the realm that we in capitalist societies think of as ‘economic’ is just as peculiar and as culturally constructed as any other way of organizing material life. It is neither ‘harder,’ nor more ‘abstract,’ nor more of a system ‘unto itself’ than others. ...Realizing this anthropological point forces, if not an overturning of Marxism, then a revision of how it has often been understood." The "revision" Donham mentions has often been that offered by Weberians in their understanding of class theory.

Although there is no parallel "Weberian Anthropology" like what is claimed with Marxist approaches, Weber’s theories have made many in-roads into recent anthropological fieldwork and theoretical discussions. Weber’s approach, which allows for contextually constructed aspects of class, provides anthropologists with an understanding that avoids essentializing any one aspect of a society. One example is Kevin A. Yelvington who employed some of Weber’s understandings in his ethnographic work in order to take into account historical situations where such factors as ethnicity and gender determine access to economic class and power. This theoretical move enlarges on the restricted Marxian concept of exploitation to include all exclusion practices through which one group enhances its rewards by closing off opportunities to others.

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10 *History*, 11.

whether the basis of exclusion be property ownership, credentials, or ethnicity, regardless of the official legitimation.\textsuperscript{12}

Ethnographers like Yelvington appreciate the focus on contextuality afforded by Weber’s class theory. The divorce of “class” from Marx’s notion of property-ownership, or any sort of empirically observable “fact,” serves as one of the most helpful insights incorporated from Weber by anthropologists.\textsuperscript{13} In employing the concept of class as an analytical category anthropologists generally permit the correlation of class identity to other factors such as age, ritual purity, gender and any number of other socially specific referents which can be used to construct a class identity.\textsuperscript{14}

While disagreement still exists among anthropologists as to how to study class in ethnographic research and how to apply class as a universal analytical category, a common trend among ethnographers is to recognize the importance of the postcolonial encounter for class identity.\textsuperscript{15} Smith acknowledges how this trend promises “to bring the whole universe of the anthropologist’s concerns into a comprehensive and comprehensible framework, since no society is now untouched by the modern world system.”\textsuperscript{16} Taking issue with such an “overgeneralizing master narrative,” Kate Crehan defends the use of class in postcolonial contexts, saying, “It is not, I would argue, that class is, as [some] would

\textsuperscript{12} Producing Power, 28-9; note that Yelvington (30) still ties class to economic means, but simply stresses that the emphasis on the socially constructed symbols that restrict or permit individuals and groups to economic means should be determined by the context. In doing so, he cites Bourdieu’s notions of capital, which extend beyond the purely economic connotations of the term, but includes (31), “economic capital, or productive property (money and material objects that can be used to produce goods and services); social capital, or positions and relations in groups or social networks; cultural capital, or life-style, tastes, skills, educational qualifications, and linguistic styles; and symbolic capital, or the use of symbols to legitimate the possession of varying levels and configurations of economic, social and cultural capital.” Although this is primarily articulated in terms of modern capitalism, it illustrates how anthropologists are willing to deconstruct “class” into various symbolic or socially constructed forms of class identity. Also, see (32) where he calls ethnicity and gender forms of “embodied social capital” because they are socially constructed as fixed.


\textsuperscript{14} Eriksen, \textit{Small Places}, 154.


\textsuperscript{16} “Anthropology,” 471; ref. E.R. Wolf, \textit{Europe and the People without History}, (UCP, 1982), 381-3, who tracks the phenomenon.
have it, a distinct dimension of inequality, or one factor alongside others such as nationalism, ethnicity, and generation, but rather that class should be seen as a way of analysing systematic patterns of inequality, reproduced over time, which are in various ways gendered, ethnicized, and so on." Similarly, Karen Brodkin Sacks nuances "inequality" towards a focus on "oppression":

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

In summary of many such approaches to post-colonial forms of class studies, Eriksen concludes, “Class theory is nearly always a kind of conflict theory, seeing the conflicts between different classes as fundamental.” The importance of conflict to class theory readdresses the overarching concern of social identity, highlighting the interrelation and encounter of various group and individual identities. In other words, anthropologists apply class theory as part of a looser and broader set of social identities, much like recent approaches to kinship and gender. Such a destabilized understanding of class identity offers a heuristic device for this present study, with a view to explore contexts such as Roman Africa where class identity embodies more than “pure economics,” and with a view to interpret Tertullian’s writings, wherein he rhetorically engages ideological differences in terms of class identity.

19 Small Places, 151.
20 See above, section 3.1. Smith, “Anthropology,” 467, notes the “parallel” between class theorists who even deny that “class” exists and with kinship theorists. Other approaches that question the presuppositions of class theory tend to draw on the critique offered by Bourdieu; e.g. Ortner, “Identities”; and Charlesworth, A Phenomenology. Also on gender and kinship, see Littlefield and Gates, “Introduction,” 3, and the various papers in their volume which address this “integration.” For this same trend in sociological studies, see Rosemary Crompton, Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), ix. For various Marxist responses to the integration of kinship and class, see the review in Donham, History, 9. For similar developments in Sociology, see Patrick Joyce, Class, (OUP, 1995), 6-7. Moreover, see the integration of class and ethnicity: Ortner, “Identities,” 4; and Yelvington, Producing Power, 8, who argues, “Ethnicity, class, and gender are socially constructed in relation to each other.” For class and religion, see Smith, “Anthropologys,” 484; and Rudolf C. Heredia, “Subaltern Alternatives on Caste, Class and Ethnicity,” Contributions to Indian Sociology n.s. 34 (1 2000): 37-62.
4.2 Roman Africa and Class Identity

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

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

Moreover, the phenomenon of citizenship bestowal became extremely important, especially because only citizens could attain higher office, vote and receive all of the benefits of the empire. As the body of "citizens" increased, especially during the later empire, citizenship became a less important distinction for identity, and many of the merchants throughout the region of the empire prospered from the empire's conquests to the extent that they attained a higher status than many citizens. Citizenship also began to blur the classic

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21 Two examples are Gruen, "Class Conflict and the Third Macedonian War," AJAH 1 (1976): 29-60; and R.J.A. Talbert, "The Role of the Helots in the Class Struggle at Sparta," Historia 38 (1989): 22-40. For an overview of class in ancient societies such as Greece and Rome by class theorists, see P. Calvert, The Concept of Class, (London: Hutchinson, 1982), 12-44; and a brief discussion of class in the Roman Empire by Edge, Class, 1. For anthropological theories of class applied to archaeology, see Meskell, "The Intersection."


23 "Class Ambivalence in the Odyssey" Historia 24 (1975), n.1.

24 "Class Conflict," 46-7.

Roman/barbarian distinctions, as Rives argues, “Nor did the Roman government consider all these areas within the empire as equally Roman. For an emperor like Tiberius, the scion of an ancient republican family, only the urbs Roma was truly Roman, while the rest of Italy was Roman only by extension, and Africa and the other provinces only in the sense that they were ruled by Rome.” While certain traits were defined in legal code to establish classes, other aspects of society constructed class identity and ideology in terms of status symbols.

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

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

Slave-holding and the domus of course were part of the wider symbolism of wealth and power. Often wealth enabled a Roman’s status in terms of education or office which were accessible through property and other status symbols. It was these status symbols that helped to construct one’s identity as a Roman. As Hope states, “In short, the Roman world was a status-conscious place, where a value was put on access to and use of status symbols such as a special seat at the

26 Religion, 171.
28 For bibliography and discussion in terms of class, see Treggiari, “The Upper-class House as Symbol and Focus of Emotion in Cicero,” JRA 12 (1999): 33-56.
theatre or a detail of dress." The "Roman world" as it expanded to colonize the provinces exported the ideological importance of status and class. The indigenous Africans organized along different lines with most Libyan villages led by elders, and most land likely owned and worked communally. Clans and broader societal structures also followed the pattern of the villages. As Roman influence came to bear on the indigenous Africans, they were labeled as both barbaric and humiliores (humble class), a status which would have subjected them to the dual penalty system which

reserved for people of humble status capital sentences like crucifixion and damnatio ad bestias (a mauling to death by wild animals in the arena), and the harsher non-capital penalties like hard labour in the mines, flogging, and chained imprisonment. Nor were humiliores allowed to bring against their "betters" civil actions like those of fraud, theft, and grievous bodily harm, for such charges, by their very nature, would involve derogation of the respectability (honestas) of people of rank and high status and a denial of the deference (reverence) that was their due.

While much work has been done on wealth and status in the provinces, the class identity of indigenous populations remains elusive, except for instances of new elite class identity. The new elite population that burgeoned under Roman colonization in North Africa attempted to transcend their class identity and move upwardly into the Roman nobility. Salzman notes, "In the western empire the senatorial aristocracy had spread its institutions, values and lifestyle so thoroughly that, by the late third

32 "Status and Identity," 150.
35 Cherry, Frontier, 19-20; Cherry uses the term "tribe," which has been criticized by anthropologists Tonkin, McDonald, and Chapman, History and Ethnicity, 20, as a generic term applied to any "political units that are not of the familiar nation and nation-state kind." cf. discussions in Atkinson, Roots of Ethnicity, 12-3; and Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism, 9-10.
century, aristocrats from Spain and Africa can be said to have lived very similar lives and to have held many of the same values. The shared “values” and ideals marked the new elites in North Africa, those individuals who accommodated a sense of *romanitas* in terms of a class identity. Early in the period of colonization, the freedmen, a position representing upward mobility, were given positions of authority in their homeland. Later into the Roman Empire, more and more Africans rose in the social ranks of the colonizers.

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

To be admitted into the noble classes one needed wealth, and Africa under Rome grew wealthy. This phenomena was widespread, as Raven states, “Many Africans were now rich enough to be admitted to the Roman knights class; there were perhaps three or four equestrian families in the average sized African city, and members of these families could make careers for themselves in the imperial administration or as officers in the army.” It is plausible that the empire did not necessarily entice many Africans to become Romans but rather to seek after Roman extravagancies, as Cherry reasons, “In fact, it could be argued that there was little about Roman culture that was inherently desirable, perhaps only, in MacMullen’s estimation, ‘hot baths, central heating, softer beds, and the pleasures of wine.’” Wealth provided many indigenous Africans with the resources to enter into the Roman social classes, and thereby become the new elite of North Africa. Returning to the example of Apuleius, sources indicate that he attained

40 See *Epistula ad M. Caesarem* 5, “[I will compare myself, then, with Anacharsis, not, by heaven, in wisdom, but as being like him a barbarian. For he was a Scythian of the nomad Scythians, and I am a Libyan of the Libyan nomads.” [παραβαλῶ δῆ ἐμαντών Ἀναχαρσίδι ὁ μά Δία κατὰ τὴν σοφίαν ἄλλα κατὰ τὸ βαρβαρὸς ὁμοίως εἶναι. Αὐ γὰρ ὁ μὲν Σκύθης τῶν νομάδων Σκυθῶν, ἕγα δὲ Λίβης τῶν Λιβύων τῶν νομάδων.] Haines remarks in his introduction to the *LCL* edition (xxiii) that Fronto “jestingly calls himself” a Libyan, and Haines deduces from Fronto’s name that “he was doubtless a Roman citizen,” as if the two were mutually exclusive.
41 On the importance of education for the new elite in general, and for Fronto in particular, see Miles, “Communicating Culture, Identity and Power,” in *Experiencing*, ed. Huskinson, 48-9.
42 *Fronto*, 10.
44 Frontier, 81; ref. R. MacMullen, *Changes in the Roman Empire: Essays in the Ordinary*, (PUP, 1990), 63.
enough wealth to traverse class boundaries. When the orator defended himself against the charge of greed, he pointed out that he had inherited two million sesterces, but with it, he brags, “I have lent support to most of my friends, I have shown my thanks to many of my teachers, and some of their daughters I have even provided with a dowry. For I would not have hesitated to spend my entire patrimony on what is worth more, through contempt of it.”

With this wealth, as Augustine tells,

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

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

The other major factor that allowed the new elite to be upwardly mobile was education in that education allowed one to travel abroad and to become “civilized.” Apuleius likely began his study in his hometown of Madauros, before going on to Carthage to learn rhetoric, and later travelling to and studying in Athens, the center of higher learning in his day.

Stephen J. Harrison emphasizes the importance of Apuleius’ education, by stating, “His life falls at the height of the Greek intellectual revival of the Second Sophistic, when Greek writers famously sought to revive the past glories of their culture in the rich cities of the Greek Mediterranean under the protection of Roman rule. Apuleius’ choice of career and literary genre are fundamentally influenced by what was happening to his contemporaries in the Greek world.”

The two factors of wealth and education empowered many Africans dissociate their previous class identity and appropriate that of upper class Romans.

The consideration of class identity in North Africa illustrates some of the ways ancients constructed their identity in the midst of a postcolonial context. By

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45 Apologia 23: Nam et amicorum plerisque opem tuli et magistris plurimis gratiam retulit, quorum dam etiam filias dote auxi; neque enim dubitasset quidem uel uniuersum patrimonium impendere, ut acquirerem mihi quod maius est contemptu patrimonii.

46 Epistula 138.19: pro magnu fuit ut munera ederet, venatoresque illos uidelicet qui sese in its exercessit munerebus, quae Apuleius exhibebat. Munera quippe dicebantur ludi non modo gladiatorum, sed etiam venatorum, id est in bestias pugnantium. Venationes, quae munera vocantur, saturno attributae sunt. Vestiret, et pro statua sibi apud Coenses locanda, ex qua ciuitate habebat uxorem, adversus contradictionem quorumdam ciuium litigaret? quod posteros ne lateret, eiusdem litis orationem scriptam memoriae commendavit. (This quote includes the variant readings on which Cunningham’s translation relies.)


applying class theory, historians can explain some of the reasons why individuals could belong to two distinct social identities, Roman and African. Class theory also helps to explain why some indigenous Africans could and did construct for themselves a Roman identity and others did not.

4.3 Ancient African Christians and Class Identity

Scholarly debate regarding the issue of class in early Christianity is by no means new. Peter Brown summarizes the exasperation of many recent historians when he says, “There is little room for the myth …which presents the advance of Christianity as due to the spread of a religion of mercy and equality among the underprivileged. Christianity was by no means the religion only of slaves and of simple folk. Rather, the third century was an age of surprising Christians, of whom the emperor Constantine was only the last.”

Recent scholarship has called into question the understanding that early Christians were uneducated oppressed masses. Stark claims that the “new consensus” among historians is that Christianity was based in the middle and upper classes, and he contributes to the discussion by comparing early Christian communities to demographic studies of cults and sects in the U.S.

Stark recognizes the objection that his approach is valid only in contemporary Western society, and he responds that such an objection (1) ignores the principles recognized by any “competent social scientist,” and (2) ignores the evidence laid out in his entire book. Whether or not one agrees with the applicability of Stark’s “scientific” methodology in regards to ancient North Africa, it establishes a theory of class with which to compare the data available to the historian.

In the early period of African Christian history, the records suggest that both upper and lower class members of society existed within Christian communities. The Scillitan martyrs, although beheaded as if Roman citizens, are generally recognized as lower class members of society.


51 Ibid, 45.

52 The supposed “new consensus” has been sharply criticized. For Palestinian Christians of the 30s and 40s, see John Dominic Crossan, The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), who uses anthropology of class, locating early Christians among the poor. For Pauline communities, see Meggitt, Paul, who engages anthropological theories, but prefers theories from the discipline of economics in helping to locate early Christians within the “general experience of deprivation and subsistence” (75).

53 Musurillo, The Acts, xxiii; Barnes, Tertullian, 63.
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Perpetuae et Felicitatis, the narrator emphasizes Perpetua’s social status, as if nobles among Christians were rare.\(^{54}\)

Whether or not many Christians in Africa were of the noble classes, outsiders like Celsus perceived Christians only as uneducated working class peasants, according to Origen who claims,

Celsus quotes what is entirely contrary to Jesus’ teaching, and is maintained only by a few people who are supposed to be Christians, not, as he thinks, by the more intelligent, but by the most ignorant. He says: Their injunctions are like this. “Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone educated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly.” By the fact that they themselves admit that these people are worthy of their God, who they show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women, and little children.\(^{55}\)

...wool-workers, cobbler, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels, who would not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters. ...

In response to Celsus’ claim Origen does not deny the lower status class identity of most Christians, but compares this to the demographics of society in general: “However, it was inevitable that in the great number of people overcome by the work because there are many more vulgar and illiterate people than those who have been trained in rational thinking, the former class should far outnumber the

\(^{54}\) PSPF 2.1-2: “A number of young catechumens were arrested, Revocatus and his fellow slave Felicitas, Saturninus and Secundulus, and with them Vibia Perpetua, a newly married woman of good family and upbringing.” [Apprehensi sunt adolescentes catechumeni, Revocatus et Felicitas, conserra eis, Saturninus et Secundulus. Inter hos et Vibia Perpetua, honeste nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta.] cf. 6.1-2, where Perpetua seems to have been afforded some special distinction by the officials.

\(^{55}\) apud Orig., Contra Celsum 3.44: Ἐὰν ἔχῃ τούτων ὁ Κέλσος τὰ ὑπὸ ὅλης τινα παρά τινι διδάσκαλων ἔρχοντας χειραμώδεις Κριστιανών, οὐ φρονιμοτέρων ὡς (οἶτα), ἀλλ’ ἀμαθεστάτων, φέρων φρονίμως τοιαύτα ὑπλατίνων. Μηδεὶς προερχόμενος, μηδεὶς αὐτοί, μηδεὶς φρονίμως (κακά ταύτα νομίζετα παρῶν ἤμων) ἀλλ’ εἰς τις ἀμαθίας, εἰ τις ἀναγνώστης, εἰ τις ἀπαιδευμένος, εἰ τις νηπίας, τολμών ἴκτες. Τούτων γὰρ ἄξιος τού φησίν αὐτότες ἀναγνώστης, δῆλοι εἰς, ότι μόνων τοὺς ἡλίθιους καὶ ἀγανεύς καὶ ἀναιδεύτως καὶ ἀνοιάτως καὶ γυναικαὶ παιδάρια, πείθει ἔθελεν τοῖς καὶ δύνανται.

\(^{56}\) apud Orig., Contra Celsum 3.55: Ὁρασὼν δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὸς ἱδρας χαλικίας ἡ προφητείας καὶ ἀναγγελείως καὶ σύντομοτονος, καὶ κανεψικος, καὶ τοὺς ἀπαιδευτοτότος τοὺς καὶ ἀγροικοτάτος ἀναιρεῖτων μὲν τῶν πραξιμέτων καὶ φρονιμοτέρων διεσπότων αὐτῶν φθεγγότης, τολμώντως... εάν ἱδρας τινα παροιμίας τὰς παροιμίας διαδικασῖαν καὶ φρονιμοτέρων ἡ καὶ συναίνει τῷ πατέρα, ὅμως ἐλεγξεῖτον αὐτῶν διέτειν.
more intelligent. But Celsus did not want to recognize this fact.”57 While Origen does not give direct evidence for Africa Proconsularis, he does provide insight into the class makeup of Christianity contemporary to Tertullian and very similar in context.58 Fronto, moreover, alleged that Christians “collected from the lowest possible dregs of society the more ignorant fools together with gullible women.”59 Because Fronto spent much time in Rome, his account may not relate directly to North Africa, but it does align with other sources from neighboring regions and time periods, making its application to North Africa plausible.60

4.4 Tertullian and Class Identity

To which class of Roman society was Tertullian born? His skill as a trained orator and his education indicated in his writings seem sufficient to surmise that Tertullian came from or rose to a high level of status or class. Perhaps a more pertinent question, however, and one that can be explored in Tertullian’s own works, is “In which class did Tertullian place himself?”, or “How did Tertullian construct and depict his own class identity?” Despite the propaganda from non-Christian Romans and new elites, many Christians came from noble ranks in North Africa. The vast majority of Christians, however, were plebs with little or no claim to status as defined by Roman social norms. In order to investigate with which end of the social spectrum Tertullian expressed solidarity the following section will analyze his works De cultu feminarum 1 and 2.

57 *apud* Orig., *Contra Celsum* 1.27: Αναγκάσον δὴν ἐν πλήθει γρατουμένων ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου, ὡς πολλαπλασίους ὑδιόταί καὶ ἀγροκότεροι τῶν ἐν λόγοις γεγυμνασμένων, πολλαπλασίους γενέσθαι τούς ἴδιωτας, καὶ ἀγροκότερους τῶν συνετωέρων. Άλλα μηβουλήθεις ταῦτα ὁ Κέλσος κατανόησαι. This quote includes the variant readings on which Chadwick’s translation relies.

58 cf. Pliny’s declaration of surprise at upper class Christians, *Epistula* 10.96.4: “...I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy ought not to go unpunished. There have been others similarly fanatical who are Roman citizens” [Neque enim dubitatum, quaecumque esset quod daterentur, pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerunt alii similis amentiae, quos, quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbe remittendos.] See Braun, “Aux Origines,” 192, who contrasts the low class makeup of the Scillitan Christians with the community of Tertullian.


4.4.1 Class in De cultu feminarum

In the two volume work *De cultu feminarum*, Tertullian offers no specific historical data by which to date the treatise, which has led to a wide range of scholarly opinions regarding the treatise’ *sitz im leben*. Braun argues that the passage in 1.4.1-2 is a thesis of Tertullian’s subject indicating books one and two as parts of a unified work.61 Barnes, concurring with the earlier research of G. Säflund, believes book two is an independent sermon written ten years prior to book one.62 A third possibility, offered by Church, is that Tertullian consolidated two addresses into a single tractate.63 While most studies investigate Tertullian’s stance towards women as a stylistic criterion for understanding the works and any development of thought between them, the following discussion will take an alternate approach.64

Regarding Tertullian’s claim in *Apologeticum* (37.4) that even the noble classes consist of Christians, Barnes observes, “In 197 he gave that boast no specific content, but fifteen years later his open letter to the proconsul Scapula reels off a list of senators, governors and imperial freedmen who are either Christians or sympathetic to Christianity.”65 A closer examination of Tertullian’s stance on class issues and social organization, undertaken by Dennis E. Groh, contributes valuable insights to recognizing the importance of class, rank and wealth in Tertullian’s writings.66 Groh finds Tertullian to protest against ambitio and gloria, saying each “has a negative sense and occurs frequently in conjunction with wealth or riches.”67 The following analysis of *De cultu feminarum* finds two different emphases regarding wealth, thus implying that they are two separate works.

In book one of *De cultu feminarum* Tertullian concerns himself with wealth in regards to the Christian women (*sorores diletissimae*, 1.1.1) of his congregation.68 Throughout the work, he writes against outlandish examples of misused riches:

> From the smallest caskets is produced an ample patrimony. On a single thread is suspended a million of sesterces. One delicate neck carries about it forests and

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63 “Sex,” 92, n. 38; Church does not believe the consolidation to have been from tracts ten years apart as Barnes proposes, but much closer.
64 For a review of feminist readings of Tertullian, see below, section 6.4.1.
67 Ibid, 9; ref. *De pal.* 5.5; *Ad nat.* 2.4.15-16; *De mon.* 7.5; and *Ad uxor.* 2.3.1.
68 Barnes, *Tertullian*, 117ff., believed this work to be a homily.
islands. The slender lobes of the ears exhaust a fortune; and the left hand, with its every finger, sports with a several money-bag. Such is the strength of ambition — (equal) to bearing on one small body, and that a woman’s, the product of so copious wealth.\footnote{1.9.3: De breuissimis loculis patrimonium grande profertur; uno lino decies sestertium inseritur; saltus et insulas tenera ceruix circumfert; graciles aurium cutes kalendarium expendunt et sinistra per singulos digitos de saccis singulis ludit. Hae sunt uires ambitionis tantarum usurarum substantiam uno et muliebri corpusculo bauiari.}

The temptations of wealth, especially such lavish examples of its misuses, should not be heeded according to Tertullian. He warns the sisters not to fall into the same trap of vanity as Eve (1.1.3). He encourages them to resist the temptations offered by the fallen angels before the days of Noah (1.2.4), and regarding the legend that precious jewels come from dragons ({\textit{draconum}}, 1.6.3), Tertullian deduces that women should avoid them as though from that “Serpent” ({\textit{serpente}}), the Devil ({\textit{diaboli}}).\footnote{70 For the “days of Noah” see Gen. 6:1-4 and 1 Enoch 7-8. Marie Turcan, “Etre femme selon Tertullien,” \textit{Vita Latina} 119 (September 1990), 15, believes this alludes to Pliny, \textit{Naturalis historia}.}

Book one offers warnings only; Tertullian never rebukes or chastises the sisters for actually succumbing to wealth nor implies that any member of his audience belong to the upper classes.

The only non-biblical example of someone who has fallen into the temptation of wealth is found “at Rome” ({\textit{Romae}}, 1.7.2) where provincials’ wealth causes noble women ({\textit{matronis}}) embarrassment.\footnote{71 Although Tertullian states he has seen (uidimus) this event, Turcan takes the statement rhetorically.}

Tertullian expounds on the “Tyrian” (\textit{Tyriis}) lack of appreciation for Roman wealth, stating, “Purple with them is more paltry than red ochre” ({\textit{Vilior est apud illos purpura quam rubrica}}, 1.8.1).\footnote{72 cf. the passage referenced earlier in Tacitus, \textit{Annals} 3.2, where the soldiers bore the ashes of the fallen Germanicus with \textit{fasces} proceeding through every colony; he adds that for this occasion “the commons [were] in black, the knights in purple” [\textit{atrata plebes, trabeati equites}].}

While on the subject, Tertullian declares that God could have made “sheep to be born with purple and sky-blue fleeces” ({\textit{purpureas et aerinas oues nasci}}, 1.8.2) but did not, and therefore any such perversions “are understood to be from the devil” ({\textit{a diabolo esse intelleguntur}}, 1.8.2), or more specifically “the devil and his angels” ({\textit{diabolum et angelos eius}}, 1.8.3) who have imported “worldly shows” ({\textit{spectaculorum saecularium}}, 1.8.4), “frenzies of the racecourse, or the atrocities of the arena, or the turpitudes of the stage” ({\textit{circi furoribus aut arenae atrocitatibus aut scenae turpitudinibus}}, 1.8.5), all of which belong solely to those who seek after “worldly glory” ({\textit{gloriae saeculum}}, 1.8.6).\footnote{73 Given this blatant antagonism toward the Roman imperial presence, a postcolonial read could interpret Tertullian’s use of gold and iron (1.5) as subversively analogous to foreign/indigenous or Roman/African.}

Tertullian’s sisters, however, never appear within the wealthier classes; instead, he warns them to resist the “Devil” and the temptation to participate with those seeking \textit{gloria}.\footnote{73 Given this blatant antagonism toward the Roman imperial presence, a postcolonial read could interpret Tertullian’s use of gold and iron (1.5) as subversively analogous to foreign/indigenous or Roman/African.}
Book two begins with a similar address to Tertullian's "fellow-servants and handmaids" (conservae et sorores, 2.1.1), but the specification follows that this discourse is "not... of affection, but paving the way for affection in the cause of your salvation" (non... affectationis sed affectioni procurans in causa uestræ salutis). The different tone between the two volumes stems from the fact that many of the sisters actually have participated in the extravagancies of wealth, whereas Tertullian only warns against such wealth in book one. Tertullian seeks to persuade those who already exhibit "licentious extravagances of dress" (in habitus ...licentia, 2.1.3), "who rub their skin with medicaments, stain their cheeks with rouge, make their eyes prominent with antimony" (quae cutem medicaminibus urgent, genas rubere maculant, oculos fuligine porrigunt, 2.5.2), who own "servants" (serui, 2.5.4), who "turn [the colour of] their hair with saffron" (capillum croco uertere, 2.6.1) and even men who have succumbed to all and more of these excesses (2.8).

As Tertullian develops his argument against, "your riches and elegancies" (diuitiarum uestrarum uel elegantiarum, 2.9.5) rhetoric emerges indicating that the recipients of his rebukes are wealthy converts. He proposes, "When (once) the knowledge of God has put an end to all wish to please by means of voluptuous attraction, all these things are rejected as frivolous, as hostile to modesty" (cum tamen, cognito Deo, adempta placendi uoluntate, per luxuriae occasionem omnia ilia ut otiosa ut hostilia pudicitiae recusantur, 2.8.2). Again, he questions why any would return to pre-conversion habits and asks, "Moreover, what causes have you for appearing in public in excessive grandeur, removed as you are from the occasions which call for such exhibitions?" (Quae autem uobis causa extructius prodeundi cum remotae sitis ab his quae talium indigent?, 2.11.1). The true motivation, Tertullian adds, is for "seeing and being seen"

74 Turcan prefers the variant affectationi to the genitive of Oehler's text; the confrontational tone, however, in Tertullian remains in either rendering. Therefore, it is suprising in her comments (Tertullien, 21) that she does not elaborate on why she considers book one to be "oratoire et vengeur" but book two to be "humble et suppliant."

75 Comp. 2.5.2 with De paen. 11. Regarding nostri serui (2.5.4), Tertullian's usage seems to be a rhetorical means of saying uestri serui, given the context and overall tone of the treatise; in this paragraph Tertullian compares his audience with "soldiers" (milites) who take gifts from "foes" (ab hostis), and then returns to his typical usage when he attacks "your schoolings and professions" (uestris disciplinis et professionibus, 2.5.5). Moreover, Harrill, "The Domestic Enemy: A Moral Polarity of Household Slaves in Early Christian Apologies and Martyrdoms," in Early Christian Families, ed. Balch and Osiek, 242-6, illustrates how Tertullian can rhetorically construct "slaves" for the purpose of his argument. Turcan underscores Tertullian's familiarity with military imagery, comparing this reference with De cor. 11.3-4; De spect. 24.4; and De prææ. haer. 12.2. The last two, like here in De cult. fem., compare military mutiny with the behaviour under review; the first, however, explicitly declares service to the emperor in the army to be a betrayal by the Christian.

76 Oehler's text for occasionem in keeping with Thelwall's translation; Turcan reads uacationem.

77 The singular causa found by Turcan to be more plausible is a plural, causae, in Oehler.
(uidere ac uideri) in the various displays of wealth in “public” (publicum) and for the purpose “of inflating glory” (gloria insolescat). The audience should resist “if the requirements of Gentile friendships and of kindly offices call you” (si necessitas amicitiarum officiorumque gentilium uos vocat, 2.11.2), and they ought to take pride to “walk in poorer garb” (pauperius incedit, 2.11.3) so as not to appear as prostitutes who imitate “the most honourable women” (honestissimis... feminis, 2.12.1).

While on the subject of prostitutes in the guise of nobility, Tertullian makes reference to Rome: “That powerful state which presides over the seven mountains and very many waters, has merited from the Lord the appellation of a prostitute” (Ilia ciuitas valida quae super montes septem et plurimas aquas praesidet, cum prostitutae appellationem a domino meruisset, 2.12.2). He then expounds, “She sits, to be sure, ‘in purple, and scarlet, and gold, and precious stone.’” (Sedet certe in purpura et coccino et auro et lapide pretioso, 2.12.2).

Less overt references to Rome and its influences such as “purple and scarlet sheep” (purpureas et coccineas owes, 2.10.1; cf. 2.10.4), and the “public shows” (spectacula, 2.11.1), arise in Tertullian’s arguments as well.

From this comparison of the two volumes of De culto feminarum, several observations can be made regarding Tertullian’s discourse on class. The books represent two different occasions when Tertullian speaks about the parameters of a Christian woman’s (and man’s, 2.8) wardrobe. In book one, he warns the audience against the temptations of wealth and of the pursuits of gloria, but he makes no mention of any Christians who have actually participated in such activities. The second book, however, indicates that Tertullian has witnessed Christians who belong to or have the means of belonging to the upper classes and who display their wealth gratuitously, an option unacceptable to the African theologian. He argues that a convert must reject the immodest and licentious uses

79 Tertullian also insists, “You ought to hate what ruined your fathers (figuratively, Israel)” [Odisse debetis quod Iudaeos perdidit, 2.13.6]. Instead, they should adorn “the purple of modesty” [purpura pudicitiae, 2.13.7]. Regarding purpureas et coccineas, Turcan only notes that the latter is “un symbole de luxe et de richesse.” Other possible subversive references to Rome in De cult. fem. include 2.2 where, like the analogy of iron/gold to Africans/Romans in 1.5, Tertullian’s example of Sarah taken from Abraham by the Egyptians could be understood as representing the faithful and the Romans, given Tertullian’s concern for women’s at risk of rape by persecutors (see below, section 5.4.1).
of riches and therein reject the upper classes whose lifestyle is entangled in such behaviour. Tertullian, moreover, understands the abusive use of wealth, as typified in the noble classes, attributable to Roman influence. It seems that, to Tertullian, the rejection of upper class identity by the Christian likewise requires a rejection of the Roman system that furthers systemic social stratification among the nationes (2.6.1).
5 Ethnicity Theory

5.1 Social Anthropology and Ethnic Identity

Studies of ethnicity have a relatively short history in the discipline of anthropology in that early fieldwork focused on characteristics of a “people” or “tribe” observed rather than the “ethnicity” of those observed.¹ Scholars explain the sudden appearance and popularity of the term “ethnicity” by the “sense of revulsion and shame at the events that racial doctrines, and specifically Nazi racial doctrines, brought about in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.”² “Race” intoned biologically fixed categories, a notion now discredited in most disciplines, especially Social Anthropology.³

Since anthropologists reject “ethnicity” as some “thing” biologically fixed for individuals and groups (i.e. “race”), alternate criteria must be forwarded for what is and is not “ethnicity.” What has become known as the primordialist position, expressed by Clifford Geertz’ article, explains ethnicity in terms of “givens” or “congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, [which] are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves.”⁴ Primordialists themselves may not attribute such “givens” as fixed, but claim that the informants do, which requires the notion to be incorporated into theory.⁵

The theory, however, has been sharply criticized by Fredrik Barth, because the

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³ Eriksen, Ethnicity, ⁵; and Audrey Smedley, “Race” and the Construction of Human Identity,” AA 100 (3 1998), 690. Eugenia Shanklin, “The Profession of the Color Blind: Sociocultural Anthropology and Racism in the 21st Century,” AA 100 (3 1998): 669-79, explains how anthropologists can still undertake “racial studies” as the study of people’s understanding of “race” in society. The substitution of “ethnicity” for “race” does not avoid all of the methodological and theoretical problems as noted by many scholars; cf. Eriksen, Ethnicity, ⁵; Smedley, “Race,” 690; Tonkin, et al., Ethnicity and History, 22.
⁵ Hutchinson and Smith, “Concepts of Ethnicity,” 8.
5.1 Social Anthropology and Ethnic Identity

approach “allows us to assume that boundary maintenance is unproblematical and follows from the isolation which the itemized characteristics imply.... We are led to imagine each group developing its cultural and social form in relative isolation....” Alternatively, Barth proposes a focus on the intersection, or “boundary,” between ethnic groups, citing the possibility of “cultural givens” to transmute across such boundaries and between “ethnicities.”

Constructivist approaches to ethnicity entail a further retreat from any notion of “boundedness” or essentialism. On one hand, anthropologists can understand ethnic identity as providing a “social, political and cultural resource for different interest- and status-groups.” Less functionalist approaches, however, emphasize the discursive aspect of ethnicity, as Banks explains, “The content of the [ethnic] group — in terms of both ‘culture’ and personnel — has no a priori existence or stability. That is to say, it is not so much the group which endures as the idea of the group.” R. Neeman described the constructivist perspective as one in which “ethnic cultures are fluid, changing, and even invented, subject to the interpretations and choices of groups and individuals.” Similar to discourse on social identity, kinship and class, some anthropologists have reacted to a destabilized understanding of ethnicity by dismissing the term altogether as a useful analytical category.

By placing ethnicity within the broader discussions


8 Banks, Ethnicity, 12; original emphasis.

9 “Invented Ethnicity as Collective and Personal Text: An Association of Rumanian Israelis,” AQ 67 (3 1994), 135. cf. Barth, “Introduction,” 17. The accusation of Abner Cohen, Urban Ethnicity, (London: Tavistock, 1974), xii-xv, that Barth’s static understanding reifies ethnicity (and is, therefore, primordialist), is seen by Eriksen, Ethnicity, 55, as “debatable.” More recently, Banks, Ethnicity, 13, concludes that Barth’s “position is closer to that usually known as primordialism — ethnicity as a permanent and essential condition,” because of Barth’s understanding of ethnicity as “a superordinate identity, one which transcends or is at least equivalent to all other identities (such as those based on gender, or status)....” Hal B. Levine, “Reconstructing Ethnicity,” JRAI n.s. 5 (2 1999), 167, represents a common understanding: “[Barth] developed an approach to ethnicity that contained elements of both....”

10 On the “destabilized understanding,” see Levine, “Reconstructing Ethnicity,” 165; citing the assessment of Comaroff, “Ethnicity,” 164-5, who rejects past theories for a more anti-
of identity, however, anthropologists can explore what has been called a "kaleidoscopic and seemingly paradoxical set of phenomenon," a "set" which includes kinship, class and religion, to name a few.11

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Many anthropologists agree with Barth’s central tenet of ethnic theory, namely that ethnic groups “cannot exist in isolation but only contrast to other groups.”12 Most anthropologists agree that ethnicities cannot be classified simply by noting differences in traits and customs but instead it is the “social boundaries” between groups formed by their encounter and “not the cultural content enclosed by the boundary” that allow for discourse on ethnic identity.13 The focus on boundaries, encounter and even “conflict,” allow anthropologists to establish clear analytical methodologies while avoiding the essentializing tendencies of primordialism.14 Levine elaborates on Barth’s insights, “Demarcating self from other, in-group from out-group, the boundary component of ethnicity remained stable while society and culture changed. Individuals, moving across boundaries in response to changing conditions, could choose their ethnic identities from those available to them.”15 In this explanation, Levine highlights another aspect anthropologists have incorporated since Barth: the element of multiple ethnic identities, especially in postcolonial contexts.16

With Barth’s theories of boundaries incorporated and modified, many scholars return to the content of ethnic identities as perceived by informants and the manner in which they function as ethnic boundaries. Eriksen speaks of the balanced approach needed for scholarly delineation of ethnic markers or characteristics by noting both the subjectivist (emic) and the objectivist (etic) approaches: “Ethnic identities are neither ascribed nor achieved: they are both.”17 Scholars generally agree that the specific factors that can serve as boundary markers are all but innumerable. Manning Nash forwarded the triad of “blood, food and cult” as salient elements of most emic demarcations of ethnic identity.18 Hutchinson and Smith suggest six features which are held “in varying degrees”:

1. A common proper name
2. A myth of common ancestry

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12 Banks, Ethnicity, 13; also, Eriksen, Ethnicity, 12
13 Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 9. Eriksen, Ethnicity, 37-8, agrees, noting, “Instead of listing traits of ‘objective culture,’ which members often share with non-members anyway, Barth defines ethnicity as categorical ascriptions...” As an example Eriksen cites Eugen E. Roosens, Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis, (London: SAGE, 1989), 12-3: “There is more chance that the Flemish in Brussels, who always have to speak French, will become more ‘consciously’ Flemish than their ethnic brothers and sisters in the rather isolated rural areas of West Flanders or Limburg.”
14 Hutchinson and Smith, “Introduction,” 3.
15 Levine, “Reconstructing Ethnicity,” 167; it should be noted that at this point in her summary, Levine – like most – begins to criticize other elements of Barth.
16 Also, Eriksen, Ethnicity, 8.
17 Ibid, 56; the only debate, he says (58), is “on where to put the emphasis.” cf. Barth’s own statement in “Ethnic Boundaries,” 11: “[Ethnicity is] a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.”
18 The Cauldron, 25.
(3) Shared historical memories
(4) One or more elements of common culture, including "religion, customs, or language"
(5) A link with a homeland
(6) A sense of solidarity "on the part of at least some sections of the ethnie’s population."  

In features (2) and (6), the authors reflect the understanding of Roosens, namely, that ethnicity is a "psychological reality," and even if there is no common ancestry, the individuals can establish themselves with a certain ethnic identity.  

By forwarding descriptions and depictions – rather than definitions or essential elements – of ethnicity, anthropologists continue the discourse on ethnic identities with fruitful results; examples of such insights not only stem from the cornucopia of studies on contemporary ethnic groups, but also from the ethnography of historical records like those remaining from Roman Africa.  

5.2 Roman Africa and Ethnic Identity

When introducing the compilation he edited, Irad Malkin asks, "Is it legitimate to apply the term ‘ethnicity,’ invented in the mid-twentieth century, to an ancient phenomenon?"  

Malkin’s collaborators, along with what Aaron Johnson calls a "flood of literature" on ethnicity in antiquity, concur with his affirmative answer.  

While many historians argue for a primordialist understanding of

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19 "Concepts of Ethnicity," 6-7; note Hutchinson and Smith’s preference of the French ethnie over the English "ethnicy” or the Russian "ethnos,” and that they allow for “ethnic categories” when some of the six features are not prominent.
20 Creating Ethnicity, 15ff.
ethnicity, as some anthropologists were shown to do in the last chapter, such debates will be tabled in the following section, following the understanding of ethnicity where specific indicators of ethnic identity can be interpreted as a boundary between groups. Where most historians agree with anthropologists, however, is in the understanding that ethnic identities are constructed in terms of difference.

As seen with other forms of identity, ethnic groups construct their identity by distinguishing themselves from an ethnic “Other.” The ethnic “Other,” moreover, allowed ancients to construct for themselves multiple ethnic identities. A few examples discussed by historians include (1) Lucian, Syrian and “international”; (2) Cassius Dio, Bithynian, Roman and Greek; (3) Augustine, North African, Christian and Roman; (4) Paul, of Tarsus, Roman and Jewish; and (5) Strabo, from Pontus, “barbarian,” Roman and Greek. Ethnic identities in the ancient world were complex, discursive, manifold and sometimes even contradictory, as seen in the ethnic identities of Roman colonizers, indigenous Africans and new elites.

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

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

To the Romans and the Roman colonizers, the indigenous Africans bore certain traits that served as ethnic boundaries. One of the minor poems of (Ps.) Virgil states, “She was his only help, African by race, her whole appearance proclaiming her native land.” The fact that an outsider could look at a woman and know by her figura that she was an Afra suggests that there were physical signifiers by which North Africans were recognized. Snowden, who seeks to

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33 Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 171ff; cf. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, 100ff. While these authors primarily concern themselves with Ethiopians, they serve to further the understanding of ethnic identity in Roman North Africa by interpreting ethnicity from the perspective of non-Romans.
34 *Romans*, 112-120; Mitchell and Greatrex, “Introduction,” xii.
35 *Moretum* 31-2: erat unica custos, Afra genus, tota patriam testante figura.
reconstruct the actual somatic type of North Africans, explains, “The child of a white mother and an Ethiopian father was *decolor (dисcolor)*. These two words were often used to describe the skin color of the peoples of India and Mauretania. Hence, the Roman usage of these words to describe children born of Ethiopian and white parents suggests that the children of such unions resembled in color the lighter Indians and Mauretanians.”

Likewise, Thompson attempts to pinpoint the skin color of North Africans compared with Ethiopians and Romans, when he states, “The very darkskinned Berber group known as the Aphodelodes is likewise described as resembling *Aethiopes* only in colour but not in morphology. The ethnic label *Melanogaetuli* (black Gaetulians) is similarly a coinage reflecting the fact that this southern Berber people combined normal Mediterranean morphology with a very dark complexion.”

Sometimes *Afer* (African) was even used by Romans as the equivalent of *Aethiops* (i.e. black-skinned). This, however, was usually due to a lack of familiarity with darker skinned people. Fearing racializing tendencies, scholars like Gruen have questioned the use of “appearance” or skin-color in ethnic studies. What should the scholar do, however, when Roman sources use appearance as an ethnic boundary? Art historians, for example, have commented on the way in which Africans were portrayed differently from Romans. It seems that to the Roman colonizers, the Africans were darker than themselves, yet not as dark as the Ethiopians further south. Other ethnic boundaries were also formed between the Romans and the Africans by dress: Roman and Greek sources often portray Africans as nomadic barbarians wearing the “mantle” or the *pallium* instead of...
Similarly, African dialects and Punic remained in wide usage at least until the end of the second century. The encounter between the Romans and the other ethnic groups in the provinces resulted in a pressure on new elites to "become ... Roman by adopting the Roman way of life, by speaking their language, by adopting their politeia." Because of the "ethnocentrism" of the Roman colonizers in viewing the indigenous Africans, the self-identity of new elites included an awareness of their own African ethnic identity. Several examples in the sources indicate that Africans perceived certain of their characteristics and customs to have been defined by Roman colonizers as ethnic boundary markers.

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

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

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42 Huskinson, "Looking," 8; and Marshall, "The Self and the Other in Cyenaica," 57, who cites examples.
43 Cherry, "Marriage," 71; Miles, "Communicating Culture," 58; and Miller, "Local Cultures," 130-3; for sources and discussion. Also, Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 177-81, for the importance of language in ethnic identities.
45 Richard Alston, "Philos *In Flaccum*: Ethnicity and Social Space in Roman Alexandria," *G&R* 2nd ser. 44 (2 1997): 165-175, for the case of Egypt, where the Romans elevated the status of Hellenized, urban elites over rural Egyptians as a means of stratifying and controlling Alexandrian society.
46 Snowden, *Blacks*, 188.
47 See above. Miller, "Local Cultures," 126-134, discusses "native" languages of Africa (Punic and Lybian) remaining throughout the Roman period. cf. Augustine, *De ciuitate Dei*, 16.6, "For even in Africa we know several barbarous nations which have but one language" [*Nam et in Africa barbaras gentes in una lingua plurimas nouimus.*]
48 Fronto, 16.
Fronto represents just one of many new elites of North Africa with a self-awareness of their ethnic identity.\footnote{See Koen Goudriaan, *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt*, (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1988), for the example of Hellenistic Egypt where the tensions between the colonizer and the colonized created an ethnic awareness among the new Greek-speaking elites of Egypt.}

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

> Since his place of birth was Madauros in Africa Proconsularis, his native language (*sermo patrius*) was probably Punic. ...His linguistic background is therefore complex and this was no doubt the reason why he had to watch his words carefully. He would otherwise no doubt have been disparaged by his rivals, as was the emperor Septimius Severus who “had a melodious voice but sounded like an African somehow right up to his old age.” An emperor could afford not to be too concerned on this account, but a sophist would need to be more watchful.”\footnote{“Introduction,” 126; ref. to Flor. 9.6-7, “This is especially true for me, since the reputation that I have already won and your kind confidence in me does not allow me to mouth anything I like off the top of my head. For who among you would forgive me for a single solecism? Who would allow me one ignorantly pronounced syllable? Who would permit me to jabber any wild and uncouth words like those that well up in the mouth of the insane? Yet you easily forgive others for these same faults and quite justly so” [praesertim mihi, cui et ante parta existimatio et uestra de me benigna praesumptio nihil non quicquam sint neglegenter ac de summo pectore hiscere. Quid enim uestrum mihi unum solaecismum ignouerit? Quid uel unam syllabam barbarae pronuntiatam donauerit? Quid incondita et uitiosa uerba temere quasi delirantibus oborientia permiserit blaterare? Quae tamen alii facile et same meritissimo ignoscitis]; and ref. to *Scriptores historiae augustae*, Severus, 19.9: canorus uoce, sed Afrum quiddam usque ad senectutem sonans.}

Raven adds to this point of the self-awareness of Septimius Severus, “An African from Leptis Magna, named Septimius Severus, was once congratulated by the poet Martial ‘that nothing in his looks or speech betrayed his Punic origin.’ His relative of the same name who became the first African emperor ‘never lost his African accent, and his Punic-speaking sister, on a visit, is said to have shamed him with her broken Latin.’”\footnote{Rome, 132; ref. *Scriptores historiae augustae*, Severus, 15.7: cum sua Leptitana ad eum uenisset uix Latine loquens, ac de illa multum imperator erubesceret. Also, see Birley, *The African Emperor*, 36, “The muddled Antiochene chronicler John Malalas, four centuries later, says that Septimius was dark-skinned. There is not much chance of verifying this statement now (although one colour portrait has survived).” A gray-scaled version is in Birley’s plate 16.}

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

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

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

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

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

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

The question of "power" and loyalty to the emperor will reemerge below in regard to the new elites; for the present purposes, van der Vliet's statement helps explain the ethnic identities of new elites. Walter Pohl also clarifies this point by stating, "Romanness, even for those who reached this goal, did not cancel regional and ethnic identities." The African new elites, like Fronto, Apuleius and even Septimius Severus oscillated between the ethnic identities available to them, including Roman and African.

53 _Apologia_ 24: _professus sum... Seminumidam et Semigaetulum, non video quid mihi sit in ea re pudendum, haud minus quam Cyro maior, quod genere mixto fuit Seminedus ac Semipersa. Non enim ubi prognatus, sed ut moratus quisque sit spectandum, nec qua regione, sed qua ratione utam uiuere interit, consideratum est. ...quamquam uiideantur quaedam stultitia vel sollertia insigniores? Apud socordissimos Scythas Anacharsis sapiens natus est, apud Athenienses catos Meletides fatuus.
54 "The Romans and Us," 271.
In the early period of Christian history in ancient North Africa, it is unlikely that Christians understood themselves in terms of a new ethnic identity. Nevertheless, using anthropological theories of ethnic identity to study early Christians, historical theologians can better appreciate the dynamics at play in extant Christian writings. As Johnson contends, “Awareness of one’s theoretical assumptions allows modern readers to better grasp and articulate the contours of ethnicity in the ancient Mediterranean world.” The previous chapter discussed the relationship between the language, customs, and other boundary markers of ethnicity from both Roman and African perspectives. This understanding will now inform the reading of the Christian data from ancient North Africa.

The reports of the earliest martyrs offer clues as to the ethnic identity of ancient African Christians. In relation to patria, Rives states, “The names of the martyrs [Scillitan], unlike that of their hometown, were recorded: Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Donata, Secunda, and Vestia. It is worth noting that several of these were typical African names: these people were not immigrants, but natives of the province who had converted to this new religion.” Similarly, Braun deduces from the Scillitans’ names that they were “d’origine punique.”

While similar assumptions could be based on the names of the martyrs associated with Perpetua, their account provides a specific indication in the narration of Felicity’s delivery of her child. The narrator reports, “Felicitas, glad that she had safely given birth so that now she could fight the beasts, going from one blood bath to another, from the midwife to the gladiator, ready to wash after childbirth in a second baptism.” Blake Leyerle sees in this account strong


57 “Identity,” 29.

58 Religion, 223-4; likewise, Rankin, Tertullan, 11, affirms that the Scillitans come “from among the indigenous rural population”; cf. Tertullian Ad. Scap. 3.4.

59 “Aux Orignes,” 190. cf. Brown, The Lord’s Prayer, 195, asserts that the North African Christian community “was thoroughly Romanized by the time of the incident of the Scillitan martyrs.” Brown apparently basis this conclusion on the Scillitan’s use of Latin.

60 PSPF 18.3: item Felicitas, saluam se peperisse gaudens ut ad bestias pugnaret, a sanguine ad sanguinem, ab obstetrice ad retiarium, lotura post partum baptismo secundo.
vestiges of a fertility symbolism – which he associates with Jewish rather than Punic tradition.\footnote{61}

Another clue about the ethnic identity of the martyrs and Christians of this period is found in the office of elder in the North African churches. The vision of Saturninus reports that as the martyrs proceed through the heavenly city they see “before the gates Optatus the bishop on the right, and Aspasius the presbyter and teacher…”\footnote{62} This is one of the first extant references in African Christian history to a unique office of the elder.\footnote{63} Outside of Africa, the \textit{presbuteroi} of the first century church became the priesthood – distinct from the African \textit{seniores laici}.\footnote{64} Frend deduced that the phenomenon is attributable to Jewish origins of Christianity in North Africa.\footnote{65} Shaw posits an alternative view of the “peculiarity” of elders in North African Christian churches.\footnote{66}

Elders had served as fundamental political institutions in the numerous societies of African towns and villages in the pre-Christian period. Shaw argues, “…the literary sources reveal that elders (also called \textit{seniores}) who functioned as an integral part of the structure of the Christian Church are to be found in North Africa alone. The coincidence is surely not fortuitous, though the argument for the continuity of the two institutions have been overlooked, deliberately ignored, contested or simply denied.”\footnote{67} Shaw believes the indigenous Africans of Libyo-Punic descent transferred the role of the local elder into the new Christian communities: “the Christianization of the African countryside signaled a religious revolution of considerable significance to individual attitudes, but not necessarily a radical change in social institutions.”\footnote{68} In the larger cities Shaw allows a distinction between the local governing body of \textit{seniores} and those of the ecclesial title. He insists, however, that this is due to “an imposed Roman

\footnote{61} “Blood is Seed,” 36; while Leyerle connects Judaic and Phoenician fertility language elsewhere in his article, he attributes this passage and others like it in \textit{PSPF} (e.g. 21.2) and in Tertullian (\textit{Apol.} 50.13) to connections with Judaism rather than to a Punic heritage. cf. Wright, “Tertullian,” 1029, on “Punic religion” and “the daring blood imagery” of \textit{PSPF}.

\footnote{62} \textit{PSPF} 13.1: “…ante fores Optatum episcopum ad dexteram et Aspasium presbyterum doctorem…” and the imagery in 12.

\footnote{63} Also, Tertullian, \textit{Apol.} 39.3ff. Evans, “The \textit{Seniores Laici} and the Origins of the Church in North Africa,” \textit{JTS} n.s. 12 (1961), 280, states the role, as known during the Donatist controversy, “derived from a much earlier period.”

\footnote{64} Frend, “The Early,” 30.


\footnote{66} “The Elders,” 207-226.

\footnote{67} Ibid, 207, see note 2 for a survey of the examples.

\footnote{68} Ibid.
5.4 Tertullian and Ethnic Identity

The indigenous Africans under Rome belonged to an ethnic category distinct from the Roman colonizers. The colonization of North Africa began a phenomenon of conflict between these two categories of peoples resulting in, among other responses, a solidified understanding of the non-Roman-ness of some of the indigenous population. As the Christian communities in North Africa incorporated a growing majority of indigenous Africans into its membership, ethnic factors began to influence the practices and self-identities of said congregations. Tertullian’s constructions of ethnic boundaries such as customs and appearance will now be discussed in order to explore his distinctions between certain people groups. The following section assumes the tension in his

69 Ibid, 223.

70 For later African Christianity as largely indigenous, see Raven, Rome, 167; Markus, “Christianity,” 21-36; Shaw, “African Christianity,” who replaces “Donatist” with “African”; and Tilley, The Bible, 18, for the “remnants of Punic culture.” A.H.M. Jones, “Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?” JTS 10 (1959): 280-98, argues that heresies were not nationalistic, but “regional.” Jones’ definition of “national,” however, is rarely (if ever) proposed; instead, scholars such as Raven are cautious about labeling any form of Christianity as “nationalistic” or coterminous with an ethnic identity, but continue to recognize the trends of some sects in attracting certain people groups. Moreover, as Buell, “Race and Universalism,” 468, maintains, “Paying attention to ethnic reasoning helps us reconstruct the diversity among early Christian thinking and practices without recourse to problematic frameworks like orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy.” For responses to Jones, see Frend, “Heresy,” 39; Markus, “Christianity and Dissent,” 25-6; and Ramsay MacMullen, “Tertullian and ‘National God,’” JTS n.s. 26 (1975): 405-10.

71 See, however, Christopher D. Stanley, “’Neither Jew nor Greek’: Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society,” Journal for the Study of the New Testament 64 (D 1996): 101-124, for this phenomenon throughout the Roman Empire and its import for Paul’s writings.

72 The lack of data regarding Tertullian’s native language requires the subject to be omitted from the present discussion. See, however, H. Hoppe (1932), cited by Altaner, Patrology, (1960), 166, who states, “Tertullian formed 509 new nouns, 284 new adjectives, 28 new adverbs and 161 new verbs...” Although the notion of an “African dialect” of Latin has found little support in contemporary scholarship – see generally, Hilton, “Introduction by John Hilton to Florida in
construction of ethnic boundary markers which should be seen in light of his Christian identity (see below).

5.4.1 Ethnicity and Tertullian’s Ethnic Boundaries

Did Tertullian explicitly discuss his ethnic identity or that of the Christian community to which he belonged? Leyerle says that Tertullian understood Christians, like Jews with circumcision, to have a “shared ethnic identity” and this new identity angered the Graeco-Romans. While Leyerle focuses on Tertullian’s usage of ethnic categories for the new Christian community, the following discussion will present evidence of Tertullian’s usage of ethnic categories more generally, showing his awareness of such distinctions and their importance. Another discussion of Tertullian’s ethnicity is found in Braun’s article, “Aux Origines de la Chrétienté d’Afrique: un Homme de Combat, Tertullien.” Because of Tertullian’s anti-Roman statements in De pallio and elsewhere, Braun argues, “All of this could even make one think more precisely of a Punic origin [for Tertullian]. It is difficult to decide, however, because the entire heritage of Carthage and its glory had become common to the many African Berbers on whom the large city had for many centuries already made a significant impact.” Braun proceeds to declare that Tertullian was Punic based on certain parallels between the Punic religion and the unique traits of North African Christianity. Braun’s approach contributes little more than points of comparison between North African Christianity and the Libyo-Punic ethnic groups as seen by one scholar. His study does illustrate, however, the need to further investigate Tertullian’s own usage and discussion of ethnic indicators in order to better understand the conflict found in much of the North African’s writings.

As shown above, Tertullian claimed Africa as his patria, and since a homeland has been delineated as a common concept in forming ethnic categories,

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73 Patristic scholars can allude to Tertullian’s ethnicity: e.g. Altener, Patrology, 167, “He combined Punic fervour with Roman practical sense.”

74 “Blood is Seed,” 42.

75 “Aux Origines,” 194: Tout cela pourrait même faire penser plus précisément à une origine punique; mais il est difficile de se prononcer, car depuis plusieurs siècles déjà tout le patrimoine des gloires carthaginoises était devenu commun aux Africains berberes sur qui s’était marquée profondément l’empreinte de la grande cité.

76 Also, Wright, “Tertullian,” 1029, surmises, “Although its earliest roots in Carthaginian society remain hotly contested more than one aspect of Tertullianic Christianity may well reflect the residual influence of the grim child-sacrificing Punic religion of pre-Roman Carthage.”
Tertullian’s own understanding of his ethnicity comes into question. Another important indicator of ethnic identity for recent anthropological studies is that of dress. Dress must be understood as more than simply garments, but rather as any modifications of appearance including hair, makeup, accessories, scents and tattooing. More pertinent to this discussion is the function of dress as a boundary marker between ethnic groups.

Dress, according to Eicher, is a “coded sensory system” which links ethnicity and ethnic identity on the part of the individual wearing the dress and the outsider viewing the individual. A community can utilize this symbolic nature of dress to construct its own identity with traditional attire and accessories. “In other words,” Eicher argues, “…Ethnicity embraces ideas of group cohesion, of insiders versus outsiders, with boundaries that separate outsiders and insiders and symbols that identify members of a group as being distinct from other groups.” While some recent studies view ethnic groups’ use of dress as a reaction to modernism, many scholars view dress in terms of Postcolonial response.

One Postcolonial perspective on dress and ethnicity is Fadwa El Guindi’s explication of the veil in his work, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*. Following a diachronic approach, Guindi begins in the ancient world, explaining the various uses of the veil and its developing importance as “a symbol ideologically fundamental to the Christian, and particularly the Catholic, vision of womanhood and piety, and a vehicle for resistance in Islamic societies.”

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82 *Veil*, xii. It should be noted that a “veil” refers to any form of covering the head, face and/or neck and shoulders in anthropological terms. This coincides with the usage found in Tertullian; see *De uirg. uel*. Additionally, Charles-Picard and Charles Picard, *Daily Life*, 136, claim that head gear was common garb in Carthage. Also note the gender identity concurrently invoked in such a discussion.
ancient uses of dress informed Guindi’s research, it is argued here that the converse is also true in the hermeneutical spiral of interpretation, and Guindi’s understanding can in turn inform a reading of Tertullian’s works. As Ann Bridgewood has argued, “Dress is never value-free; there is no style which does not carry some connotation of, for example, imperialism, oppression or liberation.” Other approaches have likewise found the category of ethnic dress valuable for the discussion of late antiquity.

In the ancient world dress, including hair and accessories, served to delineate certain people groups from others. Pohl’s study of ethnicity in the Roman empire finds more ancient sources relying on dress as ethnic indicators than any other signifier. He notes specifically hair as a sign used by Roman writers to separate themselves from all “barbarians.” Several ancient authors comment on the trend for Roman women to bleach their hair blond or dye it red to imitate the northern Germanic and Gaulic peoples. Tertullian, when rebuking women who have dyed their hair, declares, “They are ashamed even of their own nation, (ashamed) that their procreation did not assign them to Germany and to Gaul” (Pudet eas etiam nationis suae quod non Germaniae atque Galliae sint procreatae, De cult. fem. 2.6.1). Tertullian understood appearance as a boundary which separated

83 “Dancing the Jar,” 48.
84 “Telling the Difference,” see his section on “Hairstyles and Body Signs,” 51-61. For a North African Christian example, see Tilley, “The Passion,” 849, who comments on the Perpetua and her fellow martyrs’ command to wear the garb of Roman cults, deeming “Clothing as an extension of the body and thus as an expression of identity....”
85 Pohl, “Telling the Difference,” 54; ref. Seneca, Epistula 124.22, “Why dress your hair with such unending attention? Though you let it down in Parthian fashion, or tie it up in the German style, or, as the Scythians do, let it flow wild” [Quid capillum ingenti diligentia comis? Cum illum uel effunderis more Parthorum uel Germanorum modo uinxeris uel, ut Sceytiae solent, sparseri].
86 See Thompson, Blacks, 131ff. for discussion; one example suffices: Propertius 2.18d, “Do you still in your madness imitate the painted Britons and play the wanton with foreign dyes upon your cheeks? All beauty is best as nature made it: Belgian rouge is shameful on a Roman face. If some woman has stained her forehead with azure dye, is azure beauty on that account to be desired? In hell below may many an ill befall that girl who stupidly dyes her hair with a false colour!” [Nunc etiam infectos demens imitare Britannos, ludis et externo tincta nitore apuit? Ut natura dedit, sic omnis recta figuasti turpis Romano Belgicus ore color. An si caeruleo qua fedam sua tempor a fuco tinxerit. idcirco caerula forma bonast? Illi sub terris fiant mala multa puellae, quae mentita suas serit inepta comas’]
87 Thompson, Blacks, 132, comments on this passage, attributing Tertullian’s stance to the audience’s “inferiority complex about their ethnic identity.” Although Tertullian himself makes little use of physical characteristics as an ethnic boundary marker (in fact, in De an. 25.6-8 he seems to refute the three-tiered model of climate-derived somatic types discussed in above, section 5.2), it is interesting to compare the way scholars have portrayed him: e.g. J. D. Woodbridge, ed., Great Leaders of the Christian Church (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 49, depicts him wearing a turban; whereas, more recently, Dunn, Tertullian, has on his cover, the mosaic of the personified Africa from El Djem Museum (this image is discussed above and in Blanchard-Lemée, Ennaïfer, Slim and Slim, Mosaics of Roman Africa, 18-34). Additionally, Dunn, Tertullian, 6, ventures to “hazard a guess” that Tertullian was bearded; ref. De spect. 23.3.
one people group from another, and, when he addresses the hairstyles of Christian women, he emphasizes the importance of distinction not only between Christians and non-Christians, but between specific ethnic groups as well.\footnote{88}

In his treatise, \textit{De uirginibus uelandis}, Tertullian also comments on many aspects of women’s fashion, including how women “dye their hair; and fasten their hair with more wanton pin, ...they consult the looking-glass to aid their beauty, and thin down their over-exacting face with washing, perhaps withal vamp it up with cosmetics, toss their mantle about them with an air, fit tightly the multiform shoe, carry down more ample appliances to the baths.”\footnote{89} Tertullian speaks of the women’s dress within a polemic of whether or not virgins should be veiled in the church service. He argues in favor of the practice, and in doing so laments over the tragic happenings to his religious community of North Africa:

\begin{quote}
O sacrilegious hands, which have had the hardihood to drag off a dress dedicated to God! What worse could any persecutor have done, if he had known that this (garb) had been chosen by a virgin? You have denuded a maiden in regard of her head, and forthwith she wholly ceases to be a virgin to herself; she has undergone a change!\footnote{90}
\end{quote}

While one reading of this passage could understand Tertullian’s cry figuratively, from a Postcolonial interpretation a more serious concern is also possible in these words.

In his section “The Resistance of the Veil” in which he analyzes Frantz Fanon’s understanding of the French “unveiling” of Algeria, Guindi says that the French colonial attempts “to modernize” Algeria were actually anti-nationalistic tactics, and the “Algerians saw among settler Europeans a hidden desire to rape, literally and figuratively” by unveiling the women.\footnote{91} Tertullian understands the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Given the antipathy towards Romans in \textit{De cult. fem.}, Tertullian likely attacks wealthy women who, \textit{ike Romans}, mimic the hair of the Germans and Gauls. For a discussion of women’s hairstyles in Rome at this time, see Mary G. Houston, \textit{Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Costume and Decoration}, 2nd ed., (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1947), 116, where she illustrates several examples of hairstyles which “give an idea of the enormous importance of coiffure in the otherwise very simple and almost unchangeable costume of the Roman lady during the first two centuries of the Christian Era.”
\item \textit{De uirg. uel.} \S2.3-4: \textit{uerunt capillum et acu lasciuiores comam sibi inferunt...consilium formae a speculo petunt et faciem moriostorem lavacro macerant, forsitan et aliquo eam medicamine interpolent, pallium extrinsecus lactant, calceum stipant multiformem, plus instrumenti ad balneas deferunt.}
\item \textit{De uirg. uel.} \S3.8: \textit{O sacrilegae manus, quae dicatum deo habitum detrahere potuerunt! Quid peius aliquis persecutor fecisset, si hoc a uirginis electa aegnouisset? Denudasti puellam a capite et nota tam sibi urgo non est, alia est factura.}
\item Veil, 170ff., ref. \textit{A Dying Colonialism}, trans. Haakon Chevalier, (New York: Grove Press, 1967). cf. Tertullian’s statement (\textit{De pud.} 1.13-14), where he reminds fellow-Christians, “Heathendom itself bears such emphatic witness, that it strives to punish that discipline in the persons of our females rather by defilements of the flesh than tortures; wishing to wrest from them that which they hold dearer than life!” [\textit{ipsum quoque saeculum usque adeo testatur, ut, si quando, eam in feminis nostris inquinamentis potius carnis quam tormentis punire contendat id}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
“world” in opposition to his Christian community, and one means of protecting the boundary between themselves and foreigners involves more than a Christian/non-Christian distinction, but it requires an establishment of an ethnic boundary by means of dress.

In seeking to understand Tertullian’s passages, Pohl’s warning is pertinent regarding the complexity involved in the ancient society: often dress was more a sign of social status than ethnic identity. To this complexity could be added religion, clan, gender and many other factors. Pohl does, however, proceed to give several examples where ancient accounts of dress signify ethnic identities, indicating the need for careful examination of the textual witness when determining its usage. On certain occasions, Tertullian’s concern with outsider influence on his (predominantly African) Christian community recognizes in dress a means of stating ethnic identity; this is most evident in his work De pallio.  

≈ volens eripere quod uitae anteponunt; and Apol. 50.12 (Souter): “For quite recently by condemning a Christian woman to the lust of man rather than to a lion, you confessed that the stain upon chastity is reckoned more heinous among us than any punishment and any death” [Nam et proxime ad lenonem dammando Christianam potius quam ad leonem, confessis estis labem pudicitiae apud nos aitriciorem omni poena et omni morte reputari]. cf. Amobius, 1.64; 2.1; and 2.45.2. See also the accusation against Severus’ army by Herodian 3.9, “Falling upon the barbarians unawares, the Romans slaughtered any they met and plundered the whole area of the city, making prisoners of all the women and children” [προσπεσόντες δε οι Ρωμαίοι, ἀπαρακτικοί, τοῖς βαρβάροις, πάντα τε τῶν ἐμπόττωντα ἐφόνευον καὶ διηπάσουν τὰ ἐν τῇ πόλει, πάντας τε παιδὰς καὶ γυναῖκας σωματίων ἐλαβοῦν]. In addition, see S.R. Joshel, “The Body Female and the Body Politic: Livy’s Lucretia and Verginia – Source: Livy, ‘On the Founding of Rome’ 1.57.6-59.6,” Sexuality and Gender (2002), 177, who argues that Livy’s account of Lucretia’s rape by the last Roman prince is an attack on “what Roman ‘soldier males’ do to the conquered”; Cherry, “The Marriage of Equestrian Officers in the Post-Severan Army,” Historia 46 (1 1997), 113, who argues that the law (ref. Digesta 23.2.63) prohibiting soldiers from marrying provincials “was probably meant to protect provincial women from being forced into marriage”; J. Evans-Grubbs, “Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: A Law of Constantine (CTh IX.24.1) and Its Social Context,” JRS 79 (1989): 59-83, who argues that Constantine’s edict against marriages by abduction, formally recognized a practice that had taken place for centuries; and Lefkowitz, Heroines, 57, who speculates that Perpetua was raped by her father. For Tertullian’s use of Lucretia as a positive example to female Christians awaiting torture and execution, see Ad mart. 4; and below, section 6.4.1.

93 For another instance where Tertullian explains how ethnic groups such as the Garamantes, Germans, Athenians and Britons can be distinguished by dress in De uirg. uel., see 10.1-2; note the correlation between Tertullian’s examples and the directional perspective of both Rome and Carthage (respectively, South, North, West and East.) This perspective especially seems to point to a Roman centre, given the fact that each group represents some form of resistance to the Romans. For an example of a surviving Mosaic where Rome is depicted as central, personified, holding an orb in her hand and surrounded by personified provinces: Blanchard-Lemée, Ennaifer, Slim and Slim, Mosaics of Roman Africa, 18-34.
5.4.2 Ethnicity in De pallio

Tertullian’s treatise, De pallio, addresses the criticism made by some against Tertullian’s setting aside the toga in favor of wearing a pallium — a cloak. Tertullian describes the characteristics of this garb himself in his treatise after introducing his work by saying,

Men of Carthage, ever princes of Africa, ennobled by ancient memories, blest with modern felicities, I rejoice that times are so prosperous with you that you have leisure to spend and pleasure to find in criticising dress. These are the “piping times of peace” and plenty. Blessings rain from the empire and from the sky.

In these opening lines, Tertullian sets the tone for the treatise as one of bitter sarcasm, reacting to both those “criticising dress” and those who receive the blessings “from the empire.”

Commenting on this tone, Groh asserts that Tertullian’s understanding of the Christian life requires a correlation between inner virtue and outer reality: “This is why Tertullian gives so much attention to disciplinary matters, even matters of dress, in his treatises.” Groh continues by connecting Tertullian’s Christianity with his subversive tendencies, stating,

The pallium employed in this way represents a divine dress donned to express values opposed to those of societal man in his craving for public dignity and glory, symbolized by the toga. Tertullian’s pallium, like the clothes of the contemporary counter culture, was the announcement of a socio-political revolution in values based on an understanding of life at fundamental odds with the mainstream of society.

94 For commentary and discussion of De pall. see Hunink, Tertullian, who concludes that this is a speech delivered in Carthage (16).
95 De pall. 1.1: Principes semper Africae, uiri Carthaginenses, uetustate nobiles, nouitate felices, gaudeo vos tam prosperos temporum, cum ita uacat ac iiuat habitus denotare: pacis haec et annonae et otia: ab imperio et a caelo bene est. Note that after uiri Bulhart inserts Africeae on the bases of one of the older manuscripts.
96 Hunink, Tertullian, 68, “The text shows a remarkable contrast between the local African culture (of Carthage and other towns), and the Roman culture that has become dominant in the whole world. ...the contrast with Rome is further sharpened by rather sinister references to its history....” Hunink adds that Tertullian is not speaking in terms of “political resistance or nationalistic revolt.” However, on the problematic “resistance”/“Romanization” dichotomy, see above, section 1.4.
98 Ibid; cf. his note 57 on sources for the pallium as a rejection of pagan Rome; another review is in Fredouille, Tertullien, 446-7; Fredouille, however, rejects these scholars’ findings (448): “...un tel changement vestimentaire était-il susceptible de provoquer un <<scandale>> quelconque à Carthage, au temps des Sévères? A priori, non.” For recent scholarship that suggests otherwise, see above, section 1.4.
If Tertullian suddenly dons the *pallium* refusing to wear the Roman toga, then Pohl’s claim that “innovation in dress often expresses more fundamental changes in society, and usually goes along with actual or intended social advancement of new groups,” becomes pertinent.\(^99\) Ancient historians disagree in their understanding of the *pallium*: historians of Rome can claim Tertullian refers to Greek attire while historians of Carthage can argue for a traditional African referent.\(^100\) The following analysis of *De pallio* agrees with the latter, understanding Tertullian’s use of dress as a boundary marker of ethnic identity.

There is an ambiguity in Tertullian’s *De pallio* as to whether or not Tertullian refers to a philosopher’s cloak or a traditional African outfit.\(^101\) Several passages suggest the former in Tertullian’s thought, such as when he admits, “this Mantle, albeit it is more Greek” (*hoc pallium, etsi Graecum magis*, 3.7).\(^102\) He later defends the cloak, countering that “you are nevertheless Greek to a degree” (*admodum Graeci*, 4.1), and proceeds to explain, “A philosopher, in fact, is heard so long as he is seen. My very sight puts vices to the blush” (*sic denique auditur philosophus, dum uidetur: de occursu meo uitia suffundo*, 6.1).\(^103\) Clearly, these passages indicate that the Greek form of a philosopher’s cloak is represented in Tertullian’s treatise.\(^104\) However, would Tertullian condone wearing a

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\(^99\) “Telling the Difference,” 49.

\(^100\) e.g. Houston, *Ancient Greek*, 96-99; and Gilbert and Colette Charles-Picard, *Daily Life in Carthage at the Time of Hannibal*, trans. A.E. Foster, (London: Ruskin House, 1961), 135, respectively. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 85, 210, can assume both without further elaboration. Likewise, Dunn, *Tertullian*, 6, 33, 41, says the *pallium* belonged to “the custom of the local population”; deemed it “the Greek/Punic pallium” (ultimately concluding its symbolism to be bound to philosophy), and described it as the “more native dress.” Also, Hunink, *Tertullian*, 9, 67, can claim the *pallium* is *a* philosoper’s cloak and later claim that it is “associated with local [African] history and religion... contrasted with Roman culture.” In the present discussion, suggesting the *pallium* an African garb is not meant to “essentialize” the physical referent. Rather, it is argued here, that Tertullian could have construed the *pallium* to suit his needs.

\(^101\) Price, “Latin Christian Apologetics,” 110-1, allows for both. Tertullian seems to take his cue from Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo* 1-2. One should also note, however, that Justin neither confirms nor denies Trypho’s assumption that his cloak is a philosopher’s. Rather, Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo* 8, uses the opportunity to delineate truth from philosophical conjecture, finding the prophets’ and apostles’ ‘philosophy alone to be safe and profitable. Thus, and for this reason, I am a philosopher’ [ταύτην μόην εύρισκον ϕιλοσοφίαν ἀσφαλὴ τι καὶ σύμφορον. Οὕτως δὲ καὶ διὰ ταύτα φιλόσφος ἐγώ]. Moreover, Justin applies this device in a dialogue with a Jew who is learning philosophy, not in his writings to Romans or Greeks (*1-2 Apologia*). The following section suggests that Tertullian accommodated Justin’s actions for his own purposes.

\(^102\) In favor of the philosopher’s cloak as a referent, Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 120; Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 107, relying on Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 448; and Wright, “Tertullian,” 1039.

\(^103\) The text of 4.1 is Oehler’s in agreement with most early editions; Bulhart rendered, *modis ad Graios estis* over still other variants, including, *modis ad gratos* and *admodum gratios*. See textual notes in A. Gerlo, *CCSL* 2.

\(^104\) Houston, *Ancient Greek*, 99, describes the *pallium* as “identical to the Greek *himation*,” which is in fact simply a cloth “of great size so that it covered the figure to the feet. ...This cloak is simply thrown over the shoulders and either hangs loose or is held by the hands in front” (68).
Philosopher’s cloak, when philosophers are excluded from persecution (Apol. 46; Ad. nat. 1.4) and evading persecution is a sin (De iei. 12; De fug.)? While many other such objections could be made against exclusively associating Tertullian’s pallium with the Greek philosopher’s cloak, the most illuminating data comes from other arguments in De pallio.

Tertullian’s use of dress involves a complex rhetorical aim, allowing ambiguity in certain passages for the sake of persuasion. Preceding any philosophical descriptions of the pallium in Tertullian’s treatise are several lines that indicate an African origin and form of the garb as prominent in the author’s argument. Tertullian reminds the audience, “Still, you too of old time wore your garments--your tunics--of another shape” (Tamen et ubis habitus alter olim, tunicae fuere, 1.1), and he then contrasts the toga with the “mantle... which used to be worn by all ranks and conditions among you, you not only are unmindful of, but even deride” (et si quid praeterea condicio uel dignitas uel temporalitas uestit; pallium tamen generaliter, uestrum immemores, etiam denotatis, 1.3). The apologist continues his defense by reminding the Carthaginian audience of how the battering ram was invented by Carthage – and he adds that it was used by Rome to destroy Carthage – but has been forgotten by the Carthaginians; likewise, the pallium, which was the traditional and ancient dress, is now unrecognized (1.3). Given the duplicitous usage in Tertullian, how should one interpret his construction of the pallium?

Other examples exist in the treatise where Tertullian speaks of the pallium with still differing referents, as neither African nor Greek. Referring to the public priests and religious officials, he observes that they wear “the Mantle, above all the garments in which you array your gods and goddesses, an august robe; and, above all the caps and tufts of your Salii and Flamines, [it is] a sacerdotal attire” (pallium super omnes exuuias et peplos Augusta uestis superque omnes apices et titulos sacerdos suggestus, 4.10). In other words, the robe Tertullian dons is similar enough in appearance with both the sacerdotal garments of many cults and the philosopher’s cloak worn by many throughout the Roman empire for the apologist to claim them as one and the same pallium for the sake of argument. Such an understanding explains Tertullian’s statement about the pragmatic benefits of his outfit: “But, than the Mantle nothing is more expedite, even if it be double, like that of Crates” (At enim pallio nihil expeditius, etiam si duplex, quod

105 On 1.1 Hunink, Tertullian, 71, comments, “The contrast between ‘Carthage’ and ‘Rome’ still remains implicit here....” And on 1.3, Hunink (84) states, “The speaker drives home his point by expressly repeating the Carthaginian origin of the old pallium....”
106 ref. Virgil, Aeneid 1.14, 3.415. Hunink, Tertullian, 87, stipulates, “One may argue, however, that the quotation of Vergil is more than just decorative, as it adds to the speaker’s obvious intention of appealing to nationalistic feelings of his audience.”
107 Bulhart replaces titulos with tutulos on the witness of the 1622 edition of Claudius Salmasius who reviewed manuscripts no longer extant.
Cratetis, 5.3. Tertullian compares the pallium to the Cynic’s attire, insinuating that the former is like the latter but not actually equal to it.

The pallium worn by Tertullian coincides with the traditional manner of dress referred to in the opening paragraph of the treatise. The differing explanations and comparisons, such as philosophers’ and priests’ wardrobes, derive from Tertullian’s deliberate shift in argument found in the second paragraph. After alluding to Rome’s destruction of Carthage, and quoting its celebration by Virgil (ref. Aen. 1.3), Tertullian agrees to abate the intensity of his rhetoric: “Draw we now our material from some other source, lest Punichood either blush or else grieve in the midst of Romans” (Sit nunc aliunde res, ne Poenicum inter Romanos aut erubescat aut doleat, 2.1). In so doing, Tertullian proceeds to illustrate his defense with non-African examples of attire, so as to make his argument more palatable to his audience.

The audience, as addressed in the opening to the principes semper Africae, uiri Carthaginienses, consists of the new elite of Africa. They themselves represent and mimic the many who have followed Rome, especially “in the way of dress ...precocious in Romanizing” (de habitu... Romanum praecoca, 1.2). Moreover, Tertullian’s new elite audience become embarrassed by the type of individuals who also wear the toga, such as “branded slaves” (dedictios), the “notoriously infamous” (subuerbustos), “clowns” (rupices), “buffoons” (scurras), “rustics” (paganos), the “corpse-bearer” (uespillo), the “pimp” (leno) and the “gladiator-trainer” (lanista, 4.8).

Before discussing the practicality of the pallium, Tertullian subtly retorts, “Did Anacharsis change otherwise, when to the royalty of Scythia he preferred philosophy? Grant that there be no (miraculous) signs in proof of your transformation for the better: there is somewhat which this your garb can do” (An aliter mutauit Anacharsis, cum regno Scythiae philosophiam praeuertit? Nulla in

108 For ancient sources on Crates’ pallium, see Hunink, Tertullian, 254-5.
109 See Hunink, Tertullian, 91, on this structural shift in Tertullian’s argument.
110 This and other passages, lead L.E. Elliot-Binns, The Beginnings of Western Christendom, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), 151, to conclude, “In [Tertullian] the characteristics of the African Church and of the Phoenician people, of whom he was so proud, are combined.”
111 Hunink, Tertullian, 90, comments, “By broadening his minor theme to a major world wide phenomenon, the speaker gains safe territory, where he can dwell for some time....” And later Hunink notes (91), “Significantly, the name of Carthage, which was mentioned no fewer than four times in the introductory chapter, does not reappear.”
112 cf. Apuleius, Flor. 16.1, “chief citizens of Africa” [principes Africae uiri]; and where Apuleius represents himself as the spokesperson for the entire province of Africa: Flor. 9.36-40. Hunink, Tertullian, 19, claims a public and therefore diverse audience, but adds “the elite might be sensitive to the more hidden notes of philosophy, religion, and politics.”
113 For the toga as a common symbol of Roman power, see Virgil, Aeneid 1.282, “...The Romans, lords of the world, and the nation of the toga” [Romanos, rerum dominus, gentemque togatam]. This passage is quoted by Martial in his allusion to Domitian: Epigrammaton 14.124, “He that gave the stars to his great father makes the Romans lords of the world and people of the gown” [Romanos rerum dominos gentemque togatam ille facit, magno qui dedit astra patri].
As shown in chapters three and four, Anacharsis served as proof for many African new elites that their “barbaric” identity was surmountable. Tertullian’s remark suggests an audience of new elites who would have recoiled at his distinction. Groh understands Tertullian to be subversive, stating, “To wear the *pallium* cut at the roots of social co-optation by proclaiming a renunciation of the pursuit of public office and social rank.” By suggesting through attire a renunciation of such pursuits, Tertullian aims at the vulnerability of the African new elite.

The ancestral attire serves as an ethnic boundary marker in *De pallio* which separates Africans from Romans, a distinction many new elites sought to overcome. Conversely, Tertullian sees the toga as the boundary marker established by Romans in Romanization; he sardonically comments, “from the shoulders of the sublimer people [the toga] should descend to embrace Carthaginians” (*ut ab humeris sublimioris populi Carthaginienses complecteretur!* 1.2). Exposing the posture of new elites towards Rome, Tertullian reframes the assumptions regarding Rome’s beneficence towards the provinces, and his “tone is unmistakably sarcastic”:

> How large a portion of our orb has the present age reformed! how many cities has the triple power of our existing empire either produced, or else augmented, or else restored! While God favours so many Augusti unitedly, how many populations have been transferred to other localities! how many peoples reduced! how many orders restored to their ancient splendour! how many barbarians baffled! In truth, our orb is the admirably cultivated estate of this empire.

The new elites, however, consider Tertullian’s proposal that they should reclaim their African ethnic identity by reappropriating the *pallium* unacceptable. He, therefore, turns the argument to show that many of their acculturated customs, such as athletic games, derive originally from Greece, not from Rome.

The question, then, arises, “Why, now, if the Roman fashion is (social) salvation to every one, are you nevertheless Greek to a degree, even in points not honourable? (*Quid nunc, si est Romanitas omni salus, nec honestis tamen modis ad Graios estis?*, 4.1). Pressing the issue of the African and Roman ethnicity boundary by juxtaposing a third Hellenistic grouping, Tertullian demands, “What

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114 Oehler’s text reads *signa* for *digna*.
116 Hunink, *Tertullian*, 16-7, for audience, which he concludes was a public gathering of Carthaginians for Tertullian’s speech.
hast thou, Libya, and thou, Europe, to do with athletic refinements, which thou knowest not how to dress?” (Quid tibi Libya, et Europa, cum xysticis munditiis, quas vestire non nosti?, 4.1). The new elite should remember what happened to Alexander the Great, who, though having conquered Media, “was conquered by Median garb” (uictus est Medica ueste, 4.6). In rejecting the trappings of the toga, the new elite, according to Tertullian, have the ability to reclaim their heritage and their ethnic identity.

Tertullian alternates between presenting the negative aspects of the toga and the positive role of the pallium. His explication of the inconvenience of the toga seems to be coded language meaning both the Roman costume and Roman custom – if not Roman conquest:

In short, I will persistently ask your own conscience, What is your first sensation in wearing your gown? Do you feel yourself clad, or laded? wearing a garment, or carrying it? If you shall answer negatively, I will follow you home; I will see what you hasten to do immediately after crossing your threshold. Tertullian offers the Africans, whom he believes to be “laded” with Rome’s presence, the benefits of the pallium:

These (pleas I advance) for the Mantle in the meantime, insofar as you have defamed it by name. Now, however, it challenges you on the score of its function withal. “I,” it says, “owe no duty to the forum, the election-ground, or the senate-house.” ...But you will decry me as indolent. Forsooth, “we are to live for our country, and empire and estate.” Such used, of old, to be the sentiment. None is born for another, being destined to die for himself.

For Tertullian, the clothes one wears signify not only class and status, but one’s loyalties to certain ethnic groups. In resistance to the toga he offers the pallium, and yet, Tertullian’s argument defies oversimplification of categories as evidenced by his conclusion.

118 Hunink, Tertullian, 183, notes that “Libya” represents Africa, while “Europe” symbolizes Rome. Correspondingly, “Asia,” mentions in the previous sentence refers to Greece, the third destabilizing identity. 119 De pall. 5.2: Conscientiam denique tuam perrogabo, quid te prius in toga sentius, indutumne an onustum, habere uestem an baiulare. Si negabis, domum consequar, videbo, quid statim a limine properes: nullius profecto alterius indumenti expositio quam togae gratulatur. cf. Hunink, Tertullian, 250, who explains how his translation, “dressed or oppressed” retains the pun. 120 De pall. 5.4: Haec pro pallio interim, quantum nomine comitiasti: iam uero et de negotio prosocat. ‘Ego’ iniquit ‘nihil foro, nihil campo, nihil curiae debeo... Sed ignauam infamabis, scilicet: Patriae et imperio reiue viuendum est; erat olim ista sententia: “Nemo ali nascitur mortarius sibi.” 121 On De pall. 5.4, Hunink, Tertullian, 260, acknowledges “an almost anti-Roman attitude.” Hunink than adds, “It is perhaps no coincidence that these words are attributed to the pallium rather than expressed by the speaker on his own account.”
When the apologist completes his case for choosing between the dichotomy of toga and *pallium*, that is between Roman and African, he then transcends the distinction with a new category, that of Christian. His conclusion states, “Joy, Mantle, and exult! A better philosophy has now deigned to honour thee, ever since thou hast begun to be a Christian’s vesture!” (*Gaude, pallium, et exsulta! Melior iam te philosophia dignata est, ex quo Christianum uestire coepisti*, 6.2). Because Tertullian has not mentioned Christianity nor made a Christian/non-Christian distinction in the work previously, “*De pallio* stands out as an oddity, so much so that some have even claimed that it antedates Tertullian’s conversion. This, however, is unlikely.”

What is evident in this work is the complexity involved in speaking of ethnicity in the ancient world which did not always separate issues such as class and religion. If Tertullian originally wrote *De pallio* from a Christian perspective, he suppresses this identity until his conclusion in order to speak as an African to Africans about their need to distinguish themselves from another ethnic group, the Romans.

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6 Anthropology of Religion

6.1 Social Anthropology and Religious Identity

In anthropology religion has always been a central concern to scholars for both fieldwork and theoretical discourse, having been understood to be a “cultural universal.” One problematic element scholars found in discussing religion was defining precisely what was meant by the term, often with Eurocentric distinctions of “religion”/“paganism,” “religion”/“superstition” and “religion”/“magic.”2 The supernaturalist school defines religion in terms of “belief in Spiritual Beings,” while a sociological approach defined religion as that having to do with the “sacred.”3 Both of these approaches have come under attack because they simply beg the question, “What is ‘supernatural’ (e.g. ancestors)?” and “What is ‘sacred’ (e.g. a national anthem)?”4

3 The supernaturalist view begins with Edward Tylor, Primitive Culture, (New York: 1871); see discussions in Bowie, The Anthropology, 22-24, who claims Tylor’s definition to be “remarkably durable”; and Lambek, “General Introduction,” 19. For a modified supernaturalist definition in terms of “anthropomorphic,” see R.H. Crapo, “More on a Cognitive Theory of Religion,” CA 23 (3 1982): 341-4. The sociological approach traces back to Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life [Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totemique en Australie], trans. Karen E. Fields, (New York: The Free Press, [1912]1995), 21-33, who defined religion as “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set aside and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them”; cited in Klass, Ordered Universes, 20; for a good summary and discussion of Durkheim, see David A. Gellner, “Anthropological Approaches,” in Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed. Peter Connolly, (London: Cassell, 1999), 12-5. Edith Turner, “Anthropology, Fieldwork and Belief,” AT 19 (2 2003), 22, examines Durkheim’s implicit value judgment of religion: “After every long and beautiful description – wooing the reader as well as himself – he carefully lifts his readers away from it all, distancing them, as it were, and bids them take another look, wearing those Durkheimian spectacles. The ‘spectacles’ are to cut out the glare, so to speak. Passage by passage Durkheim unbuilds each edifice and shows it to be – nothing, beautifully constructed by society. The power that people felt in religion most certainly did exist, he assured them. That power was society.”
4 Criticizing supernaturalism: Lambek, “Skeptical Rejoinders,” 83, outlines “skeptical ‘deconstruction’” of this view; and see discussions in Bowie, The Anthropology, 22; Eriksen,
Moreover, both Durkheim and Tylor fall victim to the charge that they were seeking the "origins" of religion in humankind, an endeavor which assumed social evolution as a constant and therefore differentiated between "primitive" forms of religion — understood, at best, in the Freudian sense of naive, coping mechanisms or, at worst, in the Marxist formulation of oppressive, deceptions perpetuated by the powerful — and "complex" religions. An alternate approach came in Geertz, who attempted to "interpret" the emic importance of religion. Geertz defines religion as "(1) a system which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." The goal of writing a "thick description," as Geertz phrased it, is classically illustrated by a winking boy. A so-called "thin description" would scientifically note that the boy closed one eyelid. The anthropologists' aim, however, would be to interpret the meaning of this gesture, an aim even more
significant for the anthropology of religion. Although Geertz too received criticisms, yet such criticisms are notably fewer and less damning; moreover, a large consensus of anthropologists employ his approach.\(^9\)

Even since Geertz, however, religion, like kinship, gender, ethnicity and other anthropological categories, has been problematized. Eriksen indicates how some ethnographers attempting to describe an emic understanding of “religion” find that “religion” itself is an etic concept for the society or social group being observed.\(^10\) While some scholars attempt to incorporate Geertz and yet retain the phenomenological approach, many readily accept religion as a destabilized category.\(^11\) Assuming religion to be a fluid category, scholars can understand religious identity to be contructed in varying ways by groups and individuals, such as when religious rituals or the specialists who enact them are used in differentiating insiders from outsiders.\(^12\) The reason ritual is important for religious identity is that anthropologists often speak of ritual as the “social aspect

\(^9\) e.g. of critics: Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 23, claims that Geertz gives a definition of what a religion is, not a universal “rubric” of religion.


\(^11\) Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 38 is an example of a scholar who explicitly offers a phenomenological accomodation of Geertz. His own definition, described as an incorporation of Geertz to Durkheim, he suggests should be a hypothesis tested by the ethnographer: “Religion in a given society will be that instituted process of interaction among the members of that society – and between them and the universe at large as they conceive it to be constituted – which provides them with meaning, coherence, direction, unity, easement, and whatever degree of control over events they perceive possible.” Although such a definition could apply to the western understanding of science or philosophy, Klass answers (39), “How shall we, for example, set boundaries between religion on one side and, on the other sides, science, philosophy, medicine, psychology, and so on? Do we indeed need boundaries?” cf. D. Gellner, “Anthropological Approaches,” 20, who cites Robin Horton, “African Traditional Thought and Western Science,” *Africa* 37 (1967), 50-71, 155-87, republished in Horton’s essays, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West*, (CUP, 1993), to argue that despite differences, African religions and Western science both were “systems” that explain, control and predict the world. On religion as a destabilized category, see D. Gellner, “Anthropological Approaches,” 36; Gellner cites the example of M. Southwold, “Buddhism and the Definition of Religion,” *Man* n.s. 13 (1978), 370-1, who lists twelve possible characteristics. Similarly, Bowie, *The Anthropology*, 24, cites Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World’s Beliefs*, (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 10-11, who lists seven “dimensions.” Gellner, *Religion*, 142, prefers a “hierarch of (at least) three types of religion.”

\(^12\) “Ritual” is yet another problematic category; see Eriksen, *Small Places*, 216, for examples of anthropologists who have discussed cockfights, modern Olympic games, etc. in terms of ritual. Likewise, “specialist” has been studied in the past with western-biased hierarchies of religious specialists (e.g. priest, shaman, witchdoctor, sorcerer, etc.). Recent scholars focus primarily on any distinction between “lay-persons” and “clerics”; see Klass, *Ordered Universes*, 63-71. Moreover, this is not to say that the specialist/non-specialist is a universal distinction, but when societies attribute higher powers, special access, formal or informal training or some other distinctive feature to one or more of its members the designation is appropriate; see Eriksen, *Small Places*, 215.
of religion” and understand them as “rule-bound public events.” Similarly, when observing religious specialists, ethnographers sometimes note a correlating group, congregation or “church” (in the Durkheimian usage of the term), what some have deemed a “collective consciousness.” While a Durkheimian theory of “church” or religious group may not always be present in religious systems, when it does appear anthropologists find it often occurs in relation to a religious “Other,” which shapes the group’s construction of their own religious identity. This understanding assists a reading of Tertullian, especially when the African theologian invokes ritualistic symbols (such as the sacramental chalice) and congregational distinctions (such as ecclesiastical councils). These elements help to focus a discussion of identity in general into a narrowed scope of religious identity in Tertullian’s writings, which is difficult both because religion permeates all of Tertullian’s writings and because religion seems to pervade all aspects of society.

Since religion is often described as an all encompassing system, anthropological theorists often assume its import in discussing other forms of identities. People’s religion often affects (or is affected), determines (or is determined) and/or correlates (positively or negatively) with aspects of kinship, gender, class, ethnic and innumerable other forms of social identities. On many occasions “politics” serves as a synonym for a totalizing category or system of any given element in any given society, especially when used to indicate the interconnectedness of religion and power. In other words, religion provides anthropologists with a comparative category that often entails the complex web of social and individual identities that accompany religious practice and belief. Religious identity, like other forms of identity discussed above, is often contextually constructed in terms of insiders and outsiders. Before exploring how

15 Lewis, Arguments, xii credits Evans-Pritchard, and those who have followed his approach, with recognizing how religion — and politics — have an “institutional basis of conflict and cohesion” which often constructs meanings and identities in terms of the “Other”; cf. R.L. Stirrat, Power and Religiosity in a Post-Colonial Setting: Sinhala Catholics in Contemporary Sri Lanka, (CUP, 1992). Also helpful is Klass, Ordered Universes, 84, who discusses religious identity in terms of “congregation” member versus “sinner.” See also Albert Doja, “The Politics of Religion in the Reconstruction of Identities,” trans. Angela McLachlan, Cra 20 (4 2000), 423.
Tertullian delineates between religious insiders and outsiders, one should return to the categories of Roman colonizer, indigenous African and new elite to inquire how religion operated and was portrayed in Roman Africa.

### 6.2 Roman Africa and Religious Identity

While recent studies of Roman Africa do not often directly engage with social anthropological discussions on religion, many of the anti-ethnocentric and anti-essentialist insights have contributed to the scholarly understanding of religion in antiquity. Recently, moreover, Roman scholars have recognized the way in which various groups and individuals with varying interests and competing ideologies constructed identities through religion. The following discussion will focus on the way Roman religion shaped the identities of North Africans.

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

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the polytheistic nature of religion during the Empire, scholars admit that there “was no single ‘religion of the Roman empire.’ Every people and tribe, in certain ways every town, had its own traditions.” Coinciding with Rome’s colonialism, Romans’ religious worldview allowed for worship of additional deities, which leads Turcan to claim, “Roman polytheism was opportunistic and thus open in advance to possible expansion.” Regarding the imperial nature of Rome’s religion, Ando elaborates,

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

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

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

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

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22 The Gods, 13. Similar to the claim of “opportunism,” see the emphasis on the results of Roman religion, i.e. that the gods respond appropriately to religious practice: Ando, “Introduction,” 11; and King, “Organization,” 299.
23 “Introduction to Part IV: Theology,” in Roman Religion, ed. Ando, 141.
24 “Organization,” 296. Similarly, Rives, “Religion,” 257, discusses the ambiguity between the many Jupiters of cult and the one sovereign Jupiter of myth. In reaction to studies which overemphasize such phenomenon, however, Ando, “Introduction to Part III: Ritual and Myth,” in Roman Religion, ed. Ando, 102, claims, “The myth of a mythless Rome has had an especially pernicious influence on the study of Roman religion...”
25 “From Republic,” 62; ref. 3.2.5.
As anthropologists have repeatedly found regarding the importance of specialists in constructing religious identity, so too historians of religions in the Roman empire acknowledge the centrality of rituals and specialists in forming religious identities for a community. Ritual played a central part in Roman society and filled virtually every aspect of individuals’ lives. Rives characterizes this complex understanding of Roman religion as one in which there is no secular/sacred distinction and in which ritual, myth, iconography, philosophy all “influenced each other and interacted in important ways, but they did not form a coherent system.” On the importance of ritual, Scheid claims, “...the Roman religion was ritualistic. No modern historian has questioned this formalism.” Particularly in the case of civic rituals, local governing bodies appointed specialists whose qualifications often were based more on social status than religious training, spirituality or other forms of “specialization.” Nevertheless, Romans placed special emphasis on “Orthopraxy,” or correct performance of rituals by specialists, and this emphasis allowed communities to construct their religious identities. Although Roman religion had no concept of orthodoxy by which to determine saint from sinner, doctrinally sound from heretic, Romans did stress orthopraxy which they used to construct for themselves a religious identity, a religious “Us” who faithfully sacrifice to “Our” god(s) in opposition to “Them” who do not. Roman religions performed the same function because they involved “a communal relationship with the gods.” The “gods,” moreover, for Romans throughout the empire entailed not the entire pantheon, but those gods “of and for a political community or body of citizens.” Roman religion stressed the “communal nature” of humans with the gods; the gods one worshipped shaped one’s religious identity. For these reasons, Ando claims, “...the purposes here are better served to focus on ‘which’ god is worshiped in religio, Roman or provincial, and for what function.”

27 On the translation of ritus, Ando, “Introduction,” 2, notes “religio as cultu and therefore as ritus”; but Scheid, Roman Religion, 30, insists, “The term ritus (in Greek nomos) designated a mode of action, a mode of celebrating religious festivals or rituals, not the content of those festivals. To designate that content, that is to say what we now call ‘rites’ or ‘rituals,’ the Romans employed the terms sacra or caerimoniae. A ritus was, on the other hand, a way of celebrating a traditional ritual – for example, a sacrifice: there was both a ‘Greek rite’ and a ‘Roman rite.’”
28 “Religion,” 246.
29 Roman Religion, 30.
31 King, “The Organization,” 292.
32 David Potter, Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius, (HUP, 1994), 213.
33 Scheid, An Introduction, 22.
35 Davies, Rome’s Religious History, 9-10; and Scheid, An Introduction, 175.
constructing their religious identity through ritual, specialists and communal gods, Romans did not segment that identity from other aspects of their lives and societies.

Religion encompassed and epitomized various aspects of Roman society, such as the home, the local sphere and individuals’ relation to the empire at large. As discussed above under kinship, the Roman domus included religious ritual which was reflective of the idealized Roman society. As dependents related to the paterfamilias in terms of pietas, all inhabitants of the empire honoured the emperor as patronus through religious ritual. Scheid contends that all Roman religion consists of a hierarchy reflective of the patron-client structure of the Roman economy and calls this structure the “implicit theology of Roman ritualism.” Similarly, local civic religion politicized rituals and specialists by allowing the local “gods” to symbolize loyalty to political bodies. The civic model of Roman religion, according to Woolf, portrays “religion as essentially homologous with the social and political structures of ancient societies.” Local elites, therefore, often displayed their status and power by demonstrating their connection to the emperor via cults and dedications.

Whereas so much scholarly discussion of Roman ritual practice frames religion and religious identity in terms of power, authority and hierarchy, Roman religion is often portrayed in terms of identity politics. Rives states, “Roman

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


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

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

culture thus involved a crucial nexus between religion, Roman identity and public power.\textsuperscript{43} The "nexus" involved ethnic and "political" identities enacted through ritual, as in the case of the cult to Jupiter Optimus Maximus as a way Romans displayed "pride in their identity as Romans, the people whom Jupiter had blessed above all others."\textsuperscript{44} As discussed above under Romanization, Romans understood themselves as especially "blessed" by the gods, a conception that helped construct Roman religious identity and ideology.\textsuperscript{45}

Although the various ritualistic practices and religious affiliations cannot be oversimplified to characterize Romans as insincerely practicing their religion for the purposes of personal gain, many scholars understand the Roman political authorities to utilize religious rituals for purposes of control and authority.\textsuperscript{46} Scheid elaborates,

> In other words, the operation of [Roman] religion was necessarily marked by a certain coldness, by calculation of advantage and by attention to reality: Roman religion was in good health and held in high esteem to the extent that it was linked to politics and the political. ...Roman religion was in essence political and politicized.\textsuperscript{47}

While Scheid's comments reflect a view that emphasizes the functionalist nature of Roman religion, his insights help explain the various rituals of Rome and the significance for political power. Discussing the more nuanced understanding of the relationship between religion and political power, Rives adds, "This does not mean that political manipulation of cultic institutions never took place, but that contemporaries were probably much less sure about identifying it than most modern scholars have been."\textsuperscript{48}

Religion in the provinces varied regionally, and the reaction, reception and/or rejection of Roman religion differed accordingly.\textsuperscript{49} Despite the "shift" in scholarly discussions of Romanization, Woolf decries the fact that indigenous

\textsuperscript{43} Rives, "Religion," 258.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 274 and 258.
\textsuperscript{46} Davies, \textit{Rome's Religious History}, 3-12.
\textsuperscript{48} "Roman Religion," 350.
\textsuperscript{49} For "foreign cults" in Rome, see Turcan, \textit{The Gods}, 106-33.
religions in the provinces have largely remained unexplored. The two-fold reason for this is defined as the scarcity of sources and the ideological bias of the existing sources, which were produced by Romans.

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

King explicates the openness of Rome to provincial religions:

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

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

The indigenous African population did not cast away their gods when Rome destroyed Carthage. Instead, they kept the gods of their fathers in unique ways, as reported by Pomponius Mela during the reign of Claudius: “[Africans] differ in language and in the cult of the gods whom they worship as ancestral and venerate in the traditional way.” Whether or not they actually worshiped them

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52 “A Religion,” 222.
54 “Beyond (Dis)belief.”
56 Pomponius Mela 1.41-2: linguis different et cultu deum quos patrios servant ac patrio more venerantur.
in the ancestral manner, they did not always worship them under their ancestral names. Raven gives an example: “The very popularity of Saturn (whose name only thinly disguised his original identity as Baal), in preference to Jupiter or Minerva, for example, also reveals the strength of old loyalties.” One of the best recent discussions on religion and religious identity in northern Africa is that by Rives, *Religion and Authority in Roman Carthage*. According to Rives, religion helps both outsiders to define a person’s identity and helps an individual to establish his or her self-identity. Rives explains,

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

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

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

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

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57 *Religion*, 146.
58 *Religion*, 133; for *interpretatio Romana* in Gaul, see Woolf, “Polis-Religion,” 50; note also, Woolf’s warning (44) on a limited understanding of this phenomenon, “as if Romanisation and Resistance were the only issue at stake when provincials turned to the heavens”; and Turcan, *The Cults*, 12-5. Conversely, Shaw, *Rulers*, 19 discusses “*interpretatio Africana*.”
59 e.g. Tanit/Juno-Caelstis, Baal/Saturn, Shadrapa/Bacchus, Melkart/Hercules, *et al.*
61 Ibid, 131.
62 “Religion,” 44.
primary "group" that organized religion in Africa Proconsularis was the new elite. 63

Very often, new elite individuals in pursuit of prestige would dedicate a temple or a shrine on behalf of the city, the imperial officials and/or the emperor himself. 64 Thereby, the new elites established themselves in the eyes of the person (or persons) honored as loyal, devoted and capable, while simultaneously portraying themselves before all those who witnessed the dedication as a person of status, power and prestige. The emperor and imperial officials accepted such dedications, often resulting in the bestowal of citizenship or rank in return; the local people, likely, interpreted them as signs that the dedicator had ties with the emperor and the imperial powers. By carefully, and perhaps naturally, "translating" local gods into Roman deities in these dedications, the new elites mediated between the Roman colonizers and the indigenous Africans, redefining their identity in the eyes of both parties simultaneously.

6.3 Ancient African Christians and Religious Identity

With the introduction of the Christian faith, an untranslatable religion in Roman terms, the complexity increases regarding religious conflict and the formation of a new religious identity. Throughout the empire, Christians received the malignity of non-Christians; however, persecution and the role of martyrdom played a vital role in North African history in the formation of Christians' self-understanding. In order to address this phenomenon the causes of Christian persecutions throughout the empire need delineating.

Scholars have offered a variety of theories to explain the persecution of Christians by Roman authorities. Many suggest some legal basis for the persecution, and, although none still upholds the former view that Nero enacted specific legislation against the Christians, scholars do surmise that Christians could be convicted on the basis of laws pertaining to collegia or superstition. 65

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

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

65 On institutum Neronianum, see discussions in Musurillo, The Acts, lix; and Barnes, "Pagan Perceptions," 233. cf. Tert., Ad nat. 1.7.9; Tacitus, Annals 15.44; and Suetonius, Vita Neronis,
The majority of scholars, however, remain dissatisfied with legal explanations, because of the inconsistency of persecutions. Many, moreover, see in the Pliny/Trajan discourse a reflection on Nero’s actions, and as a result the procedure of Pliny forms precedence for other provincial officers. G.E.M. de Ste Croix argues that Pliny’s actions did not establish precedence “absolutely,” but instead provided the provincial governors with the model by which to work, a model applied with great variance.

While disputes continue over the legal basis of Romans’ actions toward Christians, most scholars recognize one factor that contributes to the inconsistent application of persecution: the demands of the local elites. Commenting on the Pliny/Trajan correspondence, Wilken observes,

Shortly after Pliny’s arrival in the city, a group of local citizens approached him to complain about Christians living in the vicinity. What precisely the complaint was we do not know, but from several hints in the letter it is possible to infer that the charge was brought by local merchants, perhaps butchers and others engaged in the slaughter and sale of sacrificial meat. Business was poor because people were not making sacrifices. Towards the end of the letter, written after Pliny had dealt with the problem, he observed that the “flesh of sacrificial victims is on sale everywhere, though up till recently scarcely anyone could be found to buy it.”
It appears that Trajan's directive, *conquirendi non sunt*, was generally observed by provincial leaders, yet when the status quo of a certain demographic in the local population was challenged, as in the case of idols and sacrificial meat not selling, the Roman officials took action against the group causing the disturbance.\(^{71}\)

In Africa where new elites mediated religion between the Roman colonizers and the indigenous Africans in order to establish themselves in a special status in the eyes of both groups, any disturbance of the practice of the Afro-Roman sacrifices and rituals would have greatly threatened their position. Can we assume that Christians were not "sought out" by the Roman colonizers themselves, but by the new elites defending their special status? Could this explain the more violent tone of the attacks of the new elite such as Fronto and Apuleius on Christianity?\(^{72}\)

In searching for indications of the cause of Christian persecution in North Africa, Musurillo warns scholars, "It is clear that such texts [the *acta*] can be used to support all theories or none at all."\(^{73}\) Wypustek finds evidence of *superstition* in the account of the Scillitan's trial: "If you return to your senses, you can obtain the pardon of our lord the emperor."\(^{74}\) No mention, however, is made in the account of the Scillitan's trial of who brought the charges against the Christians. One clue may lie in the enigmatic exchange between the official and the Christian spokesperson:

[Proconsul] Cease to be of this persuasion.

[Speratus] It is an evil persuasion to commit murder, to bear false witness.\(^{75}\)

How does Speratus' response answer the proconsul? Perhaps he declares that to deny being a Christian would "bear false witness." Yet, this does not explain what committing "murder" has to do with the line of questioning. The Scillitan Christian could have been indicating something about those who brought charges against him and the other Christians; that is, they are of the "evil persuasion to murder, to bear false witness" by alleging that the Christians were to blame for the decline in the worship of Roman-translated African gods.

\(^{71}\) Musurillo, *The Acts*, lxi-lxii; who adds, "...this would be particularly hard on the humiliores and the non-citizen classes (to which most Christians belonged before the *Constitutio Antoniana* of A.D. 212.)" cf. Acts 19:23-41.

\(^{72}\) See above, section 2.3.3.


\(^{74}\) Wypustek, "Magic," 277; ref. *PSS 2*: *Potestis indulgentiam domni nostri imperatoris promereri, si ad bonam meniem redeatis.*

\(^{75}\) *PSS 7*: *Saturninus proconsul dixit ceteris: Desinite huius esse persuasionis. Speratus dixit: Mala est persuasio homicidium facere, falsum testimonium dicere.*
Although the *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* tells that the new Christians *apprehensi sunt* (2.1), it does not report why or by whom. If one can assume that Trajan's instructions not to seek out the Christians were heeded by Roman provincial leaders, then one must conclude that someone brought the accusation before the Roman officials. The narrator reports that Perpetua and her companions were treated harshly "because from the intimations of certain deceitful men, [the tribune] feared lest they should be withdrawn from the prison by some sort of magic incantations." The label "deceitful men" echoes the denunciation of Speratus of those who "bear false witness," and strengthens the conclusion that the narrator is referring to those who "betrayed" (*tradiderat*, 4.5) the North African Christians to the Roman officials. Given that Perpetua's confrontation with the official in the next line calls into question the emperor himself, one wonders what part the most well-known and successful African new elite, Septimius Severus, played in the persecution of Christians.

Many scholars recognize the numerous indicators of Septimius' views towards Christianity. Some have highlighted the outbreak of persecutions that followed the emperor's visit to Egypt and declared that Septimius produced an edict launching an empire-wide persecution. The *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* refers to Severus' prohibition of Jewish and Christian proselytizing, and the issue has "become a matter of continuing dispute among scholars." Birley concludes that the passage is of a "fictional nature" and the correlation of the emperor's visit

76 *PSPF* 16.2-4: *quia ex admonitionibus hominum uanissimorum uerebatur ne subtraherentur de carcere incantationibus aliquibus magicis.* The English translation is that of R.E. Wallis, "The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas" in *ANF* 3, as opposed to Musurillo who translates *hominum uanissimorum* as "very foolish people" which neglects the self-serving and dishonest insinuations of the phrase in this context.

77 For the pattern of local elites sponsoring local festivals and games in order to establish their own political identity, see Onno Van Nijf, "Athletics, Festivals and Greek Identity in the Roman East," *PCPS* 45 (1999): 176-200.

78 *PSPF* 16.2-3: "Perpetua spoke to him directly. 'Why can you not even allow us to refresh ourselves properly? For we are the most distinguished of the condemned prisoners, seeing that we belong to the emperor; we are to fight on his very birthday. Would it not be to your credit if we were brought forth on the day in a healthier condition?'" [In faciem ei Perpetua respondit: 3 Quid utique non permittis nobis refrigerare noxiis nobilissimis, Caesaris scilicet, et natali eiusdem pugnaturis? aut non tua gloria est, si pinguiores illo producamur?] See discussion in W.H.C. Frend, "Open Questions Concerning the Christians and the Roman Empire in the Age of the Severi," *JTS* n.s. 25 (2 1974): 333-51.


and the outbreak of persecution is mere coincidence.\textsuperscript{81} The coincidence is repeated, however, when the imperial family celebrates the birthday of Geta Severus, Septimius’ son, in Carthage on the same day as the torture and execution of Perpetua and her fellow-martyrs.\textsuperscript{82}

Moreover, beyond the chronological coincidence, historians have seen other factors that point towards the emperor’s involvement in the persecution of Christians. Pointing to the Severan lawyer, Julius Paulus, who left an outline of legislation against the magicians, astrologers, and prophets, Wypustek argues that the law would have included Christians.\textsuperscript{83} Another factor in interpreting the persecutions in North Africa that took place under Septimius’ reign is the emperor’s relationship to the new elite of Africa. Although in 197 Septimius executed twenty-nine senators with connections to North Africa upon the defeat of Albinus — a rival who was also from Africa, the emperor “also entrusted a high proportion of key provinces, with large armies attached, to men of African origin or connection.”\textsuperscript{84} Moreover, Raven notes that the indigenous African gods were prevalent during this time, even among the administration of the Roman armies.\textsuperscript{85} The new elites, placed into such close proximity in status with the Roman/African Emperor, could not afford to allow the religion which played such a key role in establishing themselves as mediators between Romans and indigenous Africans to decline because of a new secretive and seemingly subversive religion.

Whether or not historians will ever be able to agree on the cause or legal basis of Christian persecution in North Africa, the sources do suggest that new elites of Africa were threatened by the new religion. In the second period of African history, African Christians will continue to suffer at the hands of Roman officials, but this time the persecution will extend to Christians throughout the Roman Empire under Decius, and within the Christian religion, conflict would persist between the diocese of Rome and of Carthage.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Septimius}, 210; cf. his deduction from the chronological coincidence in another instance (221): “...While the Emperor and his party were in Africa, the proconsul died. It may have been from natural causes. But the fact that Plautinus was there at the time makes one wonder.”

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{PSPF} 16.2-3; Birley, \textit{Septimius}, 221, believes, “The imperial party would have been otherwise occupied.”


\textsuperscript{84} Rankin, “Tertullian and the Imperial Cult,” \textit{SP} 34 (2001), 209; Rankin also discusses how “The author of the \textit{Historia Augusta} even ventures that this ‘murderer (interpector)’ of so many of high estate ‘was regarded by the Africans as a god’”; ref. \textit{Scriptores historiae augustae}, \textit{Seuerus}. 13.8-9: \textit{ab Afris ut deus habetur}.

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Rome}, 145.

6.4 Tertullian and Religious Identity

The landscape of ancient North African religion includes a wide array of interactions between various cults and religious practices. In one sense scholars could not elaborate on Tertullian's writings outside of the category of religion in that every treatise of his is written from a Christian perspective and within religious dialogue. Such an oversimplification of Tertullian's works, however, should not negate the interwoven aspects of social identities, kinship, class, ethnicity and other elements which also permeate his writings. The web of complexity in his construction of a social universe actually provides the scholar with the ability to view any one work or subject in Tertullian's writings from many different approaches asking a variety of questions. One such question is regarding Tertullian's religious opponents and dialogical counterparts. Because so much of his work is apologetic or polemic, a focus on those whom Tertullian challenged, both Christians and non-Christians, offers insights into his arguments and identity.

6.4.1 African Christian and Roman Non-Christian Religious Identities

Roman persecution of Christians significantly affected the self-understanding of many North African Christian communities. During one of the outbreaks of persecution against Tertullian's congregation, he produced *Ad martyras*, a tract written to encourage and edify those awaiting torture and death in prison. Although the letter published under its current form at a later date, it betrays no signs of having been written to a wider audience than the martyrs themselves and does not explicitly reference any concern for a wider audience. Whether Tertullian speaks in a pseudo-correspondence for rhetorical effect or whether the treatise represents an actual epistle to specific individuals can likely never be demonstrated conclusively. Tertullian's work does indicate, however, a clear conflict between his religious community and that of non-Christians, a fact unreservedly accepted among scholars. The following analysis of *Ad martyras* seeks to further this understanding by exploring the textual construction of that religious conflict as directed against not only non-Christians generally, but more specifically, as conflict with non-Christian Romans.

In establishing the Christians' opponent in *Ad martyras*, Tertullian specifies that the true persecutors of those awaiting torture are not merely the human agents, but the cosmic forces opposed to the Christian God at work in those humans. Tertullian celebrates with the martyrs that their imprisonment has separated them "from the world" (*a mundo*, 2.1) so they no longer have to look on

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87 cf. *Ad ux.* Similarly, Tertullian can speak directly to heretics rhetorically, but still address a wider readership (e.g. *Adu. Marc.*, *Adu. Prax.*, *Adu. Val.*, etc.)

88 Schlegel, "The *Ad martyras,*" 125-128, argues for the latter.
“strange gods” (alienos deos, 2.7). Such an understanding of martyrdom should come as no surprise to Tertullian’s audience, as indicated in his reminder, “We were called to the warfare of the living God in our very response to the sacramental words” ( vocati ad militiam sumus Dei uiui iam tunc, cum in sacramenti uerba respondemus, 3.1). In other words the Christians’ baptismal confession included a rejection of idolatry and a pledge to do battle with the devil. More can be said, however, about Tertullian’s precision in describing religious oppressors in terms beyond an exclusively Christian/non-Christian dichotomy.

Nowhere in Ad martyras does Tertullian make reference to any provincial gods or cults, African or otherwise; instead, he repeatedly alludes to Rome as “the world” (saeculum) and the challenges it represents to the Christians. Moreover, Tertullian develops his discourse with a Rome/Carthage dichotomy in terms largely encoded for insiders. He describes the Roman prison in which the martyrs are held as “the devil’s house” (Domus... diaboli est, 1.4) and challenges the Christians to defeat the devil in “his own kingdom” (in suo regno, 1.5) by being “armed and fortified with concord” (munitos et concordia armatos, 1.5). The use of “Concord,” part of the complete title given to the reconstructed city of Carthage – COLONIA IULIA CONCORDIA KARTHAGO – would have been recognized by any inhabitant of the city. Tertullian then declares that this “world,” not the martyrs, is actually awaiting judgement, and that “not of the proconsul, but of God” (non proconsulis, sed Dei, 2.3).

At the end of his treatise, he supplies another subtle attack on Rome by comparing the worthy purpose of Christian martyrdom with the many who supported the emperor, alluding sardonically to the many who died for a “mere human being’s cause” (hominis causa, 6.2). While the identification of Rome as the enemy would be natural for Christians under persecution (e.g. the New Testament book of Revelation), Tertullian formulates his religious “Other” precisely in Roman/African terms. The language is not limited to merely Christian and non-Christian terminology, but instead includes political/regional

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89 Harrill, “The Influence,” 275-82, sees in Tertullian’s words (and Cyprian, Epistulae 69.7.1-2; 70.2.1; 73.4.2) influence of Roman contract law, that was a practice common to the everyday experience of those in the Roman empire at this time.
90 saeculum is used nine instances (counting saecula saeculorum, 3.3 as twice, in which case it is the Christian age to come), seven of which are in chapter two.
91 Rives, Religion, 44. Tertullian elsewhere references Concordia as symbolic of Carthage (De pall. 1.2; in fact, it is specifically in contrast to the toga as a symbol of Rome); see comments in Barnes, Tertullian, 85.
92 For a discussion of this reference to Septimius Severus’ rise to power and suppression of rivals, see Barnes, Tertullian, 32-3; this reference to Severus’ defeat of Albinus in 197 leads Barnes to date Ad martyras in the latter part of that year. For the ancient witnesses, see Dio Cassius 75.8, 76.4; and Herodian 3.8.12. On the ironic, hominis causa, cf. Scriptores historiae augustae. Severus, 11, where Septimius deified Commodus in response to the Senate’s alleged support of Albinus.
93 Tertullian explicitly does so, citing the biblical book of Revelation in De res. car. 24-5.
references that one would expect to find in a postcolonial treatise. One passage in the *Ad martyras* expressly evidences the subversive tone Tertullian applies to the social context of the martyrs.

As part of his exhortation to faithfulness, Tertullian provides those awaiting martyrdom with a long series of examples (4.4-7). Gerald Bray in his book, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian*, notes the peculiarity of this list, observing, “The ‘martyrs’ whom he celebrates are not even Christians – a highly revealing fact. All of them without exception are figures drawn from pagan history and mythology. Obviously, fidelity to Christ was not the most important element in Tertullian’s definition of a martyr!”

What, then, was the “most important element” in Tertullian’s definition of a martyr? One might suspect that Tertullian is limited by a lack of Christian examples of martyrdom available at the time, and he must, therefore, draw from non-Christian heroes to present acts of bravery in the face of torture and death. Does Tertullian not know of the Scillitan martyrs who died in North Africa around 180, or about Perpetua, Felicitas and their fellow-martyrs who died in 203? If he is writing before these events, surely he does know about the beheading of Paul, the martyrdom of Peter, the stoning of Stephen or the crucifixion of Jesus. None of these men, however, are offered as examples to the martyrs. Perhaps, given the socio-political landscape of his time, elaboration can be made on the “martyrs” Tertullian does cite.

The complete list of *exempla* include Lucretia’s suicide after being raped, Mucius’ burning of his hand before his captors, Heraclitus’ suffocating himself in overheated dung, Empedocles’ casting himself into the volcano, Peregrinus’ immolating himself at the Olympic games, Dido’s suicide in her pyre, Hasdrubal’s wife’s suicide in the burning of Carthage, Regulus’ refusal to negotiate resulting in his death by multiple stab wounds, Cleopatra’s suicide by viper and Leena’s biting off of her own tongue. Could these “martyrs” signify anything to Tertullian’s audience other than commendable suffering?

Although Dido is portrayed by Virgil as a “furious” or, one could arguably translate, “hysterical” (e.g. ‘furens,’ *Aen.* 4.69 and *furibunda*, 4.446) woman who immolated herself after being abandoned by Aeneas, the pious founder of Rome, she often appears in Tertullian’s works, along with Hasdrubaal’s nameless – in

94 Altaner, *Patrology*, 167, says Tertullian “attacked and ridiculed the pagan religion in general.”

95 Bray, *Holiness*, 45.


97 In *Ad Scap.* 3.4, Tertullian names the proconsul under whom the Scillitans were persecuted. In *De an.* 55, he names Perpetua. Both are typically dated later than *Ad mart*.

98 Note that Tertullian then turns from specific persons who have suffered to various forms of suffering; e.g. 4.9: “the sword, the fire, the cross, the wild beasts, the torture” [*ut gladium, ignem, crucem, bestias, tormenta*].
the historical witnesses – wife, as an archetype of chastity and moral fortitude because she refused to marry a Roman, which leads several commentators to deduce that Tertullian salvages an indigenous account of Dido’s death. In contrast to these two Carthaginian references, however, the Roman heroes Mucius and Regulus appear. Moreover, provincial examples like Heraclitus, a Sicilian, Empedocles of Greece, Cleopatra of Egypt and Leena from ancient Attica also occur. One natural read is to agree with the assumption that the list signifies historical acts of bravery which carry neither negative nor positive political symbolism. Against such a view, however, one finds certain pointers of Tertullian in the surrounding passages of Ad martyras.

Before he lists examples of those who have undergone torture and death, Tertullian clarifies that he is encouraging women specifically. He introduces

99 On this translation as “hysterical,” see below. For Dido, see Virgil, Aeneid 4 and Ovid, Heroides 7. cf. Tert. Ad nat. 1.18.3; 2.9.13; Apol. 50.5; De an. 33.9; De exch. chast. 13.3; De mon. 17.2. For “indigenous account,” see Church, “Sex and Salvation,” 97 n. 59; and Thelwall in his notes on De ex. cast. 13.3. As cited above, Spaeth, The Roman Goddess Ceres, 115, states Dido to be “the paradigm of the woman who abandons castitas.”

100 Livy 2.12, presents Gaius Mucius Scaevola as both courageous and ingenious in his loyalty to Rome; Horace, Carmina 3.5, eulogized Marcus Atlius Regulus who was killed by Carthaginians, saying, “To shame ye are but adding loss; the wool with purple dyed never regains the hue it once has lost nor does true manhood, when once it has vanished, care to be restored to degenerate breasts” [flagitio additis damnumi neque amissos colores lana refert medicata fuco, nec uirtus, cum semel excidit, curat reponi deterioribus].

101 For Heraclitus, see Diogenes 9.2-4; for Empedocles, see Diogenes 8.67-75; for Cleopatra, see Plutarch, Vitae parallelae, Ant. 54, 86; for Leena, see Pausanias 1.23; and Pliny, Naturalis historia 7.23.


103 Church, “Sex and Salvation,” 97, notes that half of the examples are women, only commenting that this challenges “the assumption that martyrdom may be too much to ask of women....” Schlegel, “The Ad martyras,” 127 n. 2, believes the tract addressed men and women because of the use of benedicti (1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 3.1, 3.3, 5.2) more often than benedictae (4.3). The use of benedicti is understood here as Tertullian’s gloss for the martyrs in male gender but neuter referent, a gloss he corrects in 4.3 where the martyrs’ gender is explicitly addressed. If benedictae is taken to indicate male martyrs are also addressed, then it is quite remarkable that Tertullian constructs all of the martyrs’ gender as female in this section of the treatise. For feminists critiques of Tertullian, see the examples of E. Schüssler Fiorenza, “You are not to be Called Father,” 311; Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 55; Miles, “Patriarchy as Political Theology: The Establishment of North African Christianity,” in Civil Religion and Political Theology, ed. Leroy S. Rouner, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 172-7; and Kraemer, Her Share, 162, for Tertullian as “almost viciously misogynist.” For a defense of Tertullian against these charges, see Church, “Sex and Salvation,” 83-101, who concludes that women were theologically equal to men in Tertullian’s wider writings; Elizabeth A. Clark, Ascetic Piety and Women’s Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity, (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 1986), 23-60, who discusses both negative and positive treatment of women by early Christian writers, yet only uses negative examples from Tertullian; Heine, Women, 28, states, “Different audiences lead to different kinds of arguments” when it comes to his treatment of women; Karen Jo Torjesen, “Tertullian’s ‘Political Ecclesiology’ and Women’s Leadership,” SP 21 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989): 277-282, attributes Tertullian’s stance against women in
the selection of names by stating that suffering can be found “not only in the case of men, but of women too, that you, O holy women, may be worthy of your sex. It would take me too long to enumerate one by one the men who at their own self-impulse have put an end to themselves. As to women, there is a famous case at hand…” (nec a uiris tantum, sed etiam a feminis, ut uos quoque, benedictae, sexuiuestro respondeatis. Longum est, si enumerem singulos, qui se gladio confece menti, animo suo ducti. De feminis ad manum..., 4.3-4). In light of his words, it is perplexing that Tertullian does give a list of men as well as women. More telling, the list includes five women and five men, whose deeds fall into ideologically distinct categories.

One category, that of the heroines, consists of women whose holiness (benedictae, 4.3) entails not submission but subversion. Lucretia was raped by the last prince of Rome, and her suicide brought about the end of the Roman monarchy. Dido and Hasdrubal’s wife were both famous Carthaginian heroines whose acts have been discussed above. Cleopatra, Tertullian says, died “that she might not fall into the hands of her enemy” (ne in manus inimici perueniret, 4.6) – the “enemy” of course, being Octavian, soon to be “Augustus,” the archetypal Roman. Leena is said to have chewed off her own tongue, denying the possibility of betraying her “confederates” (coniuratos, 4.7). All five of these heroines represent acts of solidarity against “tyranny,” and all but Leena’s act were in direct resistance to Rome.

The men, on the other hand, symbolically illustrate insanity or, in Tertullian’s words, “a mere vanity you find among men – in fact, a sort of mental disease” (apud homines affectatio quoque et morbus quidam animi, 5.1). In broader academic discussions, feminist scholars widely acknowledge the motif of the “hysterical” woman, wherein any woman, seen by men as acting “out of place” is
described as “frantic,” “frenzied” and psycho-somatically unstable.\(^{105}\) It is, therefore, surprising to find in the infamously misogynistic writings of Tertullian an inversion of this motif; it is the men who are unstable, insane and, one could translate, “hysterical.”\(^{106}\)

Tertullian invokes politically charged language and imagery to contrast instances of impetuous suffering by men with cases of laudable martyrdom by women; he asks, “If the bit of glass is so precious, what must the true pearl be worth?” (\textit{Si tanti uitreum, quanti uerum margaritum?} 4.9). By interpreting Tertullian’s \textit{Ad martyras} as politicized, his rhetoric also can be understood as gendered and feminized. Tertullian’s list of martyrs is antagonistic towards Rome in that it glorifies women who have subverted Rome’s oppression and who are, therefore, positive examples of martyrdom. Tertullian displays these women in contrast to the “hysterical men” who died for \textit{gloria} which gives this “religious” tract a political element which is contextually charged for Carthaginian women awaiting persecution.\(^{107}\)

Many scholars see in Tertullian’s writings a sharp antagonism towards “paganism” generally and therefore towards Roman religion only implicitly.\(^{108}\) In \textit{Ad martyras}, however, Tertullian is explicitly antagonistic towards Rome, writing from within the context of religion and religious conflict, wherein many not only resisted Romanization on a “purely” religious level – as if there were such a plane in the ancient world – but also on a socio-political level common to many Africans under Roman rule. While the Christian writer would likely denounce any religion other than Christianity as false, Tertullian specifically attacks Rome, suggesting another aspect of his own religious identity.

\textbf{6.4.2 African Christian and Roman Christian Religious Identities}

As shown in chapter one’s survey of recent scholarship, scholars in the past have viewed Tertullian as a member of a schismatic body, known as Montanism, but more recently the general consensus of scholars understands Tertullian as never formally separating from the church. How then should one understand Tertullian’s polemical use of “Montanistic” concepts, such as the Paraclete and

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\(^{106}\) Similarly, Bal, “Perpetual Contest,” 236, finds Perpetua’s father to become “hysterical” in the account of the \textit{PSPF}.

\(^{107}\) Tertullian is fully capable of manipulating these and other examples to suit his purpose; see \textit{De an.} 58, where Mucius is a positive example, and \textit{Apol. 50/Ad nat.} 1.18, where some of these same women examples are used negatively.

\(^{108}\) e.g. Altaner, \textit{Patrology}, 167, says Tertullian “attacked and ridiculed the pagan religion in general.”
new prophecies? One approach is found in D. Powell’s argument that Tertullian belonged to an ecclesiola in ecclesia, which never formally removed itself from the church at large, but acted much like a “holy club” of the revivalist movements.109 Rankin, who more recently championed this understanding, examines the textual data in Tertullian’s so-called “Montanist” writings and finds that Tertullian always includes the “Catholics” within his understanding of the church.110 Even more recently, William Tabbernee, a Montanism scholar, writes to confirm this understanding, stating,

This [penitential discipline] was an internal fight, within the Catholic church, not a battle between “Montanists” and “Catholics.” Consequently, the term psychici which Tertullian hurls at his opponents must not be equated with “Catholics” – the members of Tertullian’s house church were also “Catholics.” The psychici were simply those Catholics who were not prepared to practice the rigoristic discipline of Christian living which the “spiritual persons” of Tertullian’s house church (and probably also of some other house churches) practiced.111

The common factor in recent scholars’ understanding that Tertullian remained in the catholic church is the evidence in his writings that he placed both his opponents, the “Psychics,” and himself within any discussion of the universal body of Christians rather than labeling any one party, group or congregation as the true church. What role, then, did “Montanist” influence play in Tertullian’s writings?

Nicola Denzey speaks on behalf of many church historians when she argues for the “need to reinvestigate the modern, arbitrary lines we have previously drawn between one group and another, lines that prevent us from appreciating how one early Christian group may have accommodated texts from other, earlier traditions.”112 Moreover, she aligns herself with the recent consensus that seeks to “deconstruct or refute” the arbitrary categories and labels or “academic compartmentalization” of certain “heresies.”113 One example of deconstructing scholarly tradition about “Montanism” includes the now general recognition that

109 “Tertullianists,” 33-54. Robeck, Prophecy, 202; and Wright, “Tertullian,” 1029, agree. cf. Tabbernee, Montanist Inscriptions, 55, who identifies Tertullian as “pro-Montanist”; and Trevett, Montanism, 69, who calls Tertullian “the Montanist Catholic.” Van der Lof, “The Plebs,” argues that there was not even a distinct group within the wider Christian congregation, but that Tertullian uses the term to refer to “fellow-Catholics.”
110 Tertullian, 35-6.
111 “To Pardon,” 385. cf. The late Christian writer of the anonymous Praedestinatorum haeresis 1.86, “Whenever you read of Tertullian against the psychics, you should know that he is speaking against the Catholics.” [Vbicunque autem legeris Tertulliani adversum psychicos, scias eum contra catholicos agere]. On Pauline/Tertullianic use of psychici, see van der Lof, “The Plebs,” 353-5; and Rankin, Tertullian, xv.
112 “What did the Montanists Read?”, 447.
113 Ibid, 429.
the title itself is anachronistic when applied to Tertullian’s era.\textsuperscript{114} Long before this trend, H.J. Lawlor warned scholars that the typical approach of understanding Montanism through Tertullian is misguided, because, “Tertullian brought far more to Montanism than he found in it.”\textsuperscript{115} Tertullian did refer on several occasions to “the New Prophecy” as well as its founding prophets, Montanus, Maximilla and Prisc(ill)a, and he invoked what have been labeled “Montanist teachings,” such as the active working of the Paraclete and rigorist discipline.\textsuperscript{116} The following analysis of some of Tertullian’s works containing these elements addresses how he used the “New Prophecy” in constructing the identities of his opponents.

The number of Tertullian’s treatises considered “Montanist” by scholars varies according to the criteria used to attach such a label.\textsuperscript{117} Often, scholars use more than simply the use of “New Prophecy” or the names of Montanus, Maximilla and Prisc(ill)a, but allow any rebuttal against charges of \textit{pseudoprophetia} or \textit{noua disciplina}, references to the ecstatic state, use of \textit{Paracletus} for the Holy Spirit, mention of spiritual gifts to be held only by “Montanists,” “we” language for Montanists, “you” language for non-Montanists or any application of the title \textit{psychici} to “non-Montanists.”\textsuperscript{118} The last four criteria, however, presuppose the existence of a “Montanist” group, party or a schism in North Africa. Because of the complexity involved in the scholarly reconstructions of Tertullian’s “Montanism,” the following discussion will focus on three of his writings almost universally considered to be influenced by the New Prophecy. In this way, the evidence drawn from the material provides examples from Tertullian’s thought which unquestionably typifies his most


\textsuperscript{115} “The Heresy,” 338. Also, von Campenhausen, \textit{The Fathers}, 31, “As a Montanist, Tertullian did not become other than he had always been”; Bray, “Tertullian and Western Theology,” in \textit{Great Leaders of the Christian Church}, ed. John D. Woodbridge, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 50, “It seems probable, therefore, that Tertullian saw Montanism as a movement that advocated some of his own teachings. He was therefore inclined to rate it highly, though it is most improbable that he ever became a Montanist in the strict sense”; Tabbernee, \textit{Montanist Inscriptions}, 234, “Tertullian’s views are not necessarily applicable to other Montanists”; and Dunn, \textit{Tertullian}, 6, “...we do not know the extent to which he recast Montanism to suit his own inclinations....” Even Robeck, \textit{Prophecy}, 124, who believed Tertullian a Montanist, discusses his use of Prisc(illa)’s oracle, concluding, “It provided no new theological insight” but it “corroborated” Tertullian’s opinion.

\textsuperscript{116} Tabbernee, “To Pardon,” 378, surmises that Tertullian knew of the Phrygian prophetesses and prophet through literature.

\textsuperscript{117} For reviews, see Bray, \textit{Holiness}, 55ff.; and more recently, Rankin, \textit{Tertullian}, xiv-xvii, and 27-51.

\textsuperscript{118} This list, as a standard example is taken from Barnes, \textit{Tertullian}, 43-4.
aggressive works towards “Psychics.” Other so-called “Montanist” works will only be used to supplement the discussion, the aim of which is to explore how Tertullian used the “New Prophecy” to construct his own religious identity.\(^\text{119}\)

Most scholars conclude that Tertullian produced the three treatises, *De monogomia*, *De ieiunio* and *De pudicitia*, close together, probably within a year, and they largely represent a continuation of Tertullian’s arguments against his dialogue counterparts.\(^\text{120}\) In these works Tertullian writes against his religious opponents, designated as “Psychics” throughout, regarding the subjects of discipline.\(^\text{121}\) The New Prophecy, according to Tertullian, teaches strict Christian discipline, “not that Montanus and Priscilla and Maximilla preach another God, nor that they disjoin Jesus Christ (from God), nor that they overturn any particular rule of faith or hope, but that they plainly teach more frequent fasting than marrying.”\(^\text{122}\) The Paraclete for Tertullian continues to lead Christians into all truths and this appellation repeatedly appears in Tertullian’s works. Tertullian can concede, however, to omit for the sake of discussion, “mention of the Paraclete, as of some authority of our own” (*mentio Paracliti ut nostri alicuius auctoris*, *De mon.* 4.1) because he believes his argument can stand on other grounds such as proofs from scripture.

Within the context of Tertullian’s dispute over discipline he offers an analogy between Christ’s abrogation of the teaching on marriage by Moses and the Paraclete’s abrogation of the teaching on marriage by Paul: “the New Law abrogated divorce... the New Prophecy (abrogates) second marriage” (*noua lex abstulit repudium... et noua prophetia secundum matrimonium*, *De mon.* 14.5). The frequent references to the Paraclete, New Prophecy and names of particular prophets indicate that Tertullian understood what is now known as Montanism to be in opposition to some more lax forms of Christianity. Moreover, Tertullian references not only the movement in his work, but he explains something of the nature of the New Prophecy as he came to know it.

While Tertullian nowhere explains how he came to know of Montanus and other “new prophets,” he does indicate what role the New Prophecy plays in his arguments. Discussing the problem of customs derived from tradition but not found in scripture, he says “we are bound to adduce so much the more worthy

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\(^\text{119}\) For the accusation of heresy in opposition to new prophecy, see Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.16.4, where Montanism is referred to as a “novelty, not prophecy, as they call it.” [*νέας ταύτης, ούχ, ὡς αὐτοί φασίν, προφητείας*] and later “false prophecy” [*ψευδοπροφητείας*].

\(^\text{120}\) Most recent assumptions rely on Barnes, *Tertullian*, 55; Tertullian alludes to writing *De mon.* first: *De iei.* 1.4; and *De pud.* 1.13ff. Also, for a recent discussion of *De pud.* that emphasizes the context’s importance for Tertullian’s trinitarianism, see Andrew McGowan, “Tertullian and the Heretical Origins of the Orthodox Trinity,” *JECS* 14 (4 2006): 437-457.

\(^\text{121}\) On “Psychics” [*psychici*], note that Tertullian, aside from two examples (*Adu. Marc.* 4.22.5; and *Adu. Prax.* 1.6-7) employs the title exclusively in the three works under discussion.

\(^\text{122}\) *De iei.* 1.3: *non quod alium deum praedicent Montanus et Priscilla et Maximilla, nec quod lexum Christum soluant, nec quod aliquam fidei aut spei regulam evirtant, sed quod plane doceant saepius ieiunare quam nubere.* *cf. De mon.* 2.
reason... until by some signal celestial gift they be either confirmed or else corrected” (tanto magis dignam rationem adferre debemus ...donec aliquo caelesti charismate aut confirmetur aut corrigitur, De iei. 10.5). After then quoting the Apostle Paul, He declares that the Paraclete, as he concurrently speaks in the church, is “the Confirmer of all such things” (confirmatore omnium istorum, 10.6). Regarding certain matters of discipline, Tertullian admits that he once held a “fellowship of sentiment” (sententiae... societatem, De pud. 1.10) but later, seemingly of his own accord, came to reject his stance, which is why, “it is not lightly that the Holy Spirit has come to an agreement with us – coming to this agreement even without our asking” (non leuiter nobiscum pactus est Spiritus sanctus, etiam ultro pactus, 12.9).

Tertullian claims the New Prophecy confirmed what he had already come to believe, and in this way it served as further proof for Tertullian and as an ally against his religious opponents. Tabernee affirms this understanding: “Tertullian... while never a schismatic Montanist, did find in the New Prophecy movement certain emphases consistent with the direction his own, progressively more rigorist, views on Christian praxis were heading. Tertullian’s adoption of certain Montanist presuppositions enabled him both to reach those conclusions more quickly and to have at his disposal additional data to support those conclusions.”

The understanding of the New Prophecy in Tertullian as a confirmation and an ally against his religious opponents helps to explain his sometimes ambiguous statements about the church and its members. How does Tertullian describe those Christians with whom he disagrees?

Beyond the application of the term psychici, Tertullian provides a few specific details about his religious opponents. According to the issue at hand in his treatise, Tertullian specifies the error of his opponents, such as the permission

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123 ref. Philippians 3:15.
124 Dunn, Tertullian, 7, comments, “[Tertullian] did not see himself as having anything in common with Christians who did not hold to his Montanist convictions....” cf. Tertullian, Adu. Prax. 1.6, “We indeed, on our part, subsequently withdrew from the carnally-minded on our acknowledgment and maintenance of the Paraclete” [et nos guidem postea agnitio paracleti atque defensio disiunxit a psychicis]; Holmes comments that this withdrawal is from Rome, not his own Carthaginian bishop.
125 See Trevett, Montanism, 112, “If the original New Prophecy had outlawed remarriage then it came as music to Tertullian’s ears and probably bolstered a distaste for remarriage which he had harboured for some time.”
126 “To Pardon,” 377. Most scholars agree some explanation is needed; e.g. Barnes, Tertullian, 136, who conjectures that Tertullian’s wife died and his conversion to Montanism was a “psychological buttress of his belief that remarriage was wrong.” Another example is Altaner, Patrology, 166, “His austere and gloomy cast of mind which abhorred neutrality and compromise led him to the Montanist sect....” For more examples of psychological explanations, see bibliography in Trevett, Montanism, 68.
127 Trevett, “Gender,” 19, similarly yet conversely argues that the Catholics rejected the New Prophecy because women prophets did not fit into the “view of Christian community which would be recognizable to the Graeco-Roman world as ordered, respectable and deserving of toleration” which the Catholics were attempting to establish.
of multiple marriages (De mon. 1.1), the sin of gluttony (De iei. 1.1-2) and the
absolution of mortal sins (De pud. 1.6-8). Throughout these tracts a tenuous
description of his opponents’ relation to his church(es) exists.

Many passages verify the view of Rankin and others who understand
Tertullian to have remained in communion with the “catholic” church. From the
beginning of Tertullian’s argument, he displays a distinction with his opponents
and heretics: “Heretics do away with marriages; Psychics accumulate them”
(Haeretici nuptias auferunt, psychici ingerunt, De mon. 1.1).128 Throughout
the works, he retains the framework of one universal Church, “for our one Father,
God, lives, and our mother, the Church” (uuiit enim unicus pater noster Deus et
mater ecclesia, De mon. 7.9). Within his discussion, Tertullian includes his
opponents, even those who remarry, stating, “We shall be with God, we shall be
together, since we shall all be with the one God” (cum Deo erimus, simul erimus,
dum omnes apud deum unum, De mon. 10.9).129 Expressing his horror that some
absolve mortal sins,

Tertullian declares, “But it is in the church that this (edict) is read, and in the
church that it is pronounced; and (the church) is a virgin!” (Sed hoc in ecclesia
legitur, et in ecclesia pronuntiatur, et uirgo est, De pud. 1.8). Finally, as
evidence for one of his arguments with those who are not heretics, he reminds the
audience that one who has fallen into schism “attains pardon and is restored to
the bosom of the Church” (ueniam consequi et in ecclesiam redigi, 19.5). While
these passages indicate that Tertullian considered both psychici and those who
agreed with him within one broadly inclusive church, still other statements
display that Tertullian ecclesiologically distinguishes the two groups.130

In several instances often used to verify the older understanding of Tertullian
as a schismatic, Tertullian refers to separate and distinct ecclesial bodies. He
attacks “that bishop of Utina of yours” and the many digamists who “preside in
your churches” (ille uester Vthinensis ...ex digamia praesident apud uos, De
mon. 12.6-7), as well as “your presiding (elders)” (apud te praesidentibus, De iei.
17.4), in contrast to his own ecclesial community, wherein, “we excommunicate
digamists” (digamos foris sistimus, De pud. 1.20). In reference to the Shepherd
of Hermes, despite it having been dismissed “by every council of Churches, even
of your own” (ab omni concilio ecclesiarum, etiam uestrarum, De pud. 10.12),
Tertullian describes how “you depict upon your (sacramental) chalice” (in calice
depingis) this very shepherd. The former statement indicates what is to Tertullian

128 On the Psychics’ view of Tertullian’s group, see De mon. 2.1, 15.1, De iei. 1.5, 11.2, 13.1,
where some claim Tertullian’s views are heretical and novel. Throughout these references
the claims are treated as individual accusations, not official declarations.
129 ref. Jn. 11:21; 17; and Gal. 3:28. Also, De exh. cast. 12.6, a digamist is “among our brethren”
ex fratibus. When writing against “heretics” (e.g. Marcion, Hermogenes, etc.), however,
Tertullian makes no such stipulations.
130 Tertullian is capable, even in his so-called “Montanist” writings, of locating Christians from
various regions in “one church” [una ecclesia, De uirg. uel. 2.3.] Evans, One and Holy, 27,
believes Tertullian’s statement is inclusive of “psychics” and “Montanists.”
a distinct conciliar body from councils with which he identifies, and the latter a
different sacramental setting. These passages suggest more than an ecclesiola in ecclesia; Tertullian
distances his community from the sacramental and episcopal community of the psychici. How then can one understand the previous passages which indicated the two groups to exist within the same communion? Further passages found in Tertullian’s work allow for a distinction based on geography.

The data gleaned from the many passages which describe Tertullian’s religious opponents include references specifying those opponents as Roman.\(^\text{131}\) Seemingly out of place in an internal ecclesiological dispute, Tertullian remarks how divorce was not recognized “among the Romans,... not till after the six hundredth year from the building of the city” (apud Romanos post annum sexcentesimum Vrbis conditae, De mon. 9.11). He then returns to such language about the legality of marriage, and states, “The case is different if men believe that, at the bar of Christ as well (as of Rome), action is taken on the principle of the Julian laws” (Aliud est si et apud Christum legibus Iuliis agi credunt, De mon. 16.6). Moreover, in the final days, “there will arise a queen of Carthage” (exsurget regina Carthaginis, De mon. 17.2) – Dido – and “her assessor will be the Roman matron” (Assidebit et illi matrona Romana, De mon. 17.3) – Lucretia – to judge the psychics.\(^\text{132}\)

Concerning the relationship between the local and the universal church, Tertullian explains,

Besides, throughout the provinces of Greece there are held in definite localities those councils gathered out of the universal Churches, by whose means not only all the deeper questions are handled for the common benefit, but the actual representation of the whole Christian name is celebrated with great veneration. (And how worthy a thing is this, that, under the auspices of faith, men should congregate from all quarters to Christ! “See, how good and how enjoyable for brethren to dwell in unity!” This psalm you know not easily how to sing, except when you are supping with a goodly company!) But those conclaves first, by the operations of Stations and fastings, know what it is “to grieve with the grieving,” and thus at last “to rejoice in company with the rejoicing.” If we also, in our diverse provinces, (but) present mutually in spirit, observe those very solemnities, whose then celebration our present discourse has been defending, that is the sacramental law.\(^\text{133}\)

\(^{131}\) However, see Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 290; and Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions*, 59, who assumes psychici refer to Carthaginian Christians who were not “pro-Montanist”; also, Trevett, *Montanism*, 73-6.

\(^{132}\) Tertullian’s “queen of Carthage” blurs Dido and the ref. in Matt. 12:42. For Lucretia, see Mattei, *Le mariage unique*, 394.

\(^{133}\) Luc. 13.6-8: Aguntur praeterea per Graecias illa certis in locis concilia ex uniusseri ecclesiis, per quae et aliora quaeque in commune tractantur, et ipsa representatio totius nominis Christiani magna ueneratione celebratur. Et hoc quam dignum fide auspicante congregari undique ad Christum! Vide, quam bonum et quam incundum habitare fratres in unum! Hoc tu psallere non facile nosti, nisi quo tempore cum compluribus cenas. Conuentus autem illi stationibus prius et ieiunationibus operati dolere cum dolentibus et ita demum
Tertullian derides Romans who reject the New Prophecy and who can only rejoice in “goodly company,” (compluribus) in other words, not with those from “diverse provinces” such as Greece or Africa Proconsularis.134

Much scholarly debate centres around the pontifex maximus, also entitled, episcopus episcoporum (De pud. 1.6) attacked by Tertullian.135 Barnes has argued that Tertullian’s reference is to the bishop of Carthage, rather than Rome.136 Many, however, disagree on the grounds that Tertullian’s use of irony points to the region of the “Pontifex Maximus” of the non-Christian world.137 One of the most compelling reasons for understanding Tertullian to be arguing against Rome is found in another of his works, Aduersus Praxean, written...
possibly within “a few weeks” of the three treatises under discussion. While the document has been left aside up to the present because its primary subject is the patripassian controversy of a certain Praxeas, Tertullian does reference the opposition with the Psychics at play in *De monogomia, De ieiunio* and *De pudicitia*:

For after the Bishop of Rome had acknowledged the prophetic gifts of Montanus, Priscilla and Maximilla, and, in consequence of the acknowledgment, had bestowed his peace on the churches of Asia and Phrygia, [Praxeas], by importunately urging false accusations against the prophets themselves and their churches, and insisting on the authority of the bishop’s predecessors in the see, compelled him to recall the pacific letter which he had issued, as well as to desist from his purpose of acknowledging the said gifts.

Tertullian knows of the bishop of Rome’s actions in detail and writes in opposition to the stance of the Roman church. While Tertullian focuses on other matters in *Aduersus Praxean*, he addresses the issue mentioned in the three works on Christian discipline. Throughout those works, the many Romanisms, such as Julian law and the *pontif* and *flamen* (*De mon. 17.4*), illustrate the religious conflict between two groups in Tertullian’s thought: North African Christians and the Roman church. This understanding

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138 Barnes, *Tertullian*, 47; however, Fredouille, *Tertullien*, 488, spreads them over approximately four years.

139 *Adu. Prax. 1.5:* *Nam idem tunc episcopum Romanum, agnoscentem iam prophetias Montani, Prisciae, Maximillae, et ex ea agnitione pacem ecclesias Asiae et Phrygiae inerentem, falsa de ipsis prophetis et ecclesias eorum adseuerando et praecessorum eius auctoritates defendendo coegit et litteras pacis reuocare iam emissas et a proposito recipiendorum charismatum concessare.*

140 It is interesting to note that the bishop was likely Victor, the first African bishop of Rome: (Ps.)Tertullian, *Aduersus omnes haereses.* 7, names him to be “Victorinus,” identified as Victor by Thelwall; and P. Holmes, *ANF* (1885), note 8, comments that the bishop was “Probably Victor.” Likewise, Evans, *Tertullian Treatise Against Praxeas,* 76, believes this passage refers not to Eleutherus, but Victor who “was inclined to approve of the prophets” until Praxeas persuaded otherwise. Also, Hoffman, *The Status of Women,* 172-4, apparently on the basis of Tertullian’s statement (*Adu. Prax.* 1.5, see above), believes Tertullian refers to Victor as the “devil.” On the other hand, Trevett, *Montanism,* 58, believes the reference is to Eleutherus. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that the bishop referenced in *De pud.* need not be the same as *Adu. Prax.*; Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage,* 124, believes the grantor of peace was “most likely Eleuterus,” but it was Victor whom Praxeas persuaded. If the reference(s) were taken to indicate Victor, however, it would reinforce the view that Tertullian was antagonistic towards African new elites who were closely aligned with Rome; see Elliot-Binns, *The Beginnings,* 105, who conjectures that many African Christians resided in Rome at this time.

141 McGowan, “Tertullian,” 451, also links the audience of these treatises – albeit for different reasons.
provides an explanation for how Tertullian can speak of one universal church, in which belong both his group and the Psychics, and still delineate two ecclesial communities with distinguishable councils, bishops and even chalices, each representing different religious identities.
7 Disciplinary Frameworks for Re-Contextualizing Tertullian

In the conclusion to his monograph on Tertullian’s use of rhetoric, Sider explains how he understands his contribution to Tertullian scholarship. He begins with Tertullian’s application of classical rhetorical devices as his starting point. Sider then adds,

We have, in fact, proceeded on the assumption that the perceptions of the early Christians can be understood and appreciated only when we have unraveled the intricately woven fabric of their experience. That this “experience” was a highly composite one has long been known, but still too little has been done to distinguish its strands. Our work in this study has attempted to set in conspicuous clarity a major, and, I have argued, a crucial strand, of the early Christian mentality.¹

In a similar vein, this present work has not attempted to treat Tertullian in his entirety or even to exhaust the whole array of his identities constructed in his writings, but instead, this project has chosen to select Tertullian’s “Africanity” as a starting point and, borrowing Sider’s phrase, to “set in conspicuous clarity” an aspect of his writings. From this vantage point, scholars can revisit traditional discussions of Tertullian’s life, writings and theology, by applying, comparing and/or rejecting the interpretation of Tertullian as an African theologian.

7.1 Tertullian and Africa in Patristic Studies

To return to the outline of Tertullian’s life discussed in chapter one, the interpretation derived in the previous chapters of this North African Christian can contribute to the understanding attained by many scholars. While the longer version of Tertullian’s name, Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, is a late attestation, one can plausibly concur with Barnes that there is no real cause to doubt its authenticity. In supplement to this plausibility, one can also appreciate the significance of the name recorded in one of the earliest witnesses, Tertullianus Afer, in that it preserves an often overlooked aspect of Tertullian’s identity, namely, that he was an African.² As to his birth, no evidence remains that clarifies his heritage or class, requiring speculation from the thoughts and

¹ Ancient Rhetoric, 132. Fredouille, Tertullien, 24, makes a similar disclaimer.
² See above, section 1.3.1. Many later writers name Tertullian as an Afer, probably relying upon Eusebius/Jerome — the exception being the many participants in the Council of Carthage (411) who invoke him under this description.
Disciplinary Frameworks for Re-Contextualizing Tertullian

concepts recorded in Tertullian’s writings. Because, however, Tertullian’s writings indicate familiarity with a variety of non-Christian sources, and because so many of Tertullian’s arguments cite scripture for support, caution must be taken when attempting to determine what thoughts derive from his African background. What can be assumed is that his African context contributed something to his writings and therein can be explored in accordance with his vast array of non-African sources. Nothing is known of Tertullian’s father, but Tertullian does claim Africa as his father-land (patria), contributing only to the plausibility of assuming Tertullian to have descended from indigenous Africans and not from Roman colonizers. Data for Tertullian’s education exist in the form of his eloquence as a rhetorician and his knowledge of non-Christian sources. In light of his training and the longer version of his name, one can presume that Tertullian had access to reasonable funds, perhaps indicating wealthy kinship relations. Therefore, Tertullian likely enjoyed the life of a new elite in his training and early career. Tertullian’s relation to philosophy seems to correlate with other aspects of his repertoire, such as his use of Roman law, in that he utilizes concepts and terminology available to anyone of his caliber, but does not go so far as to indicate any real affiliation with a philosophical school. Even Osborn admits that his Stoic ideas “are not directly borrowed, but reflect the mental environment in which Tertullian lived.”

More generally, all of Tertullian’s knowledge with such sources support the assumption that Tertullian did convert to Christianity at some point in his life. After his conversion, he must have progressed rapidly in his Christian devotion and understanding, allowing him to be seen by many ancient accounts as a presbyter. Regarding Tertullian’s ordination, Barnes asks, “Has Jerome preserved a valuable fact, or has he projected back into the past his own quarrel with the priests of Rome?” Although Barnes concludes that the latter is more likely, the ambiguity in Tertullian’s writings where he claims to be one of the laity and also an official within his congregation is explained by the phenomenon of African lay-elders who can preach and govern, but perform no sacramental rites. When Tertullian’s use of the New Prophecy is understood not as schism and heresy but

3 cf. Elliot-Binns, The Beginnings, 151, “In him [are] the characteristics of the African Church and the Phoenician people, of whom he was so proud.”

4 “The Subtlety of Tertullian,” VC 52 no 4 N (1998), 369; for a complete index and discussion of Tertullian’s pro- and anti-philosophical statements, see Osborn, Tertullian, 29-37; cf. C. Tresmontanat, La métaphysique du christianisme et la naissance de la philosophie chrétienne, (Paris, 1961), 626, who argues that Tertullian did not have a philosophical system, but “habitually adopted his opponents standpoints and proceeded from there to demonstrate its inconsistencies,” cited and trans. by Bray, Holiness, 36. For an example of how Tertullian compares the treatment of Christians with the treatment of philosophers, i.e. they and he are different: Apol. 46; and Ad Nat. 1.4.

5 See De paen. 1.1.

6 Tertullian, 10.

in terms of religious conflict between the Roman and African sees, one can better appreciate Jerome’s claim that he came into conflict with the Roman clergy. Perhaps, Tertullian did reside for a period in Rome, even participating in the Roman church, much like another African at this time, Victor, the bishop of Rome.

Other aspects of Tertullian scholarship could be reevaluated in light of the interpretation presented in this thesis. One example is various arguments forwarded regarding Tertullian’s timeline. A method often used by historians and theologians to interpret Tertullian’s works is to track his theological “development.” This is usually accomplished by first outlining Tertullian’s life, indicating shifts in his practice and beliefs—most famously his embrace of “Montanism.” His writings are then examined for signs of the theological/pragmatic readjustments, and they are arranged in chronological accordance with such developments. Finally, scholars delineate Tertullian’s “early” and “later,” and sometimes “middle,” writings in order to deduce theological presuppositions found in Tertullian’s various periods of thought. Chapter one reviewed the broad details of Tertullian’s life as constructed by scholars and showed the trend of scholars in the last few decades to question the assumptions underpinning most scholarly biographies of Tertullian. Chapter six reinterpreted Tertullian’s invocation of Phrygian prophets in light of a broader conflict with Rome. Can one “trace” Tertullian’s anti-Romanism in a linear progression through his writings? Or, perhaps his treatises vary so widely in aim and audience that a strict “chronological” arrangement is questionable.

Because of the complexity of the North African context into which Tertullian belonged, and because of the highly rhetorical style of his writing, Tertullian defies classification into any one category. Whether one accepts the evidence that Tertullian was born into an African indigenous family of wealth and status, or if one chooses to insist on the possibility that Tertullian’s family were immigrants...

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9 See discussion by Rankin, Tertullian, xiv.
10 Braun, Deus Christianorum, 572, recognized problems with a strict Montanist/Pre-Montanist chronology and introduced a middle period: “Sous l’influence montaniste”; also, Barnes, Tertullian, rev. ed. (1985).
11 e.g. where to place De pall.: cf. Barnes, Tertullian, 54-5, for the year 205; and Fredouille, Tertullian, 488, who argues that it is the logical ends of his theological trajectory and is, therefore, the last of his works. Also, cf. De praes. 36.3-4, where Roman and African churches are portrayed in a positive relationship.
12 e.g. Ad Scap. includes historical referents that allow scholars to firmly date his work c. 212 (in his “Montanist Period”), but it does not include any “Montanist” characteristics. For further discussion, see Dunn, Tertullian, 7-9. It should be noted that Tertullian scholars typically do not invoke a “strict” chronological argument based on his progression into the New Prophecy, but also apply stylistic arguments and arguments based on historical allusions in his works, to name just two.
from another part of the empire, the writings of the apologist betray a strong affinity with the indigenous population of Africa who, with varying levels of intensity, often stood in resistance to Rome.

The writer’s talent and wit permit him to move across many lines of demarcation. It is not surprising nor is it implicitly erroneous that past studies of Tertullian have located him in a Roman context and understood him in light of Roman sources. For all that can be ascertained by historians, Tertullian was well versed in Roman literature, and he may have studied, worked and/or resided in Rome itself. It is even possible that Tertullian could have understood himself as a Roman – although it is telling that he never describes himself as such in his extant works. Such a self-description, however, would not negate other instances where he constructs his identity in African terms. Moreover, Tertullian accommodates many Roman, not to mention Greek, Jewish and other, material into his rhetoric.

In one sense Tertullian can take up the persona of an educated elite who distances his community from the barbarians fighting the emperor, especially when writing to Romans (e.g. the Apologeticum). In another instance the apologist can distance himself from the Roman colonizers and new elites by attacking the Roman system and those who adhere to it (e.g. Ad nationes). Although examples can be found where Tertullian has experienced wealth and the benefits of his education, when given the opportunity he explicitly rejects the pursuits of wealth and nobility and rebukes those who do not (e.g. De cultu feminarum 1 and 2, respectively). Tertullian constructs ethnic boundary markers such as dress in the case of the pallium in order to display resistance to Rome, and, when challenged, he passionately attacks the new elites who have inculturated the toga and all it symbolizes in place of the traditional African dress. In the religious world of his day which infiltrated every aspect of human life, Tertullian’s opponents worshipped the gods of Rome and not the local deities of Africa, indicating that the latter posed less of an immediate threat. Even the religion of Christian Romans conflicted with Tertullian’s understanding of his religious identity, resulting in his defense of the New Prophecy and in his attack on the “psychic” bishop of Rome. Understanding Tertullian as an African who was capable of pursuing status and gloria, like many new elites of his province, but who rejected such pursuits assists the historian in explaining the many apparent contradictions in his writings and allows the theologian the freedom to explore the plethora of sources contained within his arguments, including the element of his African identity.

13 cf. Arnobius and Lactantius, of whom Edwards, “The Flowering,” 220, says “Both, with the pride of Africans, decline to be merely Africans; on the contrary both make clear that they are Romans, beneficiaries and purveyors of a Roman education.”

14 Similarly, Fredouille, Tertullien, 21, claimed “la coherence de son œuvr” in his study. This is not to argue, however, that Tertullian was not contradictory in some of his arguments; see Dunn, Tertullian, 29.
Tertullian has been categorized as an African. The implication, conversely, is that Tertullian has simultaneously been de-classified; it is suggested here that the categories of “Roman” and “African” – to name two – should be destabilized in order to allow for more complexity and fluidity when interpreting Tertullian’s writings, and any classification or identification of Tertullian should be qualified.

In conclusion a few words need to be said about the implications of this study for Patristics more generally. As stated initially, Tertullian is in one sense a case study for a broader question, that of identity theory. The methods and theories applied in this study could also be applied to other Christian writers, especially others from North Africa (e.g. Minucius Felix, Arnobius, etc.; see above, section 2.4.1), which would allow for further discussions of early Christian practice and teachings. By incorporating Social Anthropology, Patristic scholars would be better equipped to avoid the ethnocentric tendencies present in any endeavor; moreover, this approach would compliment the aim of historical theologians who wish to avoid anachronism. By allowing the anti-essentialist approach of recent anthropological theorists traditional categories such as “religion,” “economics” and “politics” can be unbounded, destabilized and further explored, which would permit scholars to avoid the reifying tendencies of certain dichotomous labels, such as “orthodox”/“heretic” and “Western”/“Eastern.” This approach, moreover, would sanction scholars to contextualize Christian sources in an attempt to attain a more emic perspective. While historical theologians may desire something analogous to what anthropologists call a phenomenological approach, that is, the quest for universally applicable Christian principles, practices and/or doctrines (see chapter one), caution must be used so as not to impose anachronistic, ethnocentric, or essentialist constraints and constructs on the writings and contexts of the early Christians. While this project has used theory from Social Anthropology and avoided direct comparison with modern ethnographies – for modern ethnographies can never fill in “blanks” or “gaps” in ancient history, as if some current people group are still “primitive” and are more comparable to ancient Christians or Romans than are western Christians or societies, perhaps one comparison will help solidify the above re-reading of Tertullian by juxtaposing his contextualized theology with another Post-colonial theological approach.

7.2 Tertullian and Africa in Historical Theology

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

7.2.1 What constitutes African Theology?

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

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

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16 “Contextual” is used here reservedly because many so-called “contextual” theologians (liberation theologians, feminist theologians, etc.) adamantly argue that no theology is without context (i.e. contextual vs. “non-textual.”) One could say that there are only two theological approaches: contextual theologians and theologians who do not admit to being contextual theologians.


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

7.2.1 What constitutes African Theology?

sources than the Reform theology of John Calvin's disciples. The second element one considers is the response of the theologian to his or her context as with the examples of Augustine’s response Rome’s collapse or Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s responses to the Nazi regime. Within the specific reaction to a specific situation, a new theological expression arises.

Because theologies can be constructed from a specific point in time as well as over entire historical periods, prescribing the context of “a theology” is difficult. An inherent tension exists, as between one slide of film and a complete motion picture or as between a measure of music and an entire arrangement. While authors appropriately write on the theology of the Reformers, there also exists a theology of Martin Luther in 1517. The existence of such a tension, however, in no way prohibits one from speaking of “a theology” spanning decades, if not centuries, that results from broad, sweeping movements and historical developments. The field of African Theology exists in such a tension today.

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


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

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

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

In 1960 the *Revue du Clergé Africain* published a report of the proceedings of a seminar held at the University of Lovanium in Kinshasa that sparked the debate over African theology. The discussion centered on the paper given by a student,

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24 For the relationship between African theology and Pan-Africanism, see Muzorewa, *The Origins*, 3 and 46ff.
25 *African Theology*, 58.

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

The African clergy, and many faculty members of Lovanium reacted to Vanette’s arguments with the same sentiments as Bujo, making Tshibangu the more widely accepted in theological opinion. Typified by this debate, a movement arose among indigenous African Christians to birth their own “Theology.” In Africa, theology would not only be unique in its expression, but it would carry out a unique task.

7.2.3 The Aim of African Theology

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

Christians in Africa have sought a theological system and language that communicates directly to their own social, political, environmental and ancestral milieus. African Christian thinkers proceed with their own approach to theology in order to address those needs. Charles Nyamiti explains, “Rightly understood, African theology comprises various definitions. In its broadest (etymological
sense), African theology can be defined as discourse on God (theo-logos) – and on all that is related to Him – in accordance with the mentality and needs of the people in the black continent.\textsuperscript{35} The needs of the African Christians reacting to colonialism has provided a central locus in the advent of African Theology. However, as African Theology has developed, Christian thinkers have also broadened their understanding of the task of African Theology.

The task of creating a genuine African expression of Christianity, as opposed to a mere translation, has become a primary onus of African theology.\textsuperscript{36} In his introduction to \textit{Paths of African Theology}, Rosino Gibellini explains how African theologians attempt to interact with “a Christianity that will be no longer imported or simply adapted, but authentically African, a Christianity lived and experienced against a horizon of Catholicity and ecumenicity amid the new concrete historical – cultural and social – dimensions of Africa.”\textsuperscript{37} Aylward Shorter calls this “authentically” African Christian theology a theology of “Inculturation.”\textsuperscript{38} In his book, Shorter criticizes the established Church for adopting the dichotomized worldview of the ancient Romans – civilized/barbarian – and for the Church’s unwillingness to recognize that every expression of Christianity is a temporal expression.\textsuperscript{39} Shorter also explains how African Theology, like South American Liberation Theology, understands the purpose of theology to be a concrete historical reflection, not an abstract system of propositions.\textsuperscript{40} Given the purpose of African Theology, African theologians proceed with a contextualized methodology.

\textbf{7.2.4 The Methods of African Theology – A Postcolonial Critique?}

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

\textsuperscript{36} For another task of African Theology, the understanding of God in traditional African religions, see Muzorewa, \textit{The Origins}, 78.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Paths of African}, 7.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Toward a Theology of Inculturation}, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988).
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 12 and 17.
\textsuperscript{40} Shorter, \textit{Toward}, xi; cf. Gutiérrez, \textit{A Theology}, 11.
\textsuperscript{41} “An Overview,” 19.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Toward}, xi.
approaches, the rereading or reinterpreting of traditional Christian themes comprises a central endeavor of many African theologians.

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

> Whilst the recent American critical models have been profoundly influenced by Europe, with Derridaian and Foucaultian theories being whole-heartedly adopted by American critics, the Americans are now beginning to recognize that their own post-coloniality had already provided the ground for similarly subversive views of language and culture. Rather than the postmodernists and poststructuralists being seen as decentering forces, undermining the categories of a universal authority, they are beginning to be viewed as confirmations of the essentially subversive nature of much American literature throughout its development: subversive, that is, of the authority of the European centre and its forms and expectations.\(^{43}\)

The example of literary criticism in the United States provides a possible analogy for explaining the relationship of African Theology to Postcolonialism, both stemming from the common groundswell of dissatisfaction of Eurocentric claims to "universal" knowledge and truth.\(^{44}\)

### 7.2.5 The Parameters of African Theology

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

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43 The Empire, 163.
44 See Young, Postcolonialism, 64, for the "refusal of totalizing forms"; also, Castle, Postcolonial Discourses, xv.
45 cf. Tertullian, De praes. haer. 7, "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" [Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?]
A few examples of African theologians who have addressed the parameters of African Theology will help clarify the spatio-temporal tension that exists. Kwesi A. Dickson reports on a discussion spawned by a paper he presented at the 1973 meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. A European priest objected to the claim that Africa needed a unique theology, arguing that such a course of action threatened the unity of the ecumenical Church. Dickson explains,

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

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

An example that provides insight into the temporal tension within African Theology is a statement made by Gwinyai Muzorewa. In discussing both the importation and the importance of the Bible in Africa, he reflects on the chronology of African Christianity, “Most African theologians see the presence of Christianity in Africa in three stages: the infant Jesus as a refugee in Egypt; Christianity in Africa under the Portuguese prowess of the fifteenth to the seventeenth century; and, finally the dramatic nineteenth-century awakening.”\(^{48}\) Because of the specific aim of Muzorewa’s argument, his oversight of the Ethiopian, the Coptic, and even patristic churches need not be criticized here. The statement highlights, however, the lack of attention given to these traditions by contemporary African theologians.

Although African theologians, working within the specific aims of their field, focus on the post-colonial expression of Christianity out of necessity, they do not intentionally forsake previous traditions of Christian communities on the African continent. Rosino Gibellini begins the work he edited on African Theology by highlighting the history of Christianity in Africa, including the era of the Church

\(^{46}\) Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, 1.
\(^{47}\) Ibid, 2-3.
\(^{48}\) *The Origins*, 22
7.2.6 Is Tertullian an African Theologian?

Tertullian’s contribution as a theologian needs no defense. He is, in fact, often called “The Father of Latin Theology,” but one could – controversially – claim this widely used title, which traces back even to Jerome, to be yet another example of a Eurocentric approach to theology. Analogously, few – if any – would credit the Apostle Paul with the title, “The Father of Greek Theology,” simply because he was the first Christian thinker to write in Greek. Paul has not received such a distinction because of his own testimony that he was first,

49 Some African theologians have even called outright for an inclusion of early Christian history in African theology. One example is Bujo when he says, “Our guide in the construction of theology must be, apart from African tradition, the Bible and the Fathers of the Church. They must be the light which will show up the limitations and the inadequacies of any theological system, however brilliant.” Bujo represents some African theologians who consciously recognize the wider reality of African Theology. In accordance with Bujo’s plea, it is suggested here that Tertullian, the first “Latin” Christian writer, can also belong within such a broad understanding of African Theology.

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

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


Tertullian, however, offers no such explicit statements of self-identity, a fact that allows the Roman, the European or the Westerner to read Tertullian as a Roman, a European or a Westerner with relative ease.\(^5^6\)

Tertullian’s influence over Western Theology does not negate his original context which had non-western aspects.\(^5^7\) Tertullian was from the Province of Africa and was therefore – at least by one taxonomy – an African.\(^5^8\) While the temptation to anachronistically compare Tertullian’s “African Theology” with more recent sub-Saharan, post-colonial “African theology” could be viewed as precarious, such an approach could prove no more amiss than the traditional approach – conscious or otherwise – of reading Tertullian as a European. Instead, the juxtaposition of a competing branch of theology from the same continent as Tertullian provides a different framework that might better appreciate certain aspects of Tertullian’s self-identity and theology.\(^5^9\)

Should not scholars read Tertullian as neither a European nor an African but simply in light of his own writings? Many from a Postcolonial context would declare that this objection – rather, this modernist claim to objectivity – could only be made by a westerner, because those the “centre” has labeled the “peripheral” know that to read Tertullian “objectively” is impossible, and any attempt to do so will likely neglect an appreciation for his African-ness. With this objection in mind, the more pertinent question is, “What does it mean to be an ‘African’ during Roman colonization of Africa?” a discussion which the previous chapters have hopefully helped to facilitate.

African theologians, as shown above, often invoke early Christian authorities with African associations. In doing so, African theologians can be accused of misappropriating those sources in order to legitimize their own endeavors – as can any claim to the past.\(^6^0\) Moreover, historians can claim that such a practice is anachronistic and invalid, given that the African context of the early Christian centuries was in fact part of the wider so-called “Graeco-Roman culture.” While

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55 Philippians 3:5.
56 e.g. von Campenhausen, Fathers, 20, “…Tertullian was a Westerner…..”
57 For example, the argument of some scholars that Tertullian, who wrote some tracts in Greek, is part of the Second Sophistic movement; see Barnes, Tertullian, 211; on the Second Sophistic movement more generally, see Simon Goldhill, ed., Being Greek under Rome. See also, Bediako, Theology, 117, who criticizes Danielou’s identification of Tertullian as exclusively “Latin” and not “African.”
58 von Campenhausen, Fathers, 5, “Tertullian was an African, i.e. a citizen of Africa, the province colonized by the Romans, which is modern Tunisia.”
59 Bediako, Theology, xii, claimed this would allow one “…to read the Christian Fathers in their contexts with new eyes!” Similarly, Denise Kimber Buell, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition,” HTR 94 (4 2001), 474, argues, “Mainstream theology and historical scholarship on Christianity have much to gain from the challenges and visions offered by voices marginalized by ideology and/or social location.”
both of these accusations can be adequately dealt with by African theologians independently from this study, it is hoped that the above discussion has opened fresh avenues for dialogue in this area by deconstructing the notion of a “Graeco-Roman culture” – which can be a pseudonym for early “Western civilization” – and by destabilizing what constitutes “Africa” to allow for a broader spatio-temporal referent while acknowledging the diversity inherent therein. Likewise, in the field of African Theology, the genesis and origins of Christianity on the African continent are just as important for a more complete and holistic picture of the heritage to which African Christians, let alone others, have a claim.

Overall, this project has cut across many traditional fields of inquiry and incorporates insights from multiple academic disciplines. It is hoped that they have all appropriately and coherently intersected in the exploration of the writings, theology and identities of the early Christian writer, Tertullian the African.
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