

Fashioning Identity in the Late Roman and Late Antique World: The Case of North Africa (c. AD 200-500)

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Abstract

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Late Roman and late antique North Africa (c. AD 200-500) possessed a vibrant clothing culture which frequently discussed and debated sartorial practice. Echoes of dressing behaviours survive in a variety of forms – literary, visual and archaeological. While much of this material is known to scholars, clothing is often reduced to a passive entity, misrepresenting its polyvalent nature. My thesis explores how our understanding of processes of identity construction in the African diocese improves with better recognition of the North African sartorial grammar. Drawing on a range of evidence, artefacts such as Christian apologetic discourse, epigraphic documentation, Patristic correspondence and secular and religious figurative mosaics, I examine four key areas of identity: gender, Christian, elite and cultural.

To achieve my aims, I employ the concept of ‘dress rhetoric’ to synthesise the diverse evidence. Adapted from Barthes’ ‘language of fashion’, my interpretative framework appreciates that dress rhetoric – in the guise of ‘written-clothing’, ‘image-clothing’ and ‘real-clothing’ – does not always produce a consistent picture of clothing realities as individuals endeavour to advertise or repress identity traits. This does not negate contradictory interpretations, but rather reflects the multifaceted historical experience.

My discussion demonstrates that dress-codes were dynamic and malleable commodities, adapted to suit changing contexts, namely, the evolving gender and Christian discourse, new modes of elite representation and the political disruption caused by the Vandal invasion. My conclusions confirm that groups exploited aspects of clothing communication and its plethora of benefits. Encoded in dress rhetoric were significant social anxieties, as well as positive ideologies and *exempla*. Consideration of these dress-ways highlights pertinent power structures, those who decided acceptable or transgressive clothing practice and the enduring role of dress in manifesting social *mores*. This, in turn, articulates the relationship between the individual and their context and, most importantly, how they negotiated their place in society.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of Classical authors follow those used in the *OCD*⁴; authors not included in the *OCD*⁴ follow those used in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. Abbreviations for journal titles follow those used in *L'Année Philologique*.

Note also:

<i>AnTard</i>	<i>Antiquité Tardive</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>IL Afr</i>	<i>Inscriptions Latines d'Afrique</i>
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
<i>ILTun</i>	<i>Inscriptions Latines de la Tunisie</i>
<i>Inv. Alg.</i>	F. G. de Pachtère. <i>Inventaire des mosaïques de la Gaule et de l'Afrique. II, Afrique Proconsulaire, Numidie, Maurétanie (Algerie)</i> . Paris: E. Leroux. 1911.
<i>Inv. Tun.</i>	P. Gauckler. <i>Inventaire des mosaïques de la Gaule et de l'Afrique. II, Afrique Proconsulaire (Tunisie)</i> . Paris: E. Leroux. 1910.
<i>Inv. Tun. suppl.</i>	A. Merlin. <i>Inventaire des mosaïques de la Gaule et de l'Afrique. II (supplément), Afrique Proconsulaire (Tunisie)</i> . Paris: E. Leroux. 1915.
<i>Rev. Tun.</i>	<i>Revue Tunisienne</i>

Chapter 1: Research Context

1.1 Project Summary

The overall goal of my doctoral project is to provide a fresh interpretation of the cultural role of dress in late Roman and late antique North Africa across c. AD 200-500. My research uses a three-fold theoretical rubric that appreciates the complexities of dress and its cultural echoes. North Africa's rich cultural history produced a vibrant and varied corpus of source material that encourages inter-disciplinary research. By championing dress as *the* primary interpretive medium, this research brings together a variety of visual, textual and physical material. When exploring dress, there is a danger of over-relying on one type of evidence and, unfortunately, select pieces of evidence have indeed been studied and upheld as representative of cultural practices across the whole region – and even farther afield. Thus, the iconographic representations extrapolated from isolated mosaics have been claimed to give defined understanding of elite reality. Further, selective passages of text have been uncritically cited in discussions of normative religious or social practice, such as Christian attitudes to women drawn purely from Tertullian's rhetoric in *De virginibus velandis* and *De cultu feminarum*. In terms of dress research, such thinking has previously oversimplified the different forms of dress and downplayed the cultural force of dress and clothing systems. In short, echoes of dress are too often read as direct evidence of sartorial practice and uncritically upheld as being representative. My findings will challenge these orthodoxies, demonstrating that a more nuanced cultural environment can be uncovered once we search beyond individual, over-cited, examples. I argue that while dress satisfies a functional need, it also expresses identity and provides a medium via which individuals can mediate and negotiate their place in society. Dress is in reality a dynamic canvas on which individuals can paint ideas and ideals, moulding and infusing symbolism as desired. Most importantly, though, it can reveal where social anxieties lie. Clothing is thus an active constituent in how individuals interact with and experience their world.

1.2 Research Questions and Aims

1.2.1 Research Rationale

The rationale for my project stems from a dissatisfaction with treatments of ‘dress’ in scholarship. Although scholarship is changing and Roman dress is becoming a significant object of study in its own right (e.g. Colburn and Heyn 2008; Rothe 2009; Harlow 2012a; Rollason 2016), many studies have underestimated and devalued dress as a historical source. In the current academic context, the ideological function of late Roman clothing is often divorced from its physical reality. Where textiles once had a tangible presence, the rarity of their survival – especially in a North African context – results in a sartorial spectre. Yet, while the actual fabrics themselves may have degraded, the sources attesting to their vibrant nature still live on. Echoes of dress rhetoric come from many different, and sometimes contradictory, sources. My approach harnesses the complexity of ‘dress rhetoric’ and appreciates the various forms ‘dress’ could inhabit. This is not a case of simply bringing these disparate sources together. Instead, I build on and adapt the ideas of a ‘fashion system’ in Roland Barthes’ *Système de la mode* (1967) to suit this late Roman and late antique North African context. Through reference to a tripartite scheme of ‘written-clothing’, ‘image-clothing’ and ‘real-clothing’, this methodology recognises the complexity and importance of dress in social and cultural interactions.

1.2.2 Research Aims

The primary research questions of my thesis ask:

- What issues or social tensions were voiced, explored and resolved through dress rhetoric?
- Which forms of dress debate or negotiation predominate the historical record?
- To what extent were the clothed bodies of the North Africans a contested commodity? Did these arenas of debate change through time?

- How did transformations in social institutions – such as the growing prominence of Christianity – affect the construction and dissemination of dress rhetoric?
- Were traditional Classical *mores* just re-dressed in new costumes? Do the sources document a sartorial distinction between Roman attire and the subsequent late Roman and late antique dress customs?

My project adopts the premise that dressing is a socially and culturally significant behaviour. Dress, as understood in this thesis, includes not just garments, but also the associated discourse of clothing and presenting the body, where written and visual discourse serves to construct and maintain pertinent dress-codes. As such, individuals use particular dressing mechanisms to convey recognisable associations; the process of dressing the body is laden with cultural meaning, as is how clothing is worn. Normative clothing practices become daily practice and individuals are educated in correct sartorial behaviours through socialisation. In this way, dress actions are ingrained in quotidian interactions and cultural expectations become internalised. While dress does not require an audience, the instances of dress I draw upon in my thesis almost always are the product of the interaction between the individual and an audience of some kind. This is especially true of literary and visual material.

To achieve my research aims, I explore four identity types: gender, religious, elite and cultural. These chosen areas of investigation are sympathetic to the multiple different social allegiances documented in the available source material. As such, there is intersection with current and previous academic discussions, but these research agendas are advanced and strengthened by the addition of sartorial investigation. Each of the themes explored has often been the subject of scholarship in their own right (see Chapter 2.1.2), but, when combined, they provide a richer understanding of the cultural milieu in late Roman and late antique North Africa.

My thesis investigates instances of dress rhetoric from Roman North Africa, as defined below (see Chapter 1.4.1). I exclude Egypt, and its Coptic textile remains, from my study due to its different historical context. I contest Hoskins' statement that:

although found in Egypt they [textile remains] resemble clothes worn, and probably woven, in other parts of the Roman Empire. These archaeological fabrics are an extraordinary resource – a rich, robust, and rare visual feast (2004: 23).

Coptic material has become *the* way of establishing Roman and late antique textile behaviours. While the vibrant textiles recovered offer some insight into the physical materiality of clothing (now almost completely lost to us), the distinctive history and character of Roman rule in Egypt prevents the simplistic extrapolation of sartorial behaviours from this region as a mirror of North African practice. The history of collecting archaeological textile fragments is particular to Egypt, with earlier histories of preserving decorative fragments – an artefact of Albert Gayet’s stylistic chronologies established in 1900, which lead to the framing of clothing fragments more akin to art and less as material culture (Hoskins 2004) – now replaced with sophisticated scientific analysis (Thomas 2007).

Clothing, of course, fashions a material reality, but as a processed organic resource dress artefacts rarely stand the test of time. My decision not to include Egyptian material as direct evidence of North African practice fundamentally dismisses a corpus of archaeological textile remains. Had textile remains survived in Roman North Africa proper, they could be incorporated into this synthesis to enrich the knowledge of dress behaviours (and associated notions of continuity and change) here. Nevertheless, as my discussion shows, there are forms of dress rhetoric – both clothing practices and dress debates – which are peculiar to the late Roman North African context and merit exploration.

1.2.3 Wider Impact

My research is designed to showcase the benefits of utilising dress as the primary investigative medium. Dress provides a cultural constant to evaluate the influence of external factors such as political upheaval, religious persecution or transforming social anxieties. The adoption of a more theoretically rigorous approach structures clothing in

a system that appreciates its role in the rationalisation and expression of identity. The grammar of dressed bodies is a product of its geographical and social contexts. Simultaneously local and international, clothing behaviours necessarily appeal to particular audiences in specific contexts. My thesis demonstrates the advantages of using an informed approach to study one dynamic type of source material. It employs North Africa throughout the late Roman and late antique period (c. AD 200-500) due to its plentiful corpus of surviving material, ranging from domestic and funerary mosaics, epigraphic evidence, to Patristic rhetoric and correspondence, and because previous treatments of the evidence have frequently been one-dimensional.

The interpretive framework used in this study would also prove beneficial to other areas of socio-cultural investigation. Less of a methodology and more of an approach for exploring and synthesising material, the framework here provides the conceptual means for interpreting echoes of dress rhetoric. Such qualitative analysis is applicable to other historical or archaeological research agendas, especially when studying pervasive cultural systems where the primary artefact does not survive, such as food. My interpretive framework is a useful tool as it appreciates that the various different extant sources of evidence may not necessarily produce a complementary picture. As such, I do not discount conflicting interpretations, but instead understand them as highlighting certain nodes of tension. In sum, this thesis advocates for the recognition and further study of the diverse and highly variegated world of Roman dress using an interpretive framework that can be applied to other areas of quotidian practice.

1.3 Thesis Structure

In the rest of this chapter, I outline my geo-temporal frame (Chapter 1.4) and then briefly cover the main garments relevant to my thesis discussion (Chapter 1.5). My discussion is composed of four core chapters, preceded by a review of the current state of research (Chapter 2) and a methods and sources chapter (Chapter 3) to outline the ontological and epistemological framework to this thesis.

The first thematic chapter, *Chapter 4: Gender Differentiation*, explores how gender was constituted and communicated through dress rhetoric. The rhetoric of gender discourse was not necessarily matched by practice, but such realities are themselves telling of the socio-cultural dynamics at play. The predominance of written material that both criticises and praises female dressing habits – produced from the late second to early fifth centuries AD – demonstrates not only the centrality of such issues in the social consciousness, but also the close association between the female gender and the act of dressing the body. Importantly, this chapter considers both ‘pagan’ (non-Christian) and ‘Christian’ groups. It leads to *Chapter 5: Religious Dedication*, which investigates the place of dress in the development and codification of Christian practice and beliefs. The evolution of Christianity saw it transform from a closeted minor cult into a socio-political powerhouse and this new visibility brought enhanced modes of demonstrative religious practice. I will highlight that late Roman North Africa possessed no exclusive ‘Christian’ clothing, yet the vocal rhetoric disseminated throughout the region attests to a landscape in tune with how clothing systems could be mobilised to demonstrate participation and dedication, especially as seen in funerary iconography. Next, *Chapter 6: Social Distinction* investigates how clothing practices constructed social difference. A primary focus lies in establishing how dress conveyed and conferred social status. The source material lends itself to an emphasis on elite mechanisms of constructing and showing distinction through recognisable clothing variations and the majority of this chapter focuses on these issues, specifically with reference to evidence drawn from domestic mosaics. The final thematic chapter, *Chapter 7: Cultural Designation*, builds on ideas of elite self-presentation, establishing the extent to which there is evidence for ‘African’ clothing codes or styles. This chapter also examines ‘Vandal’ clothing and whether ‘Roman’ sartorial continuity was a cultural reality in the period after AD 439. The strands of these various discussions are brought together in *Chapter 8: Conclusion*.

However, in many ways, the division of the thematic discussion (Chapters 4-7) constructs false boundaries that fundamentally misrepresent what was once a composite whole. Ultimately, the divisions employed here are arbitrary, yet the resultant chapters offer more accessible insights into the relationship between dress

and identity in late Roman and late antique North Africa. Dressing fashions were socially constructed and fluctuated to mould to respective cultural contexts. These chapters cover significant aspects of late antique society encompassing gender, religious, social and cultural identities. There is major overlap between these chapters. This is especially true for the discussion of female dress in an early Christian context, the proclamation of gender identity in elite spheres or evolving forms of elite self-presentation, which exhibit clothing styles from different cultural backgrounds. In these cases, their inclusion in specific chapters depends on whether the motivation – as presented in the source material – was primarily a consequence of gender, religion, status or cultural identity.

1.4 Late Roman and Late Antique North Africa

1.4.1 *Geographical and Chronological Boundaries of Study*

The period chosen for this study spans c. AD 200-500. Roman Africa during this period experienced significant changes in numerous social spheres, and this project examines to what extent such issues and transformations were rationalised and made visible through the clothed bodies of the North Africans. Importantly, my aim is to investigate dress as a cultural mechanism to negotiate historical episodes, not to merely establish predominating fashions. Political instability, religious transformation and social change forced North African communities to negotiate and reconsider the terms on which they defined their cultural, political, and religious allegiances.

North Africa is, of course, a vast area (Fig. 1.1). This thesis examines evidence from the provinces of *Africa Proconsularis*, governed by the proconsul at Carthage, *Byzacena*, administrated from Hadrumetum, *Numidia*, with Cirta as its capital, *Tripolitania*, administered from Lepcis Magna, *Mauretania Caesarensis*, with its capital of Caesarea and *Mauretania Sitifensis*, with Sétif as its capital (Leone 2007: 23-24). Thus, in my discussion the term ‘North Africa’ is utilised to refer to these North African provinces – that is, the area of the African Diocese – rather than the wider geographical region. The designation of ‘Roman Africa’ here also conveys the same notions. Only passing mention is given to *Mauretania Tingitania* in my study since under Diocletian’s



Figure 1.1: Map of the African Dioceses after Diocletian's re-organisation c. AD 300.

re-organisation it in fact came under the sphere of the Diocese of *Hispania*. Such a separation is also recorded in the *Notitia Dignitatum* where *Tingitania* is not included under the division of Africa (e.g. *Not. Dign. Occ.* 26). Similarly, *Cyrenaica* offers some degree of similarity with North Africa proper and will be used carefully to supplement interpretation; this area arguably sees more commonality with Egypt and the Greek-speaking Roman East (*Pars Orientis*). Predominately, though, material for this study comes from the modern Maghreb region (stretching from Mauretania to Tripolitania), inhabitable land that includes both coastal and inland contexts. Following Dunbabin's convention (1978), I refer to sites by their mostly used names.

The temporal period chosen for my discussion (c. AD 200-500) is selected due to the rich and fertile research context it offers in terms of its literary, visual and archaeological evidence. Further, this time frame also spans numerous significant transformations in the North African provinces. Most prominently, this allows for the exploration of key events such as the writings of the highly influential early Christian theologian Tertullian of Carthage (AD 155-220), the dedication of Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) to promoting the Christian *praxis* and the Vandal occupation of North African provinces beginning in AD 429 until Justinian's re-conquest in AD 533. The extent to which the impact of these individuals or events is discernible in sartorial practice or different stylisations of the clothed body confirms the importance of dress as a communicative and reactive tool. The Roman North African population was not a static

entity and numerous transformations – as abundantly demonstrated by dress rhetoric – highlight the changing cultural interests, forms of group affiliation and inter-personal preoccupations experienced in this region.

1.4.2 Contextualising Late Roman and Late Antique North Africa

From the late second century AD onwards, North African cities and individuals played increasingly important roles in Roman society, in economic, religious and cultural spheres. This coincided with the reign of the African emperor Septimius Severus, AD 193-211, whose self-presentation neither exaggerated nor hid his African heritage (see Lichtenberger 2011). My study concerns the late Roman (c. AD 200-350) and late antique (c. AD 350-500) context, which, despite nuances of terminology, exhibits continuity in its dress evidence. In fact, the use of such descriptors often constructs boundaries not necessarily representative of the historical experience. My discussion, however, utilises these labels when characterising sartorial activities from the earlier and later periods, and are especially relevant in the interpretation of the Vandal period of North Africa where cultural dynamics exhibit both change and continuation from earlier practice and are in many ways ‘post-Roman’ in nature. Frequently, ‘Late Antiquity’ is an academic concept that frames the period spanning the late third to the sixth centuries AD as a discrete entity. The term is a modern construction and a useful heuristic tool, but one that can ultimately construct a false unified ‘late antique’ culture or identity (Miles 1999: 3). Undoubtedly, this simplifies a multitude of varying responses to changes in society and culture. ‘Late Antiquity’ was an epoch of great transformation (Mayer 2009: 11). Yet, rather than view this era in terms of decay or decline – which is a subjective relic inherited from Edward Gibbon’s ideas (Ando 2009: 59-60) – it is perhaps more beneficial to understand it as a time of transition and as a distinctive and exciting period of study in its own right, especially in terms of North Africa.

Debate still surrounds the nature of these changes in North Africa. Research on the fate of late Roman and late antique cities in North Africa (e.g. Sears 2007; Leone 2007) has highlighted the continued investment in urban life and infrastructure, as has

the study of the physical impact of Christianity (e.g. Ennabli 1997). Likewise, the analysis of the transformation of the pagan city – understood as traditional cultural and civic norms, not necessarily religious in form – furthers research agendas (e.g. Leone 2013; Lepelley 2002). The study of North African clothing practices nuances these interpretations by studying North African responses to gender dynamics promoting different forms of Roman ‘manliness’ or feminine virtue (e.g. Halsall 2004), developing Christian attitudes valuing new forms of cultural practice and marginalising traditional social systems (e.g. Cooper 2007; Clark 1988) or transforming geo-political structures altering elite culture and expressions of cultural identities (see Conant 2012). The continued economic prosperity of the North African region is evident in the number and scale of industries such as olive oil, grain and African Red Slipware (ARS) production (see Hobson 2015) and the exportation of these commodities to the rest of empire ensured the continuing significance of the North African provinces – especially *Africa Proconsularis* – to the wider Roman economy. We can study these socio-cultural developments through a range of media and combining these echoes of dress rhetoric produces a more composite picture of the North African cultural reality.

My research period begins at a time where Christianity was still a fledgling religious cult. In the second and third centuries AD, different persecutions – of varying severity – saw sanctioned opposition to Christian practice. North Africa was not unique in this regard, but the histories of persecution, the first known instance in North Africa being the Scillitan martyrs in AD 180 (Patout Burns and Jensen 2014: 3-4), but also occurring under Decius (249-251), Valerian (253-260) and Constantine (303-305) (Tilley 1996: xiii), had lasting consequences for North African religious development. The martyrdom of prominent figures such as Perpetua (AD 203) or Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (AD 258), became dynamic narratives of the Christian struggle, influencing the built environment and Christian social practice such as *despositio ad sanctos*, or burial near saints’ tombs (Yasin 2005: 433; Brown 1981: 3; Duval 1988). This, of course, helped establish processes of Christian self-definition, the impact of which is visible in the proliferation of Christian mosaic imagery in places such as Tabarka in *Africa Proconsularis*. Although actual instances of persecution were likely sporadic, the stories of such *exempla* promoted emulation, forming paragons of practice for later

generations that helped foster a sense of group identity (Rebillard 2012: 35). Undoubtedly, Christianity changed the nature of religious and cultural practice in North Africa. As early as AD 197, Tertullian had boasted of the spread of Christianity (*Apol.* 37.4; Barnes 1971: 55). Writing around AD 401 (Rebillard 2015: 298), Augustine describes the population of Bulla Regia as composed entirely of Christians (*Serm.* 301A.7; Rebillard 2012: 61). Such statements were, of course, contrived and are thus relayed to the modern scholar in an environment of Christian ‘representation’ (Brown 1998: 633-634).

Rather than understand North African communities as adopting a new coherent belief system, it is probably more accurate to imagine North African groups encountering, negotiating and debating a series of evolving Christian doctrines. Numerous religious controversies occurred in North Africa c. AD 200-500, as correct modes of religious observance were contested. This included the Donatist schism (see Frend 1952; Tilley 1996; Miles 2016) and the battle of ‘orthodoxy’ versus ‘heresy’ in Vandal North Africa which Victor of Vita frames in terms of persecution in his *Historia Persecutionis* (Whelan 2018). Religious ideals and spaces, too, were often contested commodities (Lander 2017) and disagreements about the nature of baptism and the true Church were frequently articulated through violence (Shaw 2013). The subsequent growth and development of these Christian movements, and the foci chosen to embody aspects of the Christian identity – whatever form this took – highlight the mechanisms thought appropriate for displaying allegiance to such Christian ideas and ideals.

Many prominent Roman families owned estates in North Africa and the revenue from these residences proved integral for the generation of wealth and the maintenance of the ruling elite. During times of barbarian incursions, these holdings also provided a means of escape, as was the case of Melania the Younger and her family whose vast estate in Thagaste, *Numidia*, was larger than the town itself (Dossey 2010: 93; Gerontius, *VM* 21). The historic record documents the actions and deeds of numerous well-known elite individuals from this time. Significantly, these are not necessarily just the biographies of male figures – although these are also prominent – women feature in the epigraphic record from cities such as Cuicul and Thamugadi, *Numidia* (Witschel 2013). While muted, the female experience in North Africa is not

absent. The growing distinction of well-known Christian women, such as the martyr Perpetua, also signals new forms of gender performance over the course of the third and fourth centuries AD, where conventional gender actions could be inverted or temporarily overcome (see Salisbury 1997; Sebesta 2002). In this way, the developing Christian discourse offered women alternative forms of enacting both their gender and religious identities.

The growing fashion for North African elites to depict aspects of their lifestyle, whether in actual practice or idealised representations of *otium*, confirms a new intensity in the association between aristocrats and their immediate environments, as is seen in other areas of the empire (see Scott 2004). Of course, my interest lies in investigating clothing discourse, not textile economies, but it is worth noting that economic prosperity and heightened articulation of elite and personal identity through architecture and architectural decoration suggests an index of economic potential for North African communities. Expansive *villae* and highly ornate urban *domus* in the North African landscape confirm the abundant wealth within this region (Wilson 2018; Kehoe 1988), as does the desire to demonstrate elite belonging through mosaics – a hugely significant form of identity expression (Dunbabin 1978: 25-26). Of course, the prospect of social mobility and enhancement has also left its mark on the North African landscape. The stele of the so-called Maktar Harvester (*ILS* 3.781-2), dated to the fourth century AD (Shaw 2013: 283), neatly encapsulates a narrative of an anonymous labourer who rose in wealth and privilege over the course of his life (Brown 2012: 3).

In place of economic consumption, my thesis instead explores cultural consumption. Indelibly linked to economic habits, participation in economic activities naturally advertised aspects of social status, wealth and facets of cultural identity thought advantageous. By the third century AD, towns in Roman Africa were flourishing and equipped with a range of urban institutions and infrastructure. The characterisation of the African people as a population preoccupied with such urban pursuits endured as the fifth-century Salvian of Marseilles attests (*Gub.* 6.12). Many changes in late Roman and late antique North Africa were caused by evolving relationships with the Roman imperial system, notably the fracturing of political unity, but not all need to be imaged in terms of ruinous decline, merely transformation. Although the Vandal newcomers

changed the North African political landscape, there is much evidence for regional and economic continuity (Merrills 2004b: 3) and the mosaics found at Tabarka support this. Indeed, my study actively extends to the turn of the sixth century AD to study the impact of the Vandal occupation of the North African provinces c. AD 439-533 – itself not necessarily homogeneous in character – on the expression of identity through dress. Although previously understood as evidence for the unravelling of Roman culture in Late Antiquity, a more nuanced appreciation of the realities of the Vandal conquest are now recognised (e.g. Bockmann 2013). This offers much potential to examine the nature and expression of personal and group identities in the occupied North African provinces.

1.5 The Late Roman and Late Antique Wardrobe: From Toga to Tunic Ensemble

1.5.1 Sartorial Transformation in the Later Roman World

The garment most synonymous with the Roman world is, of course, the toga. Adapted during the Republican period from the Etruscan *tebenna* (Stone 1994: 13), by the first century BC the Roman people could be characterised as the *gens togata* (Verg., *Aen* 1.282). Yet, by the start of the third century AD, the actual use of the toga began to decrease and the social role of this garment became increasingly ceremonial (Stone 1994: 13). This is not to say that the toga did not continue to signify a privileged form of dress, but rather that other forms of sartorial self-representation gained popularity, as shown in written and visual evidence. This includes types of mantles (the *pallium*), cloaks (such as the *chlamys* and *sagum*) or capes (*paenula*). In my study – informed by the categories used by Croom (2010: 55) – I distinguish cloaks from capes by the use of a brooch, clasps or ties to bring the fabric together. Capes also generally had hoods and were more suitable for all-weather protection (Olson 2017: 68). I outline the relevant garment terminology used in my study below.

Roman outfits were malleable ensembles and individuals dressed to suit their context, inhabiting and expressing a specific aspect of their identity as necessary. The co-existing nature of identities, and the fact that one might be emphasised or

suppressed, is exemplified in the description of the *imagines* of the emperor Tacitus (AD 275-6): he is shown in a *toga*, the *chlamys*, in armour, in a *pallium* and also dressed as a hunter (SHA, *Tac.* 16.2-4). These symbolic portraits emphasised various identity traits and their associated costumes (Koorbojian 2008: 74) while also highlighting that, by the third century AD, a range of outfits were considered appropriate garb for representational images. That an individual manipulated their costume to suit their context is significant and the exploration of such attire highlights the various associations they wished to claim.

Roman garments were not static entities and the evolution of the late Roman wardrobe reflects the changing needs of individuals who sought to adapt their appearance to transforming social dynamics, which, in turn, reiterated new fashions as suitable garb. As Brown notes (2012: 192-193), the increasingly colourful and vibrant textile reality mirrored the growing popularity of colourful décor in elite residences. Colour had always played an important role in clothing (Sebesta 1994b; see also Brøns and Skovmøller 2017), with certain colours being symbolic of particular roles or statuses; for instance, the purple border of the *toga praetexta* distinguished the wearer as a senator and the dark colour of the *toga pulla* made it appropriate for mourning (Stone 1994: 15). The addition of colourful accessories could personalise an outfit, even for slaves, as made apparent by a mid-second-century reference by Apuleius (*Met.* 2.7). Yet, from the third century AD onwards, the visual record exhibits a remarkable shift in textile preferences, with clothing designs, especially on tunics, becoming increasingly elaborate and colourful. Since it is assumed that visual imagery imitated actual textiles to some degree (Larsson Lovén 2017: 146), it is clear that the later Roman wardrobe offered a greater means of sartorial differentiation and personalisation than in previous generations.

Different forms of ornament enhanced the appearance of a tunic. These could be woven into the ground fabric or woven separately and subsequently applied to the garment. The latter method also offered scope for the re-use of decoration, by other family members or even lower status members of the household, thus providing some insight into the life-cycle of clothing (Bogensperger 2014). Decorative patterning on textiles ranged from simplistic monochrome designs to highly ornate and complex

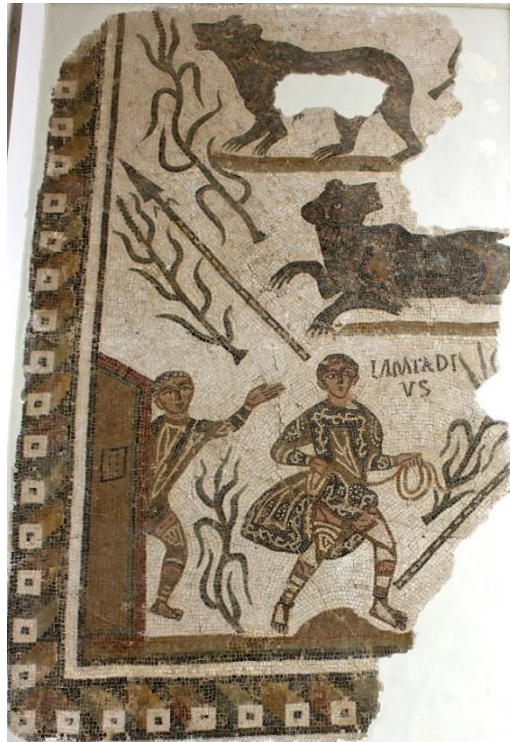


Figure 1.2: Detail of the venator Lampadius wearing a highly decorated tunic from a hunt mosaic, Khanguet el-Hadjaj, Zaghuan. Mid to late fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

geometric or iconographic designs, as exhibited by the *venator* Lampadius (Fig. 1.2) in an amphitheatre scene from a mosaic dating to the mid- to late fifth century AD,



Figure 1.3: Engraved image showing tunic decoration, ILTun 1147, Basilica at Mcdifa, Carthage. Fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.

considering the heavily ornamented clothing and dark outlines (Dunbabin 1978: 76). The placement of such decoration varied, as can be seen in a fourth-century illustration from Carthage (Fig. 1.3) associated with a tomb inscription, presumably for a textile worker (*ILTun* 1147). Knowledge of these adornment types derive from visual sources and textile remains, although my study relies on the first of these types. In fact, these two types of source frequently contradict each another and it can be difficult to ascertain the exact decorative components on North African dress; visual media are governed by artistic conventions that might limit the ability to depict and represent intricate tapestry detail. On the other hand, elaborate ornamentation, such as that on the Christian tomb commemoration for Rogata (Fig. 1.4) from Sfax, *Africa Proconsularis* (Duval 2003: 774), might present the viewer with an unrealistic level of detail. Nevertheless, such images attest to the late Roman cultural environment in which individuals were adept at expressing identity through nuances of appearance. That figures in mosaic iconography frequently wear the same clothing ensembles but in

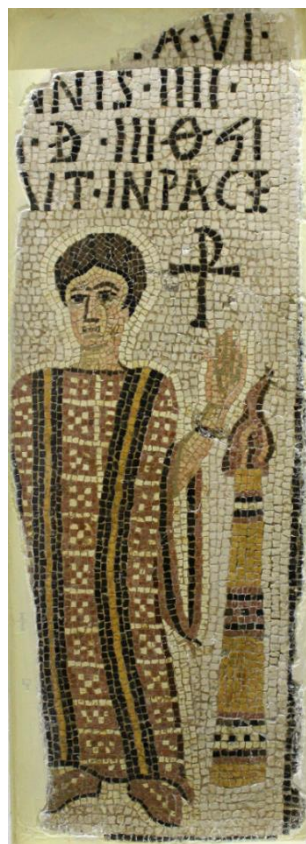


Figure 1.4: Rogata Tomb Mosaic,
Sfax. Middle of the fifth century AD.
Bardo Museum.

different colours and decorative elements implies that such textile differences were important facets of the sartorial reality.

Clavi were a ubiquitous decorative element. A *clavus* was a stripe that ran vertically down from the shoulder of the garment. Placed in pairs on either side of the neck opening, the design was replicated on front and back. Historically, *clavi* served to designate rank, with the broad stripe of the *lati clavi* showcasing senatorial status, and the narrow striped *angusti clavi* of Equestrians (Pausch 2003: 112-118). The extent to which *clavi* decoration were reserved just for senatorial and Equestrian use before the second century AD is, however, debated (Bender Jørgensen 2011: 75). That new forms of *clavi* design are evident in North African mosaic iconography by the start of the third century AD, even for the clothing of attendants or agricultural workers as seen in a late second-century AD banqueting scene from Sidi-bou-Saïd, in Carthage (Fig. 1.5), suggests a transformation of the relevance of such modes of textile adornment. In earlier Imperial designs, *clavi* ran the length of the tunic, but gradually, over the third and fourth centuries AD, tastes changed to include *clavi* running from shoulder to the waist and their use was no longer restricted to the upper echelons of society. *Clavi* stylisations also evolved from monochrome stripes to bands incorporating complex polychrome designs; they could even terminate in an arrow design, as in the depiction of a pair of hunters (Fig. 1.6) from an early fourth-century mosaic from Hippo Regius (Picard 1964 103, 107; Dunbabin 1978: 239). Recently, Bender Jørgensen (2008, 2011) has attempted



Figure 1.5: Attendant wearing a colobium tunic with thin *clavi*, Banquet Mosaic, Sidi-bou-Saïd, Carthage. Late second century AD. Bardo Museum.

to clarify the usage of *clavi* terminology from Egyptian textile evidence. Many of the details of *clavi*, however, rely on structural analysis of actual textile remains – elements that cannot be proved in a North African context. In light of the lack of accurate information, *clavi* is used in my study as a generic term to refer to all ornamentation that resembles a pair of vertical bands or stripes, regardless of form or decoration. Since it is accepted that *clavi* always come in pairs, in my study the additional qualification of *clavi* as ‘single’ thus denotes a form of single band decoration – a simplified single stripe – not a single *clavus*.

Other frequent ornamentations to late Roman clothing were *orbiculi* and *segmenta*. *Orbiculi* were woven roundels used to decorate fabric, normally situated at the shoulders or the hem of a garment. Likewise, *segmenta* were rectangular decorative elements placed in similar locations to *orbiculi*, although in modern scholarship they are



Figure 1.6: Pair of Hunters with tunics decorated with *clavi* terminating in arrow design, from a hunt mosaic, Maison d'Isguntus, Hippo Regius. Early fourth century AD.

sometimes termed *tabulae* if square in shape (e.g. Pritchard 2006: 49). Visual media demonstrates that the size of these types of adornment varied from context to context, although a survey of the depictions of garments and their decorations highlights a general evolution from small and discrete to larger and more complex patches of decoration, with iconography frequently contained within these decorative elements (Morgan 2018: 17). That these textile adornments are found on both male and female clothing confirms their perceived suitability for both genders, despite gendered clothing ensembles taking different forms in the later Roman era, just as it had done in earlier periods where gender boundaries were theoretically immutable (Kuefler 2001: 19).

In the third century AD, new forms of male sartorial stylisation – based around the tunic-ensemble – became vogue, and replaced the toga as the most popular form of public representation. Specific elements of late Roman male attire are considered below, but it is worth acknowledging that developing male fashions followed transformations in military and administrative spheres, with the introduction of ‘foreign’ elements to the late Roman wardrobe signifying their absorption into normative garb (Harlow 2004b: 54). While aspects of this late Roman costume may have been unfamiliar or inappropriate to earlier audiences – in the *Historia Augusta* the emperor Elagabalus is effeminately characterised by his sartorial excesses (*Heliogab.* 23.3-5) – changes in the tastes of the ruling elite highlight new clothing patterns and new representational modes. Indeed, the late Roman and late antique world had a new sartorial vocabulary by which to communicate. Rather than being indicative of notions of a ‘barbarian’ identity, the use of garments such as leggings formed part of the accepted performance of elite identity (von Rummel 2007: 400-406). The beginnings of the transformation of the male wardrobe, of course, coincided with Caracalla’s Edict of AD 212, which expanded the citizen population and therefore those individuals who had the right to don the toga (Rothe 2019: 127, 147). While this effectively devalued the exclusivity of the *toga* as clothing reflective of certain privileges, it cannot be the sole reason for the apparent late Roman ‘la révolution du costume’ (Marrou 1977: 15-20), not least because female clothing also underwent a transformation at this time.

Until the end of the second century AD, the idealised costume of the Roman *matronae*, elite wives of Roman citizens, included the *stola* and the *palla* (Mart., 1.35,



Figure 1.7: Onyx cameo portrait of a woman wearing the stola, Alexandria, Egypt. c. AD 90-100. British Museum.

11.104.7; Larsson Lovén 2014: 268). Worn over a loose tunic, the *stola* was a long, sleeveless garment fastened by *institae*, shoulder straps (Fig 1.7). A *palla*, as a type of mantle, was used to provide another outer layer, but it also functioned as a demonstration of modesty in covering the woman's head whilst in public (Sebesta 1994), as reflected in draping depicted on a first-century statue from Carthage (Fig. 1.8). The tension between idealised dress and the usual 'everyday' attire of Roman women reflects the ambiguity of modesty as replicated through virtuous dress (Davies 2002). Such public images no doubt disseminated acceptable forms of female attire, contributing to the standardisation of ideals of how *matronae* should appear in public. Due to the nature of source material, however, it is difficult to establish whether contemporary women mocked or emulated these representations (Harlow 2012c: 41) as these are 'representations of female dress [that] are the product of a male world view' (Harlow 2007: 536). This female ensemble appears as an idealised iteration and over the course of the later Roman period practicalities of female dress dismissed the *stola*, while the *palla* saw a more casual use (Harlow 2004a: 205). Stolate imagery appears to be relatively short-lived, peaking during the Julio-Claudian period (Olson 2008: 32). According to Tertullian, in the early first century AD Caecina Severus complained to the Senate about the matronly disregard for the *stola* (*De pall.* 4.9.1).



Figure 1.8: Statue of Roman matron wearing a tunic, palla and stola, Carthage. First century AD. British Museum.

That Tertullian, writing in the early third century AD, mobilises this historical event to bolster his rhetoric proves the continued potency of the '*stolatum...pudorem*', or stolate modesty, as Martial characterised it (1.35.8-9). Unfortunately, there are comparatively few depictions of dressed women in surviving visual media, and only a handful from late Roman North Africa itself. Such images, as seen in the late fourth or early fifth-century Matron at her Toilette mosaic from Sidi Ghrib (Fig. 1.9), show women in costumes that emphasise the transformation of notions of appropriate female attire, from the covered female bodies of the Imperial era to the more tight-fitting clothing of the later Roman period, notably with no *palla* or mantle. While the general lack of imagery does not prove a cultural unwillingness to depict women, it is interesting to note that this paucity of female imagery was paralleled by fierce rhetoric debating female attire, although the inherent moral emphasis behind such clothing forms – *pudicitia* or modesty – stayed the same.



Figure 1.9: *Matron at Her Toilette Mosaic, Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia. Late fourth or early fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.*

1.5.2 Garment Terminology

Garment terminology is a methodological issue for dress scholars as complications arise when associating terms, recovered from textual references or documentary evidence, with descriptions of clothing. Assuredly, incorporating the work of philologists into the study of ancient textiles can improve contemporary understandings of clothing garments. Maria Mossakowska-Gaubert's work (2017) on the usage of tunic terminology in Roman and Byzantine Egypt offers an excellent synthesis of terms evidenced in contemporaneous Egypt. Yet, the adoption and adaption of many Roman and late antique garments into Byzantine and later practice (especially in ecclesiastical vestments) mean that modern scholars should be critical of the historiography of primary sources, recognising the potential for later terminology to supersede original vocabulary and more aware of the imprecisions that characterise previous scholarly discussions of Roman clothing. It is acceptable to use potentially schematic terminology when discussing and interpreting Roman dress, providing that such usage is carefully qualified. Below I outline the main clothing definitions used in my study.

1.5.2.1 Terminology: Tunics

In the first and second centuries AD, outer garments frequently supplemented the tunic, but it was the symbolism of the outer layer that carried the most cultural-weight. However, by the later Roman period, the tunic was the most common garment worn by the North Africans – men, women and children alike – who could even wear multiple tunic layers to mark their status (Parani 2007: 517). Woven to shape on the loom, leaving a gap to accommodate the head and then folded at the shoulders and seamed on the sides, the tunic was comprised of a single piece of cloth, normally wool or linen (Morgan 2018:16). Some archaeological remains from Egypt suggest tunics could be comprised of three woven pieces (the body and two sleeves) sown together (Granger-Taylor 1982). A fourth-century image of a tunic (Fig. 1.10), inscribed as part of a funerary commemoration at Carthage, although very schematic, shows potential for a tunic composed of three pieces (*ILTun* 1147).

Of course, the tunic was not unique to Roman Africa, but available across the Roman world and worn in both in public and private contexts (Harlow 2004b: 54). Tunics could be customised through garment length, sleeve length (or lack of sleeves) and decoration. Ankle-length tunics – known as *tunica talaris* – became fashionable during the late Roman period (Isid., *Etym.* 19.22.7; Pausch 2003: 168-171). The choice or combination of material for the tunic – wool, linen or silk – also provided a means of social differentiation (Pausch 2003: 181; Harlow 2013: 230). By the late antique period,



Figure 1.10: Engraved image of a tunic, *ILTun* 1147, Basilica at Mchfa, Carthage. Fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.

this historically plain garment became increasingly decorated with various ornamentations and forms that characterised the garment. The wearer likely donned a tunic most suited to their context, status and identity allegiances. Understanding the differences in tunic designs, reveals the associations to be gained by adopting one tunic type in preference to another.

Colobium Tunica

One of the most frequent tunic types in the late antique period is the *colobium* tunic, *κολόβιον*, commonly worn by labourers or servants in North African iconography (Fig. 1.11). Importantly, women also wore *colobia*. Although nominally a sleeve-less variant of a tunic, the wider version of this particular tunic, popular from the third century AD onwards, may have formed pseudo-sleeves from excess material draping over the shoulders when belted at the waist. Mossakowska-Gaubert suggests that this ‘*ad hoc*’



Figure 1.11: Servant wearing a colobium tunic.
Amphitheatre Scenes, Sollertiana House, El Djem.
First quarter of the third century AD. Bardo
Museum.

sleeve might create a distinction from the tunic referred to as a *chiton* in papyri (2017: 335). In Diocletian's Price Edict, Graser translates the term *κολόβιον* as short-sleeve tunic (e.g. *Edict. imp. Diocl.* 26.39, 49, 59, 72). My discussion, however, employs the term *colobium* to refer to both styles of this 'sleeveless' tunic and thus tunics with short or no sleeves.

Strictoria Tunica

Perhaps the antithesis of the *colobium*, the *tunica strictoria* denoted a garment with tight, long sleeves. Modern scholarship also refers to it as the *tunica manicata*. Sometimes equated with the *tunica stichon* (στίχη) or seen as a diminutive (Lampe 1961), both names appear as separate entries in the same lists of Diocletian's Price Edict (22.7, 9). Worn by men and women, this new tunic style marked an evolution from earlier Roman practice – and dress rhetoric – which saw the wearing of long sleeved tunics by men as effeminate (Cic., *Cat.* 2.22). The increasing popularity of this tunic style



Figure 1.12: Servant wearing a strictoria tunic, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. Late fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.

coincided with the increase in tunic decoration appearing on visual media, especially around the tunic cuffs. The length of the *strictoria* was dependent on the gender of the wearer and their context; for example, a hunter's tunic was shorter to reflect his active occupation (Fig. 1.12). In my discussion, the term *strictoria* is used in preference to *stichon*.

Dalmatica Tunica

The dalmatic tunic (δαλματική) was characterised by its floor length and extremely wide sleeves, purposely woven in such a shape as opposed to the creation of sleeves through draping. Although commonly associated with female dress, it was also worn by men. In fact, Faith Morgan's reconstruction of the dalmatic tunic Whitworth T. 1995.145 found from the Bagawat cemetery in the Kharga Oasis, Egypt (Pritchard 2006: 52), demonstrates that it was suitable garb for both genders (2018: Fig. 96 and 97). Diocletian's Price Edict lists notes a distinction, with the items such as *dalmaticarum asemarm muliebrum*, or unmarked dalmatics for women (*Edict. imp. Diocl. 26. 34*). In

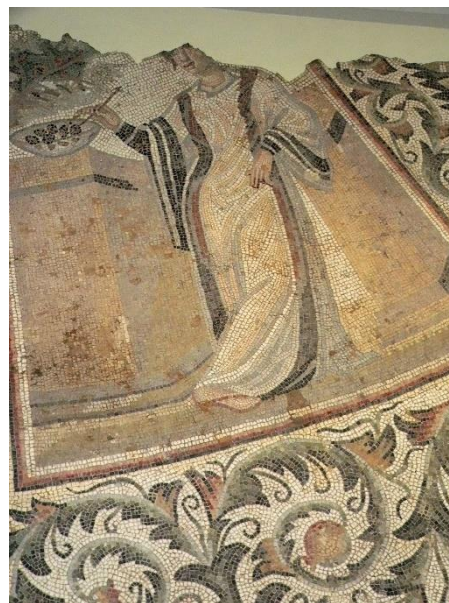


Figure 1.13: Personification of July wearing a dalmatica tunic over a tunica strictoria, Mosaic of the Months and the Seasons, Carthage. Late fourth century AD. British Museum.

much iconography, the dalmatic is schematically depicted, with the protrusion of arms just below the shoulders. It could also be worn as an overtunic as in the late fourth-century personification of July (Fig. 1.13) from the Mosaic of the Months and the Seasons from Carthage (Freed 2011: 107). A further variation in stylisation included the gathering of the sleeves with a belt around the waist or under the bust, perhaps a practical consideration to tuck away the sleeves and ease movement, as suggested by the representation of April dancing with castanets who uses a red tie (Fig. 1.14) also from the Mosaic of the Months and Seasons, Carthage. Servants or attendants likely wore a slightly shorter version of the dalmatic tunic, reaching to the ankles, as a reflection of their servile status and active roles (Harlow 2004a: 207).

The toponymical designation suggests that this style originated in Dalmatia (Morgan 2018: 17), but problems of toponymic attribution caution against reading too much into this (Harlow and Nosch 2014b: 16). Although the dalmatic tunic became increasingly associated with Christian clothing (Daniel-Hughes 2017: 83) – an opinion confirmed by Isidore of Seville who describes it as ‘a priestly white tunic with purple



Figure 1.14: Personification of April plays the castanets while wearing a dalmatica tunic with tied sleeves, Mosaic of the Months and the Seasons, Carthage. Late fourth century AD. British Museum.

stripes' (*Etym.* 19.22.9) – its usage in my discussion is not so confined, reflecting actual usage in late Roman and late antique North Africa, and is appropriate when describing garments in both religious and secular contexts.

1.5.2.2 Terminology: *Outer Garments*

From the third century AD, both male and female attire demonstrates a move away from draped clothing – epitomised by the *toga* and *palla* – and a new preference for more form-fitting clothing and tunic forms. As described above, these tunics could be highly ornate. Yet, other articles of clothing used to supplement the tunic also had significant resonances in processes of identity negotiation.

Toga

The toga was a semi-circular woollen garment worn draped over the body, producing a curved hem. Encapsulating and embodying symbolic elements of Roman social ideologies, the toga acted as an ideogram (Olson 2017: 26). While it is debateable how typical this garment was of everyday Roman dress and costume outside of city contexts (Harlow 2004b: 49; Stone 1994: 13), it is clear from artefacts like *togati* statues or grave *stele* that such characterisations were indicative of ideal Roman citizen dress and important forms of public representation. Toga attributes advertised various features of the wearer's status. Roman males assumed the *toga virilis* upon entering adulthood at which point they divested themselves of the *toga praetexta*, the purple-bordered toga worn by all free-citizen children and Roman magistrates (Davies 2005; Dolansky 2008). That the *toga praetexta* was an ungendered garment (Dolansky 2008: 53) emphasised that upon receiving the *toga virilis*, the Roman male affirmed his participation in adult male practice. Candidates running for office donned the *toga candida*, while victorious generals wore the *toga picta* (Livy 30.15.11-12; Goette 1990: 9) and emperors displayed the *toga purpurea* (Rothe 2009: 40).

The earlier version of this garment, the Republican *toga exigua*, was a smaller, tighter version than later styles (Hor., *Epist.* 1.19.12-14). Visual differentiation in the *sinus*, or the overfold, and the *umbo*, or the knob, distinguished the imperial toga from its predecessor (Stone 1994: 17). Forming a decorative emphasis across the torso, *sinus* fashion varied and was not subject to formal directives. In the second century AD, a toga tightly fitted diagonally across the chest, creating the *balteus*, or sword belt, became prevalent (Stone 1994: 24). The toga style popular by the third century AD was the *toga contabulata*, or the banded toga. The iconography of the so-called Brother Sarcophagus, dating to the mid-third century AD, includes a version of this toga type. The bands of the *toga contabulata* can be seen on the clothing of the figure second from the left (Fig. 1.15). Developments in toga fashions had this most recognisable feature, the flat-folded horizontal band running across the chest to the left shoulder, a focal point. There was greater variation in the *sinus*, which was either carried by the left arm or left to hang loose (Stone 1994: 25). This elaborate pleated band is a detail that Tertullian critiques in his early third-century *De pallio*. His discourse on the preference of the *pallium* to the toga capitalised on this latter garment's perceived tedious and cumbersome nature: 'how do you feel in a toga: dressed or oppressed? Is it like wearing clothing or bearing them?' (Tert., *De pall.* 5.1-2). As cultural shorthand in both literary and visual material, reference to the toga was employed in various media to great effect.



Figure 1.15: Figures wearing a variety of costumes, including the *toga contabulata*, Front panel of the Brothers Sarcophagus. Mid third century AD. Naples National Archaeological Museum.

This does not mean that all visual depictions of the toga were realised with complete historical accuracy. An interesting mosaic panel from a house in Sousse, *Byzacena*, dated to c. AD 200-210, shows the Latin poet Vergil wearing the toga (Fig. 1.16). Vergil wears the *toga praetexta* despite never being a magistrate and the visualisation of this garment with its copious, but unrealistic, folds results in the author being 'dressed up' in a transgressive costume which is only appropriate in this retrospective rendering (Métraux 2008: 286). The visual record in North Africa, in fact, suggests the paucity of contemporary depictions of North Africans in the toga in domestic contexts, with a preference instead for other ensembles; although a reference from Augustine suggests that even the outdated institution of the *toga virilem sumere* ceremony remained relevant into the early fifth century AD (Aug., *De civ. D.* 4.11).



Figure 1.16: Vergil dressed in the toga praetexta, Vergil Mosaic, House of Vergil, Sousse. First quarter of the third century AD. Bardo Museum.

Pallium

The *pallium* was a large wrapped mantle comprised of a large rectangular piece of material, normally of wool. It was worn wrapped around the body and could cover one or both shoulders (Rothe 2009: 41). In contrast to the *toga*, the *pallium* produced a straight hem (Davies and Llewellyn-Jones 2017: 51). This garment corresponded with the Greek *himation*, and references to the *pallium* – especially when alongside the *toga* – could operate to contrast Greek and Roman identity (e.g. Cic., *Phil.* 5.5.14). Suetonius frames the actions of Augustus, who was said to distribute *palliat* as well as *togae*, in this way (*Aug.* 98). Like many costumes in the Roman world, though, it was the symbolic value of the *pallium*, with its cultural connotations, which served as a marker of identity and morality, consequently imbuing the wearer with the characteristics associated with those who dressed as such. For this reason, Baroin and Valette-Cagnac consider the *pallium* to be a Roman invention and a term that is contextually dependent (2007: 527). Nevertheless, the *pallium* had the longest usage of any Roman cloak (Olson 2017: 74) and is attested as early as Plautus in the second century BC who utilises it to signal a Greek characterisation (*Curc.* 288).

The extent to which the *pallium* exclusively evoked a Greek identity from the second and third centuries AD is debatable. Increasingly deployed as a rhetorical device, the *pallium* signalled the philosophic lifestyle (e.g. Gell. 9.2.4, 13.8.5) and frequently provided an antithesis to the *toga*. In his *De pallio*, Tertullian, writing at the start of the third century AD (Brennan 2008: 175), employs this garment in his discussion of ‘Christian’ dress, although the exclusivity of a Christian association is questionable (see Chapter 5.1). From Tertullian we learn the various social resonances the *pallium* was thought to convey – especially the ease with which it could be put on: ‘On no occasion is there a waste of time in dressing, for all the effort it takes consists in loosely covering oneself’ (*De pall.* 5.3.1) – and its suitability for the costume of particular groups, such as grammarians, rhetors, sophists, doctors and poets (*De pall.* 6.2). Its use was not limited to these individuals, however, and in Tertullian’s argument, the *pallium* serves to bolster the image of the non-political life that Tertullian is so keen to promote (Harlow 2004b: 62) and this impression is confirmed by an early third-century mosaic (Fig. 1.17) which



Figure 1.17: Actor wearing a pallium, Mosaic of Actor and Poet, House of the Masks, Sousse. Early third century AD. Bardo Museum.

shows an actor garbed in the *pallium*. Significantly, too, Tertullian presents the *pallium* as a costume previously worn by Punic communities (*De pall.* 1.1.3). His discussion, therefore, frames the adoption of the *pallium* by North African communities as a re-adoption of traditional costume. Thus, the *pallium* acts as a literary subject (Vout 1996: 213). Tertullian's actual use of the *pallium* somewhat typifies the *pallium*'s symbolism; the *pallium* provided an effective contrast by which to differentiate Roman – and thus *toga*-wearing – groups from those for whom the *pallium* is more appropriate.

In visual media, distinguishing between the *pallium* and *toga* is difficult, especially when the lower edge is not visible (Rothe 2009: 41). Whether such images merely acted as ideograms, too, is an important consideration, but does not undermine the implications of the frequent mention of such garments, namely that this type of clothing held a positive form of self-identification. While the visual material from late Roman North Africa most frequently depicts lay Christians wearing the *paenula* and not the *pallium* as Tertullian would suggest, the Vermeule Cover, an early fifth-century ARS *lanx* featuring a Roman consul flanked by Peter and Paul, shows the apostles each

dressed in the *pallium* (van den Hoek 2006: 199). Reportedly from El Djem (van den Hoek 2006: 198), the production of such imagery in North Africa attests that this form of representation was recognisable to its audience. As a motif for purposeful rejection of the toga, by the sixth century AD the *pallium* came to symbolise a sacerdotal garment embodying episcopal authority (Coon 1997: 62).

Chlamys

The *chlamys* was a long woven cloak with a curved edge, often worn with a *fibula* on the right shoulder, leaving the cloak draped over the left shoulder (Harlow 2004b: 60). Its origins saw it often characterised as a military cloak – as in Plautus’ characterisation of the soldier Collybiscus (*Poen.* 645) – although it was a feature of the traditional Greek male hunting costume (Davis and Llewellyn-Jones 2017: 63). Thus, in the *Historia Augusta*, ‘Good’ emperors laid aside this garment when entering Rome – as seen in Hadrian’s actions (*SHA*, Hadr. 22.3) – while the immoral character of ‘Bad’ emperors could be exemplified through retaining the *chlamys*, as evidenced by Gallienus’ actions: ‘He went out in public adorned with the radiate crown, *cum chlamyde purpurea gemmatisque fibulis et aureis Romae visus est, ubi semper togati principes videbantur*, and at Rome, where the emperors always appeared in the toga, he appeared in a purple cloak with jewelled and golden clasps’ (*SHA*, Gall. 16.4). To what extent such characterisations reflect efficient rhetorical devices rather than document actual actions or social anxieties is debatable. The so-called *oratio* scene from the Arch of



Figure 1.18: The emperor Constantine, dressed in the *chlamys*, addresses the gathered audience from the rostra, frieze from the Arch of Constantine, Rome. Early fourth century AD.

Constantine depicts the emperor, wearing the *chlamys*, addressing the Roman people from the *rostra* in the Forum (Fig. 1.18). Constantine's sartorial depiction is a statement of the simultaneous martial and civil power of the emperor, as his attire contrasts to the nearby senators who are *togate* (Bodnaruk 2015: 152, 154). In an accompanying frieze representing the *largitio*, or the distribution of money, Constantine dons the *toga contabulata* and thus adopts the same attire as the senators (Bodnaruk 2015: 153). In later years, the *chlamys* and toga continue not to be mutually exclusive forms of representation as attested by iconography on consular diptychs (Olovsson 2005: 92-97).

It is clear that reputation of the *chlamys* underwent a transformation and, by the end of the fourth century AD, the *chlamys*-tunic ensemble marked civic officials, who wore the same garment as the emperor (Parani 2007: 501), but with different *tablia* – a pair of textile panels attached to the garment (Croom 2010: 57). Recent work by Ulrich Gehn (2012) has explored late Roman honorific statues looking particularly at *togate* and *chlamydati* costumes, but concentrated less on the socio-cultural analysis of such garments. As public forms of representation, honourific statues offered the opportunity to present the ideal version of oneself, and might be seen as presenting an indirect version of reality (Wueste 2017: 180). Yet, the adoption of the *chlamys* in more domestic forms of artistic representation, such as mosaics (Smith 2016: 17), confirms the suitability of this garment in such contexts in the late Roman world, although the decoration was not as complex as in those who claimed belonging with the administrative or military establishments (Parani 2007: 501). In visual media depicting diverse groups of people, the *chlamys* conveyed a sense of social distinction between individuals. Despite a prevalence of *chlamydati* statues in the East such as in Corinth (see A. Brown 2012), there is currently no evidence for similar usage in late Roman North Africa. Moreover, in the majority of North African visual representations, while the *chlamys* retains its characteristic brooch closure on the right shoulder, it is far shorter than that shown in portrait statuary perhaps to emphasise its use in dynamic activities such as hunting (Fig. 1.19).

The Greek *chlamys* also served as the predecessor to the Roman *paludamentum*, a military cloak worn by generals and later associated with emperors. As a symbol of



Figure 1.19: Mounted hunter wearing a chlamys, Hunting Scenes Mosaic, Maison d'Isguntus, Hippo Regius. Early fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.

military authority, the *paludamentum* was to be divested upon re-entering the city and failure to do so invited criticism (e.g. Cic. *Verr.* 5.13). In the fourth century AD, Nonius considered the two terms synonymous (Non. 864). My project, however, is primarily concerned with the *chlamys* as part of the hunting ensemble.

Sagum

The *sagum* was a simple rectangular cloak, smaller than the *pallium* and made from heavy wool (Croom 2010: 56). A smaller version, known as the *sagulum* is mentioned by Vergil (8.660). Originally of Gallic origin, this Gallic cloak was generally associated with the military and labourers – Cicero described donning the *sagum* as the act of going to war (*Phil.* 8.6) – but its use grew as a result of military contact with north-western provinces (Rothe 2013: 255); it is attested on the wooden leaf tablets found at Vindolanda (Wild 2002: 25). Columella recommends it for farm labourers in bad weather (*Rust.* 1.8.9), as it might also double as a blanket. The multiple functions of *saga* mean that the *sagum* as clothing and *sagum* as soft-furnishings are difficult to interpret from



Figure 1.20: Hunter wearing the sagum, Boar Hunt Mosaic, Hill of Juno, Carthage. Early third century AD. Bardo Museum.

written and documentary material: Diocletian's Price Edict mentions *sagum fibulatorium*, or *sagum* fastened with a brooch, as well as plain *sagum* (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 19.53, 61). While this has been interpreted as distinguishing between dress and blanket (e.g. Wild 2002: 22), it might also refer to a simpler version of the garment still worn as clothing. The designation of such garments as African confirm their use in the African context. During the late antique period, the *sagum* was adopted into the hunting wardrobe, where, in visual media, it is worn by servants and high status individuals alike (Fig. 1.20). The *sagum* is also mentioned in the Zarai tariff, an early third-century inscription found in *Numidia* (CIL 8.4508).

Paenula

A *paenula* was a large heavy cape with a hood made of wool or leather (Mart. 14.145, 130) and worn by civilians, although textual sources also associate it with the military (e.g. Sen., *Ben.* 3.28.5, 5.24.2; Suet., *Ner.* 49.4). This cape formed a V-shape at the front and its design allowed the movement of the arms. Despite attempts to associate this garment with the Gallic cape (e.g. Kolb 1973: 88) these two garments were not analogous, as the *paenula* was frequently, but not always, sewn together at the front

(Rothe 2009: 35). It thus offered good protection again inclement weather (Davies and Llewellyn-Jones 2017: 62). The *paenula* is attested as part of the Roman wardrobe during the last second century BC (Plaut., *Mostell.* 993) where it protects the wearer (Olson 2017: 73). However, a sumptuary law of AD 382 suggests that at this time the *paenula* was prescribed as appropriate dress for senators, in place of the military *chlamys* (*Cod. Theod.* 14.10.1). In mosaic imagery from Thelepte (Fig. 1.21), spectators at the amphitheatre wear the *paenula*. The *paenula* also appears in the mid fifth-century *Digest*, documenting the text of the third-century Ulpian who considers it appropriate for slaves (34.2.23.2).

Depictions of the *paenula* from the Christian burial at Tabarka, including that for Iovinus (Fig. 1.22), confirm that its use was not restricted to the upper echelons of society, although it was employed here as costume for males of the moneyed classes. By the fifth century AD, the *paenula* could be worn as part of episcopal costume (Daniel-Hughes 2017: 83); although such a religious association was the result of the gradual association between the *paenula* and Christian identity. In an early Christian context, St



Figure 1.21: Spectators wear the *paenula*, Amphitheatre Mosaic, Thelepte, Tunisia. Mid to late third century AD. Bardo Museum.

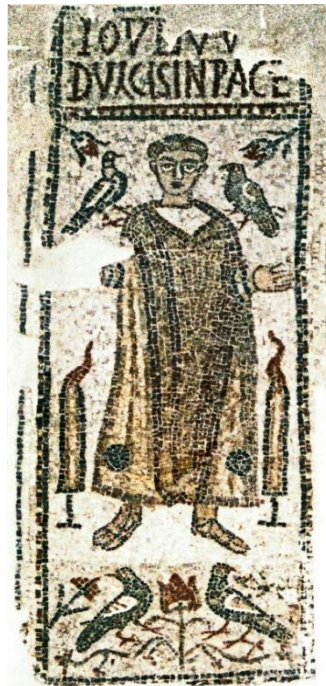


Figure 1.22: Iovinus wearing the paenula, Iovinus Tomb Mosaic, Urban Basilica Cemetery Enclosure, Tabarka. Early fifth century AD. Bardo Museum

Paul had instructed his followers to bring his *paenula* to him (2 Tim 4:13). That Ambrose of Milan is shown wearing the *paenula* in a depiction from the S. Vittore Chapel at Sant' Ambrogio at Milan (Fig. 1.23), which might have been completed shortly after his death in AD 397 or by the second half of the fifth century AD (Brenk 2005: 273), confirms a close affinity by this time. The *paenula* might correspond with the *casula* (Daniel-Hughes 2017: 83), a garment mentioned by Augustine in his narration of the miracle experienced by the Christian Florentius of Hippo who lost his *casula* (*De civ. D.* 22.8).

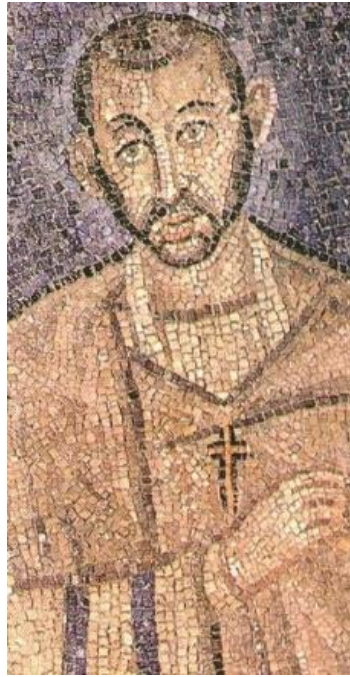


Figure 1.23: Mosaic of Ambrose of Milan, S. Vittore Chapel at Sant' Ambrogio, Milan. Second half of the fifth century AD.

Chapter 2: Current Scholarship and Literature Review

This chapter outlines the ways in which my study contributes to current research into the late Roman cultural landscape of North Africa. Exploring dress rhetoric in the creation and manipulation of identities in the context of Roman North Africa (c. AD 200-500), builds on the growing scholarship of Roman dress that has already transformed both the respectability and rigour of dress studies that examine ancient contexts. While there are various investigative avenues by which to study and engage with attitudes towards bodily presentation, no such extensive endeavour has exclusively analysed late Roman or late antique North Africa, a region where there is abundant evidence that dressing behaviours were critiqued and debated. My project therefore harnesses the current state of dress scholarship as an environment sympathetic to using clothing as a cultural device, and advocates for further research of this kind to nuance prevailing interpretations.

2.1 Current Scholarship

2.1.1 Roman Dress

The process of dressing the body is culturally significant and thus the investigation of North African dress cannot merely track what garments were popular. Aspects of this research agenda initially prevailed, as evidenced in Mary Houston's study (1947) where the description of textiles and construction patterns endeavoured to reproduce garments. Such studies continue to exist, for instance Alexandra Croom's *Roman Clothing and Fashion* (2000 [2010]), but often act as annotated glossaries to provide descriptive details, in place of cultural or historical analysis. Assuredly, knowledge of the basic characteristics of clothing is useful for understanding the connotations when individuals refer to certain articles of dress, but such actions relegate clothing to purely passive terms. Rather than just cataloguing Roman dressing-styles, my thesis contextualises various clothing fashions as active embodiments and projections of cultural ideas and ideals.

Unfortunately, for a long time scholarship upheld the toga as the bastion of Roman sartorial identity – and thus made it *the* research focal point (e.g. Wilson 1924) – establishing structural characteristics rather than any social or cultural function. Evolving fashions in late Roman North Africa saw the prominence of the tunic-ensemble replace the traditional toga-costume, as seen in Chapter 1.5. This, of course, does not negate the more anthropologically informed readings of the Roman toga undertaken by Stone (1994) or Vout (1996), examining literary and iconographic sources, but further demonstrates the fluidity of attitudes to sartorial behaviours. New forms of representation became popular and alternative apparel, such as the *trabea*, the *chlamys* and the *pallium*, witnessed increasing preference (Rollason 2016). The semiotic connotations of clothing also reveal much about the interplay of power and dressing customs thereby situating the individual in their wider social context. My study contributes further insights into the power dynamics of dressing in exploring those who have the perceived authority to question and reform sartorial activities and, as an extension, where these boundaries lie. Tertullian writing in AD 205 (Brennan 2008: 175), for instance, notes that it is a landscape of prosperity that allows for the criticism of clothing (*De pall.* 1.1), although his other clothing debates in *De virginibus velandis* and *De cultu feminarum* are better characterised as a confrontation of Christian and non-Christian practice (see Chapter 4.2). Importantly, new clothing systems often retained similar intentions to their predecessors, revealing continuing cultural anxieties or ideals.

Transformed academic interests now research diverse aspects of Roman dress rhetoric, not only confirming the benefits of using dress as an interpretative medium, but also situating dressing habits in their wider cultural context and integrating such discussions in the analysis of cultural actions, as epitomised by Ursula Rothe's (2019) recent publication. The essays compiled in *The World of Roman Costume* (1994), edited by Judith Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante are symptomatic of developments in understanding what clothing reveals about Roman society and attitudes. Mary Harlow's edited volume *Dress and Identity* (2012), too, analyses the symbolism and ideology of dress and the relationships between different types of source material. The underlying idea of the 'language of dress' (Harlow 2012a: 2) – the recognition that dress is a communicative mechanism elucidating the social identities of the wearer – is something

that underpins my thesis, but is expanded in the guise of ‘dress rhetoric’ to suit the late Roman historical context. Why this approach is necessary, and what this contributes to the wider discussion of the late Roman cultural landscape, is the reiteration of the cultural dynamics of clothing and clothing’s potential for social expression. Framing interpretations of dressing habits as such appreciates that dress surpasses mere functionality, playing an active role in socio-cultural performance. The echoes of such clothing discourse are visible in a variety of source material.

Naturally, since my study synthesises four aspects of North African dressing practice, it offers a more comprehensive investigation of clothing rhetoric than smaller contributions to an edited volume. In doing so, my research speaks to a number of concepts surveyed by Harlow’s edited volume *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion: Volume 1: In Antiquity* (2017). This publication is a later addition to the growing field of Greco-Roman Dress, showcasing the vibrancy of the study of ancient clothing. An earlier volume by Jonathan Edmondson and Allison Keith (2008) testified to the self-perceived legitimisation of ancient clothing as a research pursuit, with the editors noting that dress studies ‘is clearly now well established as a recognised field of intellectual enquiry. It can no longer be accused of being a frivolous or light-weight topic’ (2008: 3). My thematic structure also allows more dedicated focus on elements that highlight the complexity of dressing practices in their real and abstract forms. Thus, by bringing notions of gender, religion, status and cultural identity to the fore, dress is better integrated back into the contemporary North African social fabric and seen as a constituent factor in social interactions.

2.1.2 Gender, Religion, Social and Cultural Identity

We should not underrepresent the interconnectedness of gender and dress in the late Roman world, as the Roman vestimentary system gendered certain garments and ensembles. Since costumes imbued the wearer with established characterisations, gendered attire perpetuated cultural norms. Visual material, such as that discussed by Glenys Davies and Shelley Hales in their individual contributions to *The Clothed Body in the Ancient World* (2005), offers the modern scholar with representations of acceptable

Roman dress practice. Following on from these studies, but exploring a different research context, my discussion, too, highlights the positive connotations that female beautification – as represented in art – could bring. The correlation between female morality and clothing is a fruitful line of investigation as demonstrated by a number of studies (e.g. Sebesta 1994a, 1997; Bartman 2001); D’ambra comments that, ‘we haven’t yet recognised female beauty in Ancient Rome as a system with its own logic and order articulated with rhetorical force’ (2014: 155). My own thesis discussion will help to expand this theme.

As Kelly Olson shows in her investigation of the cultural weight of dress ornamentation c. 200 BC - 300 AD (2002, 2008), Roman women faced the precarious position of the duality of their attire. On one hand, clothing and adornment offered a positive means of self-expression – a so-called ‘insignia’ for women – a notion that Maureen Carroll explores (2012). On the other hand, male authors frequently censured female sartorial actions and the *matrona*’s sartorial performance was often subject to approval from male authorities. Previously, Maria Wyke has criticised exploring notions of female adornment through such ‘reflections’ or ‘images’ (1994: 134) as a prioritisation of male discourse. Her investigation situated female dressing practices in a broader representational system that produced simultaneous, but contradictory, constructs of the Roman *matrona*. Unquestionably, the production of Roman literature – a predominantly male activity – re-iterated gender ideals and significantly influenced the surviving records of attitudes to female dress. Yet, as Kate Wilkinson notes, we should not presume interpretations in terms of ‘freedom’ from patriarchal systems: ‘[a] woman’s agency need not be identical with resistance; her use of symbols need not subvert the symbolic order in which she exists’ (2015: 46). While textual evidence reinforce a male perspective, these sources are indicative of prominent attitudes and power structures, but do not necessarily reveal the full picture.

Despite the burgeoning interest in the connection between gender and clothing, religious dress-codes have seen less explicit consideration. My discussion rectifies this gap in scholarship for the late Roman North African context. The study of ancient dress as encoded expressions of ‘values, worldviews, and priorities of ancient people, as well as the social dynamics and structures of their communities’, should not ignore ‘religious’

clothing as a potential interpretative medium (Batten *et al.* 2014: 7). The vocabulary of Roman religious dress did not exist in isolation of other social activities, but was emphasised in pertinent contexts. For this reason, the debates over female attire documented in the writings of early African Christian authors, such as Tertullian's *De cultu feminarum* and *De virginibus velandis* and Cyprian of Carthage's *De habitu virginum*, which have often been discussed purely in terms of gender (e.g. Finlay 2003; Schüssler Fiorenza 1983; Forrester Church 1975) whether in praise or criticism, misrepresent the religious component of such debates. In my study, the interdependence of religion and gender as manifested in sartorial behaviours implicitly conflates these two kinds of identities: my discussion must artificially separate the two for ease of analysis.

In the Christian world-view, such differentiation was not self-evident and therefore publications that examine religious dress are more precisely interested in religion *and* gender. This is exemplified by Kristi Upson-Saia (2011) who argues that 'the construction of early Christian ascetic identities must be understood in part through the fused virtue, authority, and gender signified in ascetics' dress and physical appearance' (2011: 3). Further, since Christian authors appropriated and adapted aspects of the traditional Roman discourse that emphasised the female sphere as preoccupied with dress and appearance, the conversation of early Christian dress is often one read through female attire – albeit frequently the male discourse of female clothing. My study, too, details the mechanisms where clothing practices expressed a Christian identity, primarily from the examination of male attitudes and discussions of female dress. As Carly Daniel-Hughes notes in her study (2011), the developing Christian rhetoric imbued female clothing and the body with ever more significant eschatological and soteriological meaning. Clearly, for the emerging Christian communities in North Africa their clothing expressed their religious identity and their difference from non-Christians.

The importance of religion at the level of the individual is a subject explored by Éric Rebillard (2012), and his focus on the plurality of identities has done much to temper the previous exaggeration of the primacy of Christian identity over other social designations. Indeed, my work reflects a vision where an individual simultaneously

inhabits many, competing identities and can use clothing to highlight or suppress aspects as desired. As Rebillard argues, 'Christianness' was only given salience in certain contexts (2012: 8) and, likewise, Christian 'groupness' was evoked only intermittently. Debates of 'religious individualism' thus turn a focus onto the perpetuated stable groups of 'Christians', 'Jews' and 'Pagans', a line of study adopted by Rebillard and Jörg Rüpke's edited volume *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late Antiquity* (2015). My work complements Rebillard's (2015) chapter 'Late Antique Limits of Christianess: North Africa in the Age of Augustine' in how group-making processes, as a means of promoting group cohesion, expose the somewhat artificial nature of Christian affiliation. If clothing reveals anything about contemporary cultural dynamics, it is the malleability and ease by which individuals stylise themselves in accordance with their audiences.

The role of dress in the activation of Christian identity is an important consideration as it divulges elements of cultural continuation. By its very nature, dress allows the wearer to cast aside one costume – and thus one identity – in exchange for another. It is clear that in some contexts, Christian identity became the principal means of identification. The contribution that North African Christian funerary mosaics add to the discussion of competing social identities lies in the confirmation of the presence of a peculiar mode of 'Christian' commemoration and the extent to which the vocal dress rhetoric espoused by Christian authors filtered into actual practice. Notably, previous examinations of such North African artefacts used details of the depiction of the deceased – including dress and the body – as a means of categorisation. In her study, Margaret Alexander focused almost exclusively on these iconographic details when constructing her typology, noting that the 'positions of the arms and hands are not just conventional tags, they epitomise the differences' her typologies (1958: 43). In a similar way, Joan Downs' thesis used 'the human figure as a barometer of change at Tabarka' (2007: 554). Her work analysed the illustrations of dress on the mosaic covers, and thus supplements our understanding of clothing practices – at least from the visual sphere. My study builds on this understanding and, importantly, contextualises these images in the wider picture of the Christian use of clothing as a mode of religious communication. By integrating these representations of the dressed Christian body into a broader

discussion of sartorial practice and the vibrant written discourse, we achieve a more nuanced understanding of the function of dress.

The exploration of late Roman cultural practice almost invariably focuses on elite groups and my discussion is no different in this regard, since these are the groups whose identity expressions best survive. Exceptions exist, of course – for instance, Leslie Dossey’s (2010) study foregrounded subaltern and disenfranchised groups – but the search for ancient social identities ostensibly centres on elite behaviours. As Kate Wilkinson shows (2015), even for women of the Anicii family, a prominent and wealthy aristocratic family, their strategic performances of ‘modest’ dress which purport to showcase moderated sartorial ostentation, were only possible – and commendable – because such acts of self-denial were made visible through extremes of bodily transformation. The Anicii women had both the economic and social capital to choreograph extraordinary sartorial performances. Put simply, these women would not be remembered by their male Christian commentators if they had been poor.

For Roman North Africa, conspicuous consumption in elite spheres provides the foundation for Katherine Dunbabin’s seminar work *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa: Studies in Iconography and Patronage* (1978), which showcases the sheer vitality of late Roman artistic practice. Her work established the characteristic nature of North African mosaic iconography and composition and my study build on her synthesis by turning a sharper lens onto how visualisations of dress in these mosaics reflect a wider cultural importance of dress rhetoric. Margherita Carucci’s (2007) extensive analysis of Romano-African *domus* also helps to situate mosaic floors archaeologically and, like Lisa Nevett’s *Domestic Space in Classical Antiquity* (2010), reminds us that while being visual sources of evidence, mosaic pavements are in fact domestic material culture and functioned as such in their original contexts.

My study also contributes to the academic conversation of cultural identity in late Roman North Africa because ‘appearance – and especially dress – played an important role in how such cultural differences were perceived and formulated’ (Rothe 2017: 119). Such research agendas are especially apparent for the north-western Roman provinces where post-colonial influences can enhance the study of active self-presentation. In particular, Rothe’s investigation of cultural interaction as made visible

through dressing practice (e.g. 2009, 2012, 2013) – drawing influence from anthropological studies such as Emma Tarlo's *Dress Matters* (1996) – highlights the interconnectedness of all aspects of dress and how a focus on continuity or change in cultural identity is also inherently concerned with numerous social identities. The extrapolation and application of these ideas to late Roman and late antique North Africa appreciates the contribution of this context to the wider academic discussion.

From the late third century AD onwards, the adoption of dress with elements of a wardrobe considered as traditionally 'non-Roman' and even effeminate – particularly long-sleeved, tight-fitting tunics – confirms the transformation of sartorial tastes and modes of representation (Harlow 2004b: 51). Such actions corresponded with the increasingly blurred boundaries between military and civil matters and shifting spheres of influence. This, in turn, produced new mechanisms for demonstrating participation in appropriate cultural practice. While recent scholarship now better represents the power dynamics and realities of the cultural experience in the late Roman North African context, dress is often not the main object of study. Jonathan Conant's publication (2012) offered nuanced perceptions of what 'Roman' identity might entail for North African communities who, after all, were highly connected to the Mediterranean world. Thus, he confronts the problematic nature of 'being' and 'staying' Roman. His work makes some acknowledgement of the contribution of clothing to the expressions of a Roman cultural identity (Conant 2012: 60-62, 281-282), but its remit explored a wider body of material. Likewise, other research, such as Andy Merrills and Richard Miles' *The Vandals* (2010) highlights the changing forms of self-representation, of which clothing is an effective, but highly elusive element, and therefore acknowledge that the production of cultural identity is never solely just about issues of culture. As Brennan (2008) demonstrates, even in a context ostensibly dedicated to debating clothing – as in Tertullian's *De pallio* – the contentious issue is not limited to the dress itself, but rather what such sartorial actions imply.

Specifically for my study, there continues to be much discussion of 'Vandal' dressing practices, with a dedicated focus to identifying or rejecting elements of 'barbarian' clothing. These interpretations frequently cite fifth-century grave assemblages, which appear to identify the deceased as part of the military elite. Instead

of viewing such material culture – grave goods such as weaponry, buckles, broaches and jewellery – as evidence of barbarian foreign origins, scholarship now posits these accoutrements as conventional forms of elite self-representation relevant to the emerging military elite (von Rummel 2007: 386-406). This, however, is not a unanimous interpretation (e.g. Eger 2015), but, following von Rummel (2005, 2007) my discussion adopts a similar perspective and considers such forms of dress as indicative of social distinction, not ethnic difference. The potential contribution of North African artefacts to this discussion of late Roman cultural identity is clear, as seen in Christoph Eger's study of North African dress accessories (2012). My study adds to this debate, situating dress developments in the wider history of North African sartorial practice. It utilises a similar range of evidence as that employed by von Rummel (2007) to better contextualise evolving clothing fashions as part of a cultural system open to adaption, but with changes needing to be legitimised by those with the authority to do so. By examining dressing styles and not clothing accessories, my study documents how cultural affiliations were claimed and the sartorial elements that were seen to convey desired associations.

2.1.3 African Textile Production

Increasingly sophisticated scientific techniques applied to the study of textile remains also improve our knowledge of clothing practices, especially in the realm of textile manufacture. Such endeavours are themselves the product of decades of academic evolution (see Thomas 2007). Where studies once framed changes in textile decoration as a gradation from the naturalistic visualisation of iconography towards abstract depictions (e.g. Bourguet 1971; Badawy 1978) and thus 'expressionism' (Trilling 1982: 14), now they focus on associating structural diagnostics with broader social and cultural contexts. Sabine Schrenk's edited volume (2006) provides an exemplary resource in this regard. There is, however, a general over-reliance on Egyptian textile finds apparent in scholarship, which extrapolates elements of the Coptic sartorial system for other geographical and historical contexts. Philip Bes' bibliographic essay for textiles and

basketry research in *Technology in Transition AD 300-650* (2007) neatly encapsulates this type of treatment.

Since clothing satisfied a functional need, textile production was an important industry in the late Roman world. For the provinces of Roman Africa, the research of Andrew Wilson (2000, 2002, 2004) improves the knowledge of textile production and dyeing activities in a region, especially for cities such as Timgad, *Numidia*. Where other scholars are quick to include textiles in lists of important commodities produced and traded throughout North Africa, few substantiate this assumption, preferring to instead focus on oil, ceramics, grain and other craft items (Harlow and Nosch 2014b: 4). The North African region was famed for murex dye manufacture (Plin., *HN* 9.127), although recent analysis suggests a more complicated reality than first presumed. In many cases – such as revealed in the excavations at Lepcis Magna, *Tripolitania* – murex shell was used as an aggregate in structural mortars (Wilson 2002: 255), suggesting a presence in earlier phases of activity, but not active manufacture of purple dye. Djemila, *Numidia*, previously understood as a centre of purple dyeing (Allais 1971), is now considered to have plant-based dyeing facilities (producing a yellow colour residue), due to the lack of diagnostic murex shell finds (Wilson 2002: 258). Natalie Susmann's recent study of archaeological indicators for murex production has re-evaluated the likelihood that murex dye contributed to the North African textile economy (2015). The spread of potential production sites suggests a very widespread significance of such activities from Rhizene and Dar Essafi in Tunisia to Sabratha in Libya (Susmann 2015: 97-100). Although not all the North African sites demonstrated continued use through the period under study, this analysis highlights the potential for the identification of future sites.

The island of Jerba, on the north coast, and especially the town of Meninx, was known for its purple dye and recovered archaeological evidence supports this idea (Wilson 2004: 160). The history of this location provides interesting commentary on the North African dying industry. Despite not being included in Diocletian's Price Edict as a category of purple dye, Meninx, 'which is also [called] Girba' (Ampel., 6.15.5), constitutes one of nine *procurator bafiorum* in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, namely the *procurator bafi Girbitani Tripolitanae* (*Not. Dign. Occ.* 11.69; Wild 1976: 54). The reputation of Meninx purple is confirmed in the *Historia Augusta*, emphasising the mid-

third-century Claudius's worthiness for imperial rule: 'you will give him... one white part-silk garment ornamented with purple from Girba, and one under-tunic with Moorish purple' (*Claud.*, 14.8.3). Significantly, the textual evidence suggests a distinction between purple from Jerba and that from the Gaetulian coast (Plin., *HN* 9.127) although, in the third century AD, Pomponius Porphyrius mistakenly conflates the two (*Hor. sat.* 2.183). It is unclear exactly what this difference was, apart from the origin of specific dye productions. The longevity of dye production at Meninx is demonstrated by the presence of murex shell in every context excavated (Fentress 2009: 207-210). In fact, an intensification of murex shell deposits from later fourth- and fifth-century contexts might account for an apparent decline elsewhere in North Africa in the later Roman period. Every stage of murex dye production was undertaken at Meninx, from shell-breaking, to dye processing and dyeing of clothing. Thus, collapse at Meninx was, in part, due to a Mediterranean collapse of trade around the sixth century AD or a pandemic (Fentress 2009: 209; 2018: 250).

The scale of African textile operations is also debatable. Haywood, for instance, states:

Home manufacture is important in all agricultural countries, and it may be assumed that a great many simple productions, such as clothes and furniture, were hand-made. The woven products of Africa were well known from abroad, as is shown by the Edict of Diocletian and this may have been largely a home industry (1938: 59).

On the other hand, Paul Erdkamp cited the textile industry as a case study for understanding Roman urban manufacture (2013: 249-251). Although not exclusively concerned with North Africa, his approach characterised textile manufacture as an expansive and extensive industry. Diagnostic items for textile activities – spindle whorls, distaffs, pin-beaters, and loom weights – are known from sites in North Africa (Hurst 1994: 92-98). As Suzanne Dixon notes, 'domestic' and 'commercial' production are not necessarily diametrically opposed (2000-1: 11-12, 15). Following Jinyu Liu, consumers are 'domestic' when intended for personal usage, and 'commercial' when intended for trade or financial gain (2009: 74 n.79). Such a framework not only accounts for production to satisfy familial or local requirements, but also considers small-scale textile

activities purposed towards profit. Echoes of these small, domestic industries are also referenced by Christian authors, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.4.

Aside from Coptic textiles, the closest corpus of archaeological material for comparison comes from the Fazzan region. Material remains and evidence for textile production from two areas – the Wadi al Ajal and the Wadi Tan ezzuft – have been published¹. Located in continental Africa in the sub-Saharan Libyan zone, the Fazzan area was technically outside of Roman control. Nevertheless, Roman sources attest to good contact with and knowledge of this region, complete with barbarian stereotypes (Sil., *Pun.* 2.82-83; Corrip., *Ioh.* 6.198; Mattingly *et al.* 2003: 79-86). Current interpretations posit the Fazzan region, and more specifically the Garamantes people, as active participants in trans-Saharan trade (Guédon 2017; see also Mattingly 2017: 1-59).

A brief overview of pertinent diagnostic features of the Fazzan textiles shows the complexity of textiles in this liminal zone and local production and trade. Analysis of textile remains, dyeing activities as well as archaeobotanical evidence, suggest a mixture of on-site dyeing and importation of pre-dyed yarn (Pace *et al.* 1951: 314)². Flax importation was necessary due to unsuitable environmental conditions for growth and the lack of sophisticated *foggara*, or irrigation systems (Maspero *et al.* 2002: 168). Groups in the Fazzan region used a mixture of textile fabrics and the presence of woollen fragments only in some areas implies localised textile traditions (Mori and Ricci 2013: 310; Maspero *et al.* 2002: 163). Leather was primarily used for burial shrouds (Mattingly *et al.* 2019: 86). Loom weights and spindle whorls recovered from Saniat Jibril demonstrate more stages of the *chaîne opératoire* occurring on site (Mattingly *et al.* 2010a: 197), perhaps even identifying site specialisation in certain stages of textile production. Currently, it is unclear whether this oasis village was unique or if there is potential that other locations operated intensive manufacturing processes. The low number of loom weights recovered from nearby Aghram Nadharif, however, suggests only small-scale domestic production at this site (Mattingly *et al.* 2008: 202). This

¹ See Mattingly *et al.* 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Mattingly and Cole 2017.

² For SERS analysis see Bruni *et al.* 2010, 2011. For archaeobotanical studies see Maspero *et al.* 2002; Mercuri *et al.* 2009, 2013.

complex picture of textile behaviours in the Fazzan area reminds us of differing scales at which textile production occurred. Local communities had access to a variety of cloths for their textile uses. The prosperity of the North African region and the wealth of its elite inhabitants would also imply economic access, through trade routes, to a variety of clothing styles. The exact physical manifestations of these behaviours are only speculative.

As my exclusion of Egyptian material precludes the integration of archaeological textile remains, much of this work on textile manufacture only has an indirect influence on my study of North African dress habits. Nevertheless, this body of research elaborates upon some basic factors of textile manufacture and structural details about the garments themselves – this also being indicative of numerous attributes of clothing realities. Recent publications, such as that edited by Margarita Gleba and Ulla Mannering (2011), unequivocally demonstrate how textile studies have moved from the periphery towards the heart of many archaeological and historical agendas. More specifically for the exploration of Roman clothing, John Peter Wild's numerous contributions and his scholarly presence has greatly improved our understanding of Roman textiles. This is evident in the edited publication *The Roman Textile Industry and its Influence: A Birthday Tribute to John Peter Wild* (Rogers *et al.* 2001) which followed in the vein of Wild's seminal work (1970). Likewise, Faith Pennick Morgan's work (2018) on clothing for the late antique lower social classes, although investigating Egyptian textile remains, highlights issues of mending and re-use and stimulates discussion of pre-worn clothing, an issue which resonates with my consideration of Christian clothing charity in Chapter 5.4.

2.2 Previous Research in Cognate Disciplines

2.2.1 Textile Research and Anthropology

Efforts to legitimise the investigation of ancient clothing from various textile historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and sociologists also progress and enrich the dress research agenda. My methodological approach draws from many features of this

research, especially the appreciation that dress rhetoric constitutes all forms of clothing manipulations. I highlight the benefits of using dress as a lens of analysis. Central to the modern academic landscape is the recognition and accommodation of the inherent inter-disciplinarity of the subject as a stimulus to ask ‘modern questions of ancient clothing’ (Harlow and Nosch 2014b: 12). Indeed, the dress scholar, due to their growing scholarly reflexivity, is encouraged to appropriate ideas and perspectives from beyond their own disciplines (Taylor 2002: 272). Due to the nature of its source material, my thesis is implicitly inter-disciplinary and, by adopting and adapting aspects of Roland Barthes’ methodological approach – a perspective sympathetic to the varied iterations of dress rhetoric – advocates for clothing as inherently more complex than just a catalogue of fashions.

The ubiquity of textile activities in the Roman world produced a social familiarity with textile manufacture, tools and processes producing a Roman literary landscape fluent in textile terminologies. The exploitation of spinning and weaving as literary devices has been noted (e.g. Fanfani *et al.* 2016) and this research is further progressed by Magdalena Öhrman (2017, 2018) who emphasises the use of textile vocabulary outside the realm of textile production. The textual sources featured in my discussion often stem from genres less concerned with poetic traditions, although they do frequently demonstrate sophisticated levels of rhetorical expertise. This, of course, does not diminish the potency – or implications – of the deployment of clothing imagery or metaphors in North Africa texts; in fact, their very use in non-specialist contexts suggests the perpetuation of these cultural traditions and how aptly such activities were seen to conceptualise and represent human activities.

These ideas, in turn, invite us to think beyond dress as merely an abstract entity or effective cultural proxy, untethered to physical clothing. A comprehensive approach to ancient clothing culture recognises occupations in the *chaîne opératoire* were themselves mechanisms for self or group identification as confirmed by Margarita Gleba and Judit Pásztoókai-Szeöke’s *Making Textiles in Pre-Roman and Roman Times* (2013). Similarly, Liu’s *Collegia Centonariorum* (2009) highlights the interaction between textile workers, dealers and dress as integral parts to the same social institution. Re-iterating the composite nature of the Roman dress system is an important evolution in research

interests. Recently, Andrew Wilson and Miko Flohr's edited contribution (2016) situated craft activities in their wider social and cultural environments, not just the economy. Evidence from North African communities attests to the frequent use of textile worker classifications in commemorative inscriptions (see Haywood 1938: 59-60; Johannsen 1954) and the resonance and communicative function of such designations spoke to an external audience. Equally, stories such as that of Florentius of Hippo, as recounted by Augustine, where a poor tailor can only afford to buy a new cloak upon miraculously finding a gold ring inside a fish (*De civ. D.* 22.8), suggests a shared cultural acknowledgment that such professions were not lucrative. Although my study does not explicitly consider the logistics of textile manufacture, as will be shown, aspects of textile production do prove to be pertinent factors in the North Africa source material and central to a moral code for the construction, idealisation and performance of feminine virtue in both the Christian and non-Christian spheres (see Chapter 4). An awareness of the physical qualities of clothing and textile manufacture places the dressed body back into the academic discussion.

The evolution of dress studies is itself indicative of the appropriation, justification and application of dress as an analytical tool and re-affirms a conceptual transformation from an 'ephemeral characteristic of society to a subject worthy of academic respectability' (Taylor 2002: 2). Dress studies should not be constrained by respective disciplinary ontologies (Styles 1998: 387-388), as Lou Taylor's work notes (2002), arguing for the necessity of co-operating academic and curatorial worlds. Her subsequent work, *Establishing Dress History* (2004) thus focused on the neglected world of dress in museum collections. Echoes of her sentiments, as an advocate for appreciating the complexity of sartorial material and cultural practice, are present in my study. Her work grapples with the limitations inherent in the apparent obscurity of much of the surviving museum collections. My study also promotes a previously marginalised body of material – archaeological, visual and textile dress – bringing their utility to the fore in wider discussions of social identities in Roman Africa.

My project promotes the inherent complexity of dress in everyday interactions. In this way, it endorses an approach similar to that Emma Tarlo uses in her *Clothing Matters* (1996), which reacted against the earlier static identities constructed by

museum displays that disassociated the historical textiles from the discussion of their 'social life'. Her idea that clothing is a social phenomenon that actively negotiates identities is one that finds resonance with my research, which likewise advocates for clothing as a dynamic, not passive, identity canvas. For Tarlo, the hitherto under-studied issue of 'what to wear?' – a concept that fundamentally interacts with ideas of human agency – offers an interesting avenue of investigation. As an extension of this type of questioning, my approach considers the notion of 'what can I wear?' in the context of Roman Africa, as a method for recovering the cultural dynamics of clothing behaviours. Dress should not just be isolated to its constitutive components, for through its materiality the dress artefact expresses various modalities and dynamics, which evoke equally pertinent didactic and emotional qualities.

There is the danger of exaggerating the primacy of clothing as a material entity, a tendency apparent in Valerie Cumming's study (2004), although she does note the juxtaposition between the dressed body perpetually in motion and static displays of costume (2004: 83). Her deployment of a 'garment-as-object' framework implies that the textiles, as material culture, are the most significant form of evidence for the study of dress and other echoes of clothing practice are somehow secondary, or recover lesser details of dressing habits. This is inherently at odds with the majority of research into Roman attire, including my study, where the absence of textile remains requires the use of alternative, but still informative, forms of evidence. My approach, however, avoids oversimplifying elements of dress practice by synthesising its diverse echoes. The dress scholar, like the museum curator, fashions the presentation and reception of the dress evidence for their audience. How they engage with their particular body of evidence – indeed which questions they choose to ask of it – fundamentally impact how clothing is conceptualised and naturally influence the resulting interpretations.

2.2.2 Sociology

Working from a psychoanalytic framework and influenced by John Flügel's *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930), much twentieth-century research focused on three primary factors for clothing – protection, modesty and ornamentation – framing dress

as a purely material phenomenon. Thus, research identified an ‘evolution’ of styles and tastes (Flügel 1930: 16). Very few elements of sophisticated methodologies and ontologies fed into historical research until very recently, an exception being Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1883-4) which anticipated modern dress research through the understanding of dress and clothing as significant aspects of human culture and society. As Keenan notes, such ideology recognises the ‘scientific’ and ‘artistic’ possibilities of dress research, albeit in a frame of reference limited by its own Victorian historical context (2001: 13-15). Thus, *Sartor Resartus* represents a significant intellectual shift in the conceptualisation of clothing and its social and cultural implications. As such, the Carlylean paradigm remains integral to the development of dress theory (see Carter 2003: 1-17), especially in the recognition of the semiotics of clothing (Edmondson and Keith 2008: 1; Harlow 2012b: 2).

Barthes’ *Système de la mode* (1967) is much more recognisable as a seminal work both within the specialised field of dress studies and the broader intellectual field of historical dress. Barthes’ research posits dress as a ‘formal and normative system that is recognised by society’ (2006: 6). Thus, dressing was a process embedded within this organised system and ‘adornment’ became ‘dress’ once it was part of a system of clothing dictated by a social group (Barthes 2010: 7). His statement that dress is part of the axiological order, thereby signifying dress as a ‘vehicle of meaning’ in a vestimentary system constituted by ‘constraints, prohibitions, tolerances, aberrations, fantasies, congruencies and exclusions’ (Barthes 2006: 7, 4) finds resonance in my study. Indeed, certain forms of dressing contribute to an individual’s *habitus*. Thus, Pierre Bourdieu’s *La Distinction: Critique Social du jugement* (1977) argues for the centrality of dress to social interactions. The idea that physical embodiments of cultural capital derive from the individual’s *habitus*, builds upon the notion that, by conforming to certain social expectations, individuals acquire symbolic capital through their actions. Thus, sartorial expectations align with the ‘tastes’ deemed appropriate for the wearer’s social context.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework, Sources and Methods

In order to explore the content, character and meaning of socio-religious statements of dress in North Africa in the third to fifth centuries AD, I adopt a multi-stranded approach. My project contends that clothing was a meaningful feature of North African society. This does not make it unique in the Roman world, but African sartorial behaviours constructed a particular African rendering of dress. Not all experiences of ‘dress’ were material in nature. Dress systems – as acceptable forms of dressing – constituted the physical realisation of the boundaries and ideals of cultural *mores* (Ribeiro 2003: 19-29). These clothing systems were also a part of a much larger discourse of dress rhetoric whereby modes of dressing acted as signals of behaviour and practice. Representations of dress in visual imagery, therefore, may not necessarily depict actual practice; similarly, written evocations of clothing do not always refer to reality. Although frequently contradictory, these ‘versions’ of dress are not irreconcilable. The cultural themes that dictated the form and decoration of clothing as well as the feeling and experience of wearing ‘dress’ all contributed to its role in society (Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992a: 8-29).

The terminology used to discuss dress is often culturally-loaded, and thus requires clarification of terms; below I offer definitions and then outline my methodological framework. In particular, I demonstrate how the diverse forms of dress rhetoric emphasise different aspects of sartorial practice. I close with an overview of the visual, textual and archaeological material used in my discussion.

3.1 Defining ‘Dress’, ‘Costume’ and ‘Fashion’

3.1.1 Dress

‘Dress’ is a varied multivalent concept encompassing many different associations and manipulations of ‘clothing’. On the most fundamental level, the idea of ‘dress’ can denote physical garments, but its usage also extends to include wider clothing systems.

This is the definition followed in my thesis. The terminology of 'dress' employed here is intentional as it is inclusive, but importantly contrasts to broader, conventional usage in the anthropological and sociological sphere. Eicher and Roach-Higgins, for instance, posit dress as an 'assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements' (1992b: 1): this might include aspects like tattoos or cosmetics. Such characteristics are beyond the remit of this study as they operated within frameworks of their own logic (Jones 1987; Stewart 2007). My thesis explores the cultural role of clothing and its role in constituting and expressing social identities. As necessary, distinctions between the cloth (textile) and clothing (dress garments) are made, but otherwise 'dress' is used interchangeably as an inclusive concept.

Articles of dress construct styles, or fashions, which transform clothing from cloth to dress. It is through dressing behaviours that the textile moves beyond its *functional* nature, *acting* as a participant in social and cultural interactions. From this, dress-codes are formalised and these produce 'dress systems' which influence or regulate the wardrobe of individuals. These clothing systems feed into a wider consciousness of personal appearance where 'dress' constitutes a wide recognition of bodily display and body language. Thus, 'dress' as a concept cannot be reduced to the material details of the physical articles of clothing; rather, the term 'dress' also constitutes the way clothing and clothing systems were used, evoked and adapted.

Clothing systems are a feature of all societies. Even in societies that practise widespread undress, or nudity, the absence of clothing still reveals cultural and social customs as dress-codes are expressed through the removal or absence of garments. In fact, nudity may actually act as a 'costume', such as in Greek athletic practice (e.g. Bonfante 1989). The same is true of the Roman world where nudity was permissible in certain contexts, such as the representation of deities (Davies 2018) or the evocation of divine characteristics (Hales 2005). The latter issue forms part of my discussion of the Matron at her Toilette Mosaic, Sidi Ghrib, located 30 km south-west of Carthage, in Chapter 4.1.3. Ideas of nudity do not necessarily correspond with nakedness, but are instead a form of clothing.

As shown, 'dress' exists in many different guises and my thesis targets the diverse iterations of dress in a late Roman and late antique North African context. Dress

systems provide a commonality across groups that are geographically or temporally divided and continuities or changes amongst groups impart much about historical processes. Such variations are not always focused on the form clothing takes or, more specifically, different garment styles or fashions. While items of apparel might change from group to group, dress always evidences social and cultural factors. Dressing behaviours can thus provide nuanced insight into cultural ideals, worries or issues. In this study, there will be an explicit focus on understanding and contextualising changes in light of emerging and developing Christian discourses (Chapter 5) as well as other shifting spheres of power and influence, such as those evident in the Vandal period (Chapter 7). Other social aspects such as gender endured throughout this period, albeit with transformed moral discourses (Chapter 4), as did forms of elite display (Chapter 6). Dress was a cultural system that was dynamic and fluid, intertwining many cultural, political, social and religious elements in an on-going process of adaption. How these changes were manifested in the clothed bodies of the North Africans both literally and figuratively reflects how closely dress was associated with identity formation. Since such processes are bidirectional, my research will also investigate how ideas of dress were used in the ascription, development and performance of identities, elucidating upon broader cultural norms and perceived deviation from normative practice.

3.1.2 Costume and Fashion

My discussion of dress also employs the term ‘costume’ with connotations of bodily clothing, similar to that used by Hiler and Hiler (1939: xii) and thus rejects modern associations of theatre or roles, despite this term making frequent appearances in modern scholarship (e.g. Stone 1994; Sebesta 1994a; La Follette 1994). Although ‘costume’ has been seen as restrictive, acting in a decorative manner (Rothe 2009: 9), in my study ‘costume’ is also applied in the sense of constructing a sartorial ensemble, again to express active behaviours. It therefore maintains ideas of ‘putting on’ particular garments to convey a sense of purposeful action of dressing the body.

Another term commonly associated with ideas of dress is ‘fashion’. In modern parlance, ‘fashion’ denotes popular clothing preferences, deriving from ideas of ‘taste’, and is often associated with ephemeral ‘trends’ (Blumer 1969: 283; Davis 1992: 14). This subsequently implies exclusions, marking outliers as somehow undesirable or out-dated, but not necessarily transgressive. However, the application of this terminology to an ancient context is problematic and not without controversy, especially if judged against modern systems (Harlow 2017a: 5-6). Yet, as my thesis demonstrates, if qualified carefully, the use of ‘fashion’ is not anachronistic as it conveys feelings of popular consensus, while simultaneously highlighting evolution and re-negotiation of dress elements. Indeed, as Harlow (2004b: 46) notes when discussing the late antique male wardrobe, the transformation of fashion to anti-fashion – that is, non-traditional sartorial elements evolving into accepted constituents of dress-codes – was fostered in the late antique environment which was more receptive to external influences and social mobility. Aspects of agency and personal choice are visible in the cultural echoes of North African clothing. While clothing systems were not static, extreme forms of change or blatant disregard for dress norms, as perceived by certain social groups, made the wearer liable to censure. Tertullian’s criticism of the un-veiled Carthaginian virgins in *De virginibus velandis* exemplified this occurrence and the power dynamics inherent in deciding clothing change (see Chapter 4.2.2). Of course, we should not exaggerate the potential for sartorial freedom in the ancient world, but it is important to recognise that the North African demographic, like other parts of the Roman world, was reiterated and made visible through dress social hierarchies, but these groups were not completely immutable.

3.2 Dress, Identity and Fashion Theory

3.2.1 Dress and Identity Construction

While the use of clothing satisfies a functional necessity, dress also plays an integral role in processes of identity construction and individuals can use clothing to negotiate, manipulate and express their identities, often claiming affiliation to certain groups or

communities and thereby situating themselves in society. Clothing can be an active agent in these actions and is both produced by and contributes to the resultant identity projection. The communicative nature of dress means that the viewer ascribes identity to an individual based on their appearance. Dress-codes are the product of social and cultural expectations and clothing can be used to re-iterate or maintain boundaries since sartorial behaviours occur within a cultural environment of 'acceptable' action. This does not mean that an individual cannot transcend this cultural boundary, and therefore appropriate transgressive modes of dress, but, if they do so, they purposefully act in opposition to cultural conventions and norms.

In positing that dress can inform the expressed identities of North African groups and individuals, my thesis naturally advocates for the multiple, co-existing identities contained in the individual. An overview of the evolution of concepts of identity – especially Roman identity – as applied to Roman contexts is too lengthy to include in this study, but it is worth noting the current state of scholarship is one that recognises discrepant identities and discrepant experiences of Roman culture (Mattingly 2011: 213-245). This project is produced in this academic environment. The rejection of the binary opposition, citing 'Roman' against 'Native', leads to a much more nuanced understanding of socio-cultural interactions. For Roman Africa, this recognises the interplay of 'Roman' and 'Indigenous' elements, as well as the dynamic projections of 'Christian' identity, that do not necessarily prioritise religious identity over other affiliations, such as civic identity (Rebillard 2012). The reduction of individuals to just once categorisation implicitly perpetuates simplified – and presumably easily identifiable – cultural boundaries.

3.2.2 Barthes' *'Language of Fashion' and Dress Theory*

My thesis advocates for an evolved appreciation of dress and clothing. As discussed, dress studies – as an academic pursuit – is the product of a gradual development of dress theory and ways of interpreting and examining dress. My own approach is strongly influenced by Barthes' *Système de la mode* (1967). Although originally surveying women's fashion magazines popular in France in the 1950s, the methodological issues

raised by Barthes are familiar to the dress historian and can be extrapolated and adapted to suit the late Roman world. Although Barthes combined structural linguistics and linguistic-semiology, his approach is applicable to an historical context. In his opinion, 'it [the history of dress] actually suggests to the researcher the essential problems in all cultural analysis, culture being both system and process, institution and individual act, a reserve of expression and a signifying order' (Barthes 2006: 13). Significantly, Barthes highlights the need to 'get at its [fashion's] social and global function, and above all its history' (2006: 13).

Barthes postulates the idea of the 'language of Fashion' since clothing, as a social object, has a signifying function (2006: 11). His structuralist approach identifies that clothing can simultaneously speak to the garment itself (clothing), the discourse of fashion which is itself self-referential and reflexive (fashion) and, significantly, the socio-cultural context that constructs and perpetuates dress systems (world), which is an extension of contemporary political dynamics (1967: 20-26). 'Dress' is thus the sum of its constituent parts, but can also denote aspects of these three concepts. Echoes of clothing take three primary forms and Barthes' work highlights the tension between these three different evidence types: the 'real-clothing'; the 'image-clothing'; and the 'written-clothing'. These categories broadly correspond to the three types of source material used in my study: archaeological evidence for the materiality of dress, aspects of textile production, and interaction of the individual and their clothing; iconographic depictions of clothing and dressing behaviours; and textual discourses that both discuss items of clothing or attitudes towards contemporary dressing systems. While each of these dress iterations fundamentally recover the same artefact, they are not inherently predisposed to recount the same details. For instance, the 'real' or 'technological' clothing (the physical garment) contains details which may not be accurately replicated in visual clothing (iconic material). Equally, visual depictions of clothing do not necessarily communicate the same details that written clothing – dress in text – might. These three versions of dress are often treated in differing ways and modern and ancient authors assume degrees of assumed knowledge in each type, but can be successfully brought together (see below).

Barthes understands fashion as a written system including a vocabulary and grammar. Iconic and verbal languages are thus translations of the original article of clothing (2010: 5). He argues for a need to analyse the transformation of garments from protective textiles to apparel that is part of a codified system: the shift in the clothing's meaning only occurs when the significance of the appearance – that is the careful details of its decoration or stylisation – is recognised and internalised by society (Barthes 1967: 6-7). In this way, the individual elements only gain value when they are linked to a group of collective norms. At the same time, it is the degrees of participation in the dress system, and therefore integration into groups, that is meaningful. As such, the value of the system is only established through acceptances or challenges to this system (Barthes 2006: 13). Such ideas find correspondence with Terence Turner's conception of the 'social skin' (1980).

My project adopts a similar ontological approach as it considers clothing practices part of a cultural system that is implicitly recognised by wider society. Of course, dressing styles are perpetuated and codified by those with social and political capital and are not necessarily revered by all social groups; points of sartorial inversion are prevalent in some of the themes I explore. Unlike Barthes, however, my thesis considers the article of clothing to be self-meaningful. Barthes instead sees this 'language of fashion' as containing elements of an unconscious sartorial choice by the collective, or of a way of dressing on the part of the wearer (2006: 12). At a time when the tunic was the most common garment to wear, it was variation in design, decoration and draping that would signify particular connotations to others. My thesis views fashion (clothing) as having both a sociology and a semiology. Thus, while the sociology is directed towards the 'real' clothing, it is also constituted by a series of collective representations that produce the semiology of fashion.

In my study, I employ this adapted framework to investigate the function of dress in processes of late Roman or late antique North African identity construction, but my approach is also broadly applicable in other temporal or geographic spheres. It must be remembered, however, that different historical contexts bring with them different methodological issues through variations in the relationships between individual and society, as well as the range of sources available for study. Nevertheless, the framework

posited here, that of ‘dress rhetoric’, offers a methodological approach for studying ancient clothing that appreciates the complexities of synthesising a diverse array of source material and interrogating it appropriately.

3.2.3 Exploring ‘Dress Rhetoric’

Since dress is a culturally recognised means of communication, it is a direct artefact of a cultural environment. Adherence to or deviance from accepted clothing behaviours demonstrates recognition of the existence of such cultural rules on the part of the wearer, their audience or both actors. An individual need not agree with these practices, but any transgressive actions serve to signal the legitimacy of these dress-codes and behaviour is judged in accordance to cultural norms. Here, culture is understood to denote an ‘entire way of life, everything about the group that distinguishes it from others, including social habits and institutions, rituals, artefacts, categorical schemes, beliefs, and values’ (Tanner 1997: 27). Owing to the integral nature of social consensus and the constitutive manner in which culture constructs human behaviour, dress requires an investigative framework that appreciates the subjectivity of culture and the different contexts in which dress might be referenced. Following Barthes’ lexicon, these surviving resonances of dress rhetoric can be conceived of as texts (see also Dode 2012). In this way, each has its own grammar, which is both implicit and explicit. These texts present a form of objective history, created by highly literary, rhetorically sophisticated, and extensively constructed ‘texts’.

The adoption of terminology such as ‘language’ conveys notions of a communicative system. While this has been applied to studies of Roman art (e.g. Hölscher 2004), the notion of ‘language’ is not best suited to my study. Instead, I use the term ‘dress rhetoric’. ‘Rhetoric’, signifying all associated ideas and ideals inherent in socio-cultural constructs perpetuated by visual, literary and physical evidence, enforces a comprehensive perspective for dress and therefore reflects both its pervasiveness in all aspects of quotidian practice and its mediation of interactions between the individual and their audience. Following Elsner’s framework for the study of Roman art (2014), the

concept of 'rhetoric' satisfies an emic approach as notions of rhetoric were 'pervasive and dominant' in the Roman mentality (2014: 1). The art of rhetorical performance played an important role in politics in the Roman world and was itself an arena for self-display. In the act of oratory, the rhetorician could mobilise dress as a political tool either for his own gain or as a means of character assassination (Harlow 2017b: 158). This association between appearance and public declamation was so well-established that it formed part of the orator's performance: the toga – the traditional costume for such performances – embroiled the individual in the interplay of Roman symbolism. Conveying connotations of manliness, the performance of rhetoric could capitalise on the unspoken symbolism (Quint., *Inst.* 11.3.137; Cic., *De or.* 1.231). Quintilian's guide for aspiring orators shows the fulfilment of dress and bodily movement as a persuasive form of non-verbal communication (*Inst.* 11.3.2).

Significantly, Elsner's use of 'rhetoric' in his formulation of art as a promulgation of identity through a 'series of stylistic choices and iconographic choices... [which] can be interpreted as directly and deliberately rhetorical' (2014: 20) suits dress research because it re-iterates the purposeful formation of dress as the outcome of knowledgeable agents. 'Rhetoric' is a 'space for the play of inter-subjective relationships' through a 'variety of different media' (2014: 23), as is also the case for clothing practices. Further, expanding upon Aristotle's tripartite formulation of rhetoric, Elsner's use of *ēthos* replicates the sociality of the individual, rather than just simply denoting the speaker, artist or patron (2014: 6). His extrapolation of *pathos* as an active agent in the construction and ascription of meaning finds compatibility in the study of dress, especially when considering its communicative function, especially important insofar as he recognises that the '*intended pathos* cannot of course include the totality of potential viewers' (Elsner 2014: 14). By extension, the *intended pathos* of the clothed individual will not represent the multiplicity of potential meanings and responses. Finally, Elsner's concept of *logos* as a performative aspect of address can be more specifically attributed to the actual form or stylisation dress manifests at any particular moment or interaction.

3.2.4 Power, Agency, and Habitus

Dress rhetoric expounds the relationship between the individual and their society, in terms of maintaining and changing dress-codes and the various expressions of identity produced. Foucault's structuralist notions of discourse and power are useful, to some degree, when thinking about the discursive aspects of dress (1977). His work specifically explores how power is practised through the body; necessarily, it concerns the dressing and presentation of the body and recovers potential power dynamics that produce dressing systems. This becomes particularly important when exploring how social distinction is achieved through dressing habits (Chapter 6). His conception, however, only extends to how clothing is *socially considered* and relegates dress to a simplistic system that neither recognises nor accounts for the possibility of individual choice. Assuming such a 'passive body' is very limiting as it does not reconstruct notions of experience (McNay 1991: 125). Ideas of power exist in all variations of dress rhetoric, whether in the power to confer identity designations, the power to deny or oppose dominant clothing trends or the power to showcase and perpetuate participation in socially expected sartorial behaviours. Such issues are brought out in my discussion.

Ideas of self-presentation of the body and its associated dress rhetoric highlight the notions of agency and practice. As Joanne Entwistle notes:

Dress does not merely serve to protect our modesty and does not simply *reflect* a natural body or, for that matter, a given identity; it *embellishes* the body, the materials commonly used adding a whole array of meanings to the body that would otherwise not be there (2000: 324).

Bourdieu's *La Distinction: Critique Social du jugement* (1977) has been very influential in providing a framework in which to discuss ideas of fashion and taste, especially in terms of *habitus* (1984: 166). Applying the concept of *habitus* to the Roman sartorial context reconstructs aspects of the ancient reality, not least because such a term was part of Roman vocabulary where clothing was understood to display inner character (Olson 2017: 4). Apuleius, for instance, identifies a legionary by his dress and manner: '*habitus atque habitudo*' (*Met.* 9.39). Dress is a site for *habitus* and, as a convergence of the

individual and their social experience, clothing readily advertises social allegiances. *Habitus* bridges the theoretical gap between the unrestrained agent who acts freely without any social limitations and Foucault's passive body, which does not replicate the active potential for dress in socio-cultural interactions. In being a discursive phenomenon, dress is the product of subjects who actively engage with their social reality through routine practices (Entwistle 2000: 325). These 'structured structures' provide a framework by which the social agent acts within the bounds of socio-cultural rules in a conscious or even sub-conscious manner. Choices of dress are thus conditioned by and realised in certain cultural contexts and are defined by the dress systems that they reconstitute.

While Bourdieu's *habitus* particularly focused on ideas of class, it can equally inform our discussion of gender, religious and cultural clothing. As will be shown, *habitus* is especially suited to my research context as cultural norms implicated the individual in a complex negotiation of personal practice and social expectation. It also accounts for processes of socialisation by which individuals become knowledgeable as to normative practice and what is within – and outside – the bounds of acceptable action. In my discussion of North African dress, the concept of *habitus* helps place North African sartorial behaviours in the wider context of Mediterranean-wide Roman culture. The North African study area has an extensive, but varied, range of source material for dress rhetoric. While demonstrating local or regional expressions of dress, much of this discourse aligned with normative behaviour in the rest of the Roman world.

Discussion of individuals as part of collective 'African' identities does not, however, presuppose homogenous action across the whole expanse of North Africa. It would be easy to apply an overly-schematic vision to the dressing behaviours, seeing one dominant clothing system as producing recurrent, expected action across all groups. Yet, following the adopted methodological approach there is sufficient evidence to understand ancient North African communities as participating in the same dress traditions. While acting in and being influenced by the one dress system, individuals experienced this system in their own contexts. In this way, Fincham's concept of discrepant consumerism (2002), itself influenced by Appadurai's notion of 'the social life of things' (1986) and Edward Said's concept of discrepant experience (1993), accounts

for the varying reactions to particular consumer behaviours. This concept appreciates the existence of differing power dynamics of the different groups and recognises the presence of agency for each. This idea has been employed in discussions of ceramic consumption in the Roman world (e.g. Ray 2006), but owing to fundamental differences in the material culture, both in its original context and in the context of survival, it is not possible to treat the data for dress similarly. Nevertheless, the idea of discrepant consumerism demonstrates that reconciling ideas of textiles as goods with clothing as social performance is not anachronistic, nor misrepresentative. In recognising the potential for differing uses of and reactions to clothing, we understand dress as a physical reality *and* a cultural artefact. In this way, dress was a commodity. It functioned as social and cultural capital, demonstrated through particular economic expenditure and showcased the wearer's identities. By foregrounding identity in this discussion, the issue of the individual and their context can be addressed.

3.3 Sources for Dress in Late Roman and Late Antique Africa

The surviving remnants of North African dress rhetoric comprise a variety of types of artefacts, texts and imagery, from a variety of locations (Fig. 3.1). 'Dress rhetoric' transcends traditional source boundaries and interacts with the physical, textual and artistic spheres, and, as Barthes' work demonstrates, the three different versions of dress do not always convey the same details of the original garment. Deciphering extant source material is difficult, however, because such evidence is often partial and we must be circumspect of the motives of production. While this does not mean that source material is an idealisation, many echoes did not objectively document sartorial behaviours. Further, diverse source material can often produce conflicting and contradictory interpretations. For this reason, my study adopts a thematic structure, as the isolation of individual genres of material divorces the evidence from its wider context and divides what was originally experienced as a composite whole.

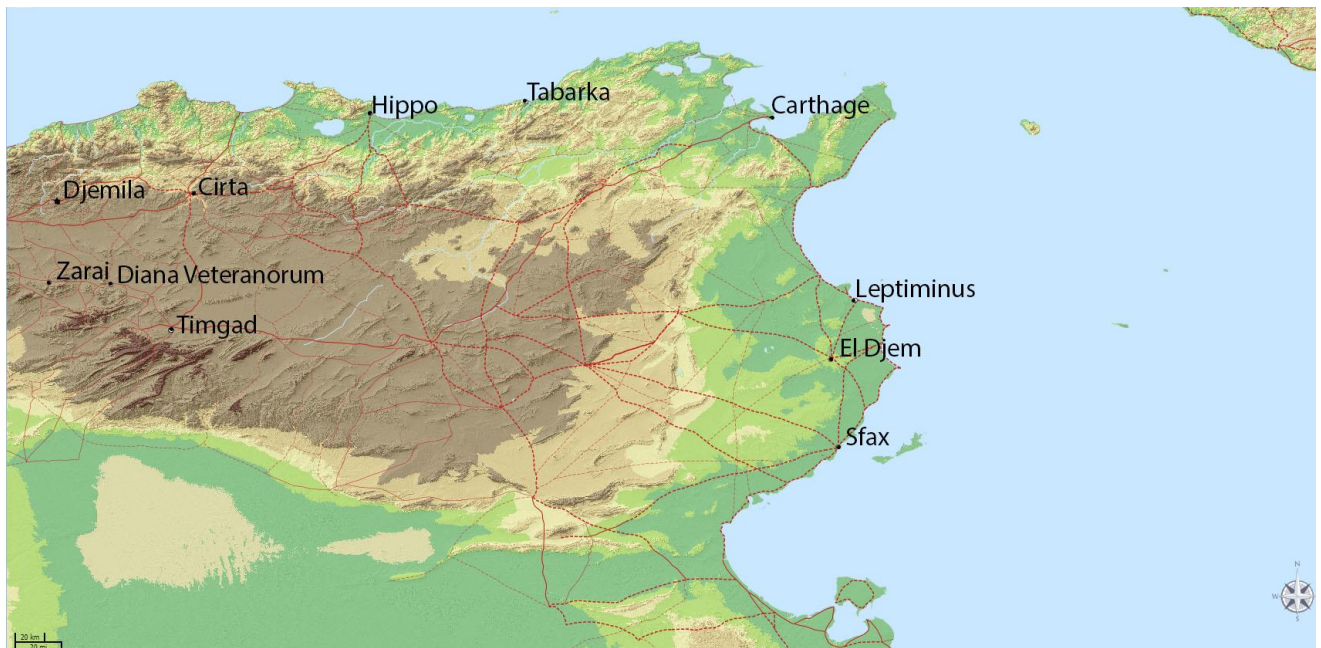


Figure 3.1: Map showing key sites discussed in thesis

A brief case study – the exploration of the *Pars Rustica* panel from the Tabarka Rural Scenes Mosaic – neatly illustrates this point. This late fourth-century AD *trifolium* apse mosaic (Fig. 3.2) originally decorated the floor of a space that flanked a dining room of a domestic residence in the site of Tabarka (Gauckler 1910: 303-305), situated along the northern coastal road (Plin., *NH* 5.22). Although badly damaged in the centre, the general composition is clear. Flanking the central building are agricultural scenes including trees and vines while a horse is tethered to the right of the complex. In the background, birds are scattered across a hilly landscape, and, in the foreground, a seated figure is visible on the left. As one of three panels, the wider iconographic message conveyed cultural ideas of elite agricultural living, perhaps echoing the three elements of Columella's Classical Roman villa: the *pars urbana*, *pars rustica* and the *pars fructuaria* (*Rust.* 1.6). The panel in question, recalling the *pars rustica* is of specific interest as it depicts a female in the bottom left corner in the process of drop-spinning (Fig. 3.3), communicated to the audience by her spindle and distaff. Many interpretations – likely influenced by Columella's tripartite system – seek to place the woman in the role of agricultural worker and describe her as a shepherdess (e.g.



Figure 3.2: Pars Rustica Panel, Rural Scenes Mosaic, Tabarka, Tunisia. Late fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.

Ennaïfer 1995: 177; Nevett 2010: 137). Yet, the depiction of her garment, a short-sleeved type with thick *clavi* from shoulder to hem, suggests a finer textile than that for a mere worker and her coiffured hair signals a higher social status. Further, the



Figure 3.3: Depiction of a woman spinning, Pars Rustica Panel, Rural Scenes Mosaic, Tabarka, Tunisia. Late fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.

placement of the mosaic floor in an elite, domestic context suggests a particular resonance of the imagery with the patron, especially pertinent at a time when the economic and social function of *villae* had blurred (Kehoe 2006: 300). It is clear that this architectural decoration depicts a virtuous archetype, not reality, especially when we consider that the ideological model of the *matrona* engaged with her spinning epitomised the correct running of the late Roman household (Larsson Lovén 1998: 86) – an idea also promoted by the Christian authority Jerome in his correspondence with the dedicated virgin Demetrias (*Ep.* 130). Therefore, the *domina* at Tabarka was not necessarily engaged in such industrious behaviours: the iconography fuses rhetoric and practice. It is only through the combination of visual narrative, archaeological context and literary material that we can appreciate the significance of the clothing practices depicted and fully understand how this awareness aids the iconographic narrative.

3.3.1 Literary Sources

A large proportion of the material utilised in my thesis is literary in nature, ranging from passing comments in texts to extended analysis of clothing activities. I have explored instances of ‘North African’ dress in published material composed in or discussing events spanning the late second century AD to the fifth centuries AD; I include written material composed by African authors or by those elucidating North African practice, as in the case of Jerome’s correspondence with the wealthy virgin Demetrias living in Africa (*Ep.* 130). I also make use of the *Digest*, the late Roman law code compiled in AD 530–533, which made extensive use of earlier legal texts, such as that by the third-century jurist Ulpian (see Honoré 2010). My work also benefits from the addition of a number of previously unknown sermons to Augustine’s œuvre (see Chadwick 1996). In some instances, I employ non-African authors to support the identification of peculiar African sartorial behaviours, as seen in my use of Clement of Alexandria, or to demonstrate shared dressing fashions across the wider Roman world.

The majority of discourse is constrained by issues of genre (Harlow 2012a: 1), but is in itself indicative of the pervasive nature of dress and its many guises in that

North African authors deployed such narrative devices with audiences understanding these clothing references, textile terminology and metaphors. Demonstrating a certain predilection for discussions of clothing, texts produced by North African authors reflect a cultural environment engaged in dress debates. Rhetorical expositions on this subject, therefore, are not false constructions, but eloquent discussions of immediate significance. My efforts to recover the implications of these clothing discussions refer predominantly to the translations of these sources and I highlight relevant terminology where appropriate. Modern translations of these ancient texts are not without issue, especially given the general unfamiliarity with textile or garment terms, and in such cases, I have endeavoured to represent the implications of the original terminology accurately in my discussion.

Owing to the growth and development of Christianity in North Africa from the late second century AD onwards, the majority of this textual material comes from a Christian context. Apologetic works, such as Minucius Felix's *Octavius*, frequently outlined or defended Christian belief and were particularly prominent in North Africa (Frend 2006: 5). This does not mean, however, that such texts only discuss 'Christian' sartorial practice. Tertullian's late second- and early third-century rhetoric is particularly pertinent in this regard. His infamous invective debates of female dressing behaviours found in *De cultu feminarum* and *De virginibus velandis* are, in fact, reflective of negotiating Christian dress actions in the wider Pagan environment, with Tertullian noting that if God had intended women to dress in coloured clothing, the wool of sheep would naturally reflect this (*De cult. fem.* 1.8.2). As will be seen, Tertullian's assertion of clothing styles considered inappropriate for Christian women implicitly outlined what normative Pagan practice might be; although this is set in the backdrop of Christian negotiation of eschatological and soteriological discourse – relating to doctrine of salvation and soul respectively (Daniel-Hughes 2010; Dunn 2003a; Gonzalez 2013). A similar approach is applicable for the study of dress rhetoric in Cyprian of Carthage's *De habitu virginum*. Whether treatise, homily or letter, these extended clothing discussions were fashioned to influence a change, but might profess an extreme version of it. As Christian authorities sought to re-configure the moral discourse in North Africa, their

agendas naturally turned to methods by which to demonstrate or visually perform their distinction from their non-Christian counterparts.

As Christian belief grew in North Africa, the need to distinguish between Christian and non-Christian waned, but this did not lessen the drama of dressing performances. For Augustine, dress became a marker of his communal ideal, a vehicle of meaning in both its written and real clothing forms. Additionally, ascetic dress offered one visual method for embodying different belief systems, but, as the renunciation trope became a familiar literary device, it is uncertain how far such ascetic sartorial behaviours documented real life. Equally as vivid is the account of the so-called Vandal Persecution, as retold by Victor of Vita in the late fifth century AD. The *Historia Persecutionis Africanae Provinciae* purports to narrate the suffering of ‘Catholic’ believers at the hands of the Arians, but is recounted, of course, through the eyes of a Catholic sympathiser. Nevertheless, this account offers a version of the dynamics of heresiology at play in North Africa – suitable for its North African audience (Whelan 2018: 17-18) – and therefore gives the modern observer some insight into religious and cultural experience in late antique North Africa.

3.3.2 Visual Evidence

A large body of visual material from North Africa is known. My discussion draws on this wealth of published imagery, most significantly mosaic pavements, which are well represented in the archaeological record due, in part, to their perceived status as ‘art’ by excavators, and recovery from wealthy *villae* or estates. If statuary from the region was the sole object of analysis, a limited array of iconographic genres and only partial engagement with figurative representations would be seen (De Bruyn and Machado 2016), perhaps a consequence of a highly examined epigraphic record (Smith 2016: 5). I do not include the tombs at Ghirza, Tripolitania, in my discussion – material that dates from the early third century AD (Audley-Miller 2012: 101) or mid-third century (Brogan and Smith 1984: 210) to the fourth century – not least since the relationship between visual dress and personal identity has recently been surveyed (Audley-Miller 2012).

Further, as dress styles do not seem to emulate Roman models (Mattingly 2003: 165), and appear to cater to a local audience through the use of Libyco-Punic iconography (Audley-Miller 2012: 100, 110; Mattingly 2003: 166, 169), integrating these contextual images into a wider consideration of North African practice is complex, especially as they are sculpture. In my study, I therefore concentrate on the analysis of mosaic imagery, as a constant mode of identity expression for the moneyed classes, to establish the evolution of sartorial depiction across the third to fifth centuries.

Mosaics were a keystone of North African elite culture and, being found throughout the region in both secular and religious contexts, offer a means of critical comparison. With a mixture of figured and geometric designs, not all excavated pavements are relevant to my examination of dressing behaviours: an inventory from 1910 lists 1056 entries alone (*Inv. Tun*; Dunbabin 1999: 101). Having examined all prominent themes, I have picked repertory most likely to document contemporary sartorial attitudes: Four Seasons imagery, hunting scenes and female beautification. For the first category, I present a few select examples, which date from the mid-second century AD to the late fourth or early fifth century, mainly from the site of El Djem, *Africa Proconsularis*. My discussion of hunt imagery utilises a number of sites from across *Africa Proconsularis*. My latter category of imagery, which focuses on female dress performance, surveys the only two extant North African examples, found in Carthage and Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia, an under-representation that is likely due to the subject matter – the matron beautifying herself in a mortal context – as opposed to the ‘authentic’ depiction of everyday (male) scenes. Both these mosaics date, quite fortuitously, to the end of the fourth century to the start of the fifth century.

Dunbabin’s seminal work (1978) has previously demonstrated popular iconographic themes from which North African patrons chose their decorative programmes – the so-called ‘African style’ – and her catalogue for North Africa lists over 600 pavements and fragments from the African provinces. I have analysed all such images to decide their relevance for understanding sartorial realities in North Africa. The mosaic floors discussed in my study date from the mid-second century AD and continue into the sixth century to allow the evolution of figured mosaic designs to be aligned with developing sartorial fashions, which are increasingly ornate, as well as

cultural changes in the North African provinces, such as the Vandal occupation. In some cases, such as the complex at Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia, archaeological material provides an accurate dating mechanism (Ennabli 1986: 55). In other instances, the iconographic stylisation offers an imprecise method of dating. Details of archaeological context derive from late nineteenth and early twentieth-century excavation reports or inventories of mosaic corpora. While more recent efforts excavations provide more reliable archaeological data and permit a relative chronology to be constructed, significant problems remain in assigning precise dates (Dunbabin 1999: 101 n.3).

For information about Christian mosaic covers, I rely on the doctoral research conducted by Margaret Alexander (1958) and that of Joan Downs (2007), but concentrate my analysis on the clothing behaviours depicted. James Terry's work should also be noted (1998), although was not available to consult for my study. Alexander's work surveyed the entirety of the evidence for Tunisia and Algeria – over 500 mosaics in total – whereas Downs' research focused on the village of Tabarka, Tunisia, which has yielded 140 mosaic covers to date: the largest concentration yet recovered from a North African site. These studies provide a synthesis of the archaeology, as well as a proposed chronological sequence first suggested by Alexander for the wider North African region and then critiqued by Downs more specifically for Tabarka. The dating of these Tabarkan mosaic images vary, but centre around the fifth century AD. Alexander suggested a relatively short period of production, only 50-75 years (1958: 113, 118-119), whereas Down's suggestion of a wider span of around 100 years, focused on AD 439-474 (2007: 548-549), seems more plausible. Christian funerary commemorations are particularly associated with the North Africa context, and the dressing activities represented by the *tesserae* directly reflect African customs, rather than being a standardised Mediterranean practice. Again, for ease of study, I discuss a small number of these Christian commemorations from Tabarka – those considered to epitomise the wider visual attitudes for this locale. Recent excavations at Leptiminus, Tunisia (Lazreg 2002; Lazreg *et al.* 2005), have uncovered new mosaic covers and thus offer a corresponding narrative of North African practice and these supplement my discussion.

A large number of mosaic floors (over 1000 in total) are now in the Bardo National Museum in Tunis (Ling 2007: 816) – either displayed to the public or kept in the

collection stores – and show both secular and religious imagery. Smaller, local archaeological site museums in Tunisia also exhibit many vibrant mosaic artefacts *in situ* (Ling 2007: 816). I also refer to a handful of mosaic fragments currently held by the British Museum in London, these being the only examples I have seen in person, rather than via published material online and in print. Although first-hand experience of mosaic pavements is useful for appreciating details such as colour vibrancy, scale or visibility of motifs, the majority of floors now displayed in museums are divorced from their original architectural contexts, some even being fixed on walls and therefore misinterpreting the original function of these visual artefacts. While visual representations do not necessarily depict reality – indeed, this is often not their primary aim (Larsson Lovén 2017: 135) – the ideas encoded in the iconography draw from social norms and customs. For muted social groups, such as women, visual dress depictions express acceptable sartorial behaviours, often providing a counterpoint to the censured tones of male authors critiquing female attire. These images supplement the picture of late Roman and late antique dressing behaviours documented in literary material, but, importantly, they do not replace the information that written dress offers us, merely offering another representation.

3.3.3 Archaeological Material

The North African archaeological record has much to offer my study of dress and identity. As established, I cannot discuss extant textile remains from Roman North Africa and have chosen not to extrapolate research from the technical analysis of Coptic textiles. However, the archaeology of sartorial practice extends further than just textile fragments. Importantly, though, my discussion does not concern small finds or details such as hairstyles, preferring instead to look at dress in its wider setting. Moreover, although I treat mosaic pavements as artefacts placed in specific architectural settings, their imagery – not materiality – is their most informative asset for my discussion, but I consider this in tandem with its archaeological context.

Bodies of epigraphic evidence, such as those surveyed by Haywood (1938: 59-60), also enhance our knowledge of dress practices in North Africa and confirm a general social familiarity with stages of textile production or exchange. The remnants of textile activities, in a variety of media, attest to a cultural landscape populated by those facilitating textile manufacture or acquisition (Jones 1960). Having surveyed this important, but tangential, body of published material, I therefore rely on a handful of documents – essentially recovering elements of written-clothing, but forming part of the archaeological or epigraphic record – which elucidate many of the practicalities of clothing practices in North Africa, especially for considering dress as a material entity. One such example is the *tabula dotis* of Geminia Januarilla, recorded on one of the so-called ‘Albertini Tablets’. The ‘Albertini Tablets’ is the conventional name given to series of archival wooden tablets dated to AD 493-496 (Courtois *et al.* 1952; Corcoran 2013: 6499). Found in 1928 at Djebel Mrata, *Numidia*, and fully published in 1952, the Albertini documents were placed in a ceramic jar, likely for safekeeping during a Berber raid (Merrills and Miles 2010: 159). Consideration of documentary such as this dowry supplements the narratives of North African dress practice as obtained from literary and visual material.

The *Edictum de Pretiis Rerum Venalium*, or Diocletian’s Price Edict, promulgated in AD 301, is often heralded as *the* basis for understanding the late Roman economy, its sophistication and organisation (e.g. Allen 2009; Rathbone 2009). Particularly pertinent for my discussion is that this index mentions over 150 textile types (Kaczmarek 2014: 329) and, significantly, those typical of the late Roman wardrobe (Rothe 2019: 149). Details from this document are frequently extrapolated for Roman textile behaviours in general, such as wages for textile workers (Wild 2014-5), used as evidence of topological or geographical textile diversity or to support claims of regionally specific textile commodities (e.g. Erdemir 2011: 117). That Roman society was familiar with discussing textile features, such as wool provenance, is well attested (e.g. Plin., *HN* 8.190). How judicial documentation translated such ideas illuminates another facet of dress behaviours, associating the material artefact with its representative discourse. Diocletian’s Price Edict evidences the perceived differences between various garments, but key methodological issues make some details unrecoverable. Many issues stem

from an inability to decode aspects of the Edict, not only in terms of its terminology, but also in the actual relationship between designated categories and the commodities themselves. As the Edict's *praefatio* makes clear, the beneficiaries of this 'regulatory law' were primarily soldiers and its purpose was to 'check the excesses with which limitless and furious avarice rages... [where in] the markets... [and] daily life of cities immodest prices are so widespread'. The products and activities detailed in the Edict, accordingly, include not only clothing and textiles, but extend to 1300 items, wages, and services (Arnaud 2007: 321).

Applying the Price Edict to the study of North African clothing is complicated, primarily due to issues of terminology. This methodological issues in not unique to documentary material and can be seen in other textual references. At first glance, the simplicity of the Edict – specifically the fact that it lists garments – implies that textile terms were in common usage through the Mediterranean world. Yet, while some general observations about clothing terms may be cautiously drawn, the reality was probably more complex. The Edict's *praefatio*, not attested in Greek versions, suggests that the master copy was in Latin (Flemestad *et al.* 2017: 258) and Greek translations produced from this (Caputo and Goodchild 1955: 114). If a copy was displayed in North Africa, it likely resembled the extant Latin versions. This does not, however, mean that all North African communities used this language and vocabulary to discuss clothing: Augustine notes, when seeking a bishop for Fussala, that the candidate should speak Punic and his general attitude towards this native dialect is favourable (August. *Ep.* 209. 3; Adams 2003: 238-239). In fact, it is actually unclear how people engaged with this epigraphic artefact at all.

The closest current findspot to my African context is Ptolemais, *Cyrenaica*. Fragments discovered during Italian excavations in 1935, but published 20 years later, fortuitously focus on chapters 19-22, relating to textiles and clothing (Caputo and Goodchild 1955). Other fragments discovered at Aphrodisias, also in Latin, aid further translation and interpretations (Erim *et al.* 1970). The organisation of the textile services and available products as documented in the Edict demonstrates the system of logic used to categorise textiles, although issues of simplistically representing abstract groupings mediate this. A recent study by Flemestad *et al.* (2017) surveyed references

to textile tools in surviving fragments, supplementing our knowledge of potential textiles terminologies officially applied in the Roman world. Critical use of secondary source material such as translations is necessary, as both ancient author and translator may not possess extensive textile knowledge (Gaspa *et al.* 2017: 19). Terminology continually evolves and its connotations are never static (Llewellyn-Jones 2003: 25). Although the Edict might suggest standardised terminology and a reciprocal understanding of this in broader society, it is just one document, produced for a specific purpose. To uphold it as entirely representative of textile terminology and prices is to misjudge its function – to resolve financial instability.

The Zarai tariff (*CIL* 8.4508) is one artefact that is specific to the North African context, although the modern scholar may extrapolate aspects of this research for other discussions of Roman textile behaviours. Found in 1858 in the frontier region of Zarai in *Numidia*, this stone inscription, which appears to reflect the division of garments with the binary qualifiers of ‘African’ and ‘Foreign’, dates to AD 202 (Trousset 2002: 368) and records the customs tariffs for a selection of commodities, including furs, hides, livestock and slaves, alongside textiles. These goods clearly passed along the transhumance routes running between the Hodna basin and the Plains of Constantine (Merrills 2018: 366). As a customs list with flat-rate charges (Duncan-Jones 2006: 6), the Zarai tariff was a functional document: it includes three tariff clauses, the *lex capitularis*, the *lex uestis peregrinae*, and the *lex coriaria*, as well as a fourth paragraph linked to the *lex portus maim(a)/(i)* (Renier 1858; Morizot 2009). The existence of such a public document demonstrates the movement of textiles and the interaction of African pastoralist communities with civilian or military markets (Broekaert and Vanacker 2016). The Zarai tariff also identifies the types of finished textile goods that might be exchanged – the *abolla*, *tunica*, *lodix* and *sagum* – as well as leather and woollen fleeces (Broekaert and Vanacker 2016: 112). The widespread depiction of hunters wearing the *tunica*- and *sagum*-ensemble in North African iconography suggests the alignment of image-clothing and real-clothing.

There were clearly significant and expansive trade systems operating in the North African provinces. A similar impression is given by the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*. In brief, the *Expositio*, an economic treatise detailing different groups

throughout the Mediterranean world, offered its audience an impression of the Roman world at its time of composition (Rougé 1966: 83). Believed to be brought together some time in the mid-fourth century AD – either AD 359/60 Rougé (1966) or between AD 350-362 Grüll (2014) – this commercial geography mentions the production and trade of Mauretania and Numidian textiles commodities (*Expos. mundi* 60). It is clear that the author of the *Expositio* paid particular attention to conveying textile activities, as they are the most frequently cited exports. 20% of the mentioned commodities are textiles while 17% are wine, 17% are oil, and 10% are grain (Grüll 2014: 635). Again, this document characterises North African sartorial practice, as an extension of textile behaviours, in a wider environment of commercial activities.

3.3.4 Drawing the Threads of Dress Rhetoric Together

As this brief overview of my dataset demonstrates, my discussion draws on a mixture of different source types. Each source and source type is a product of different intentions, and these factors influence the dress rhetoric espoused. My study turns a critical lens onto these clothing echoes and investigates three main ideas: context, content and function. Exploring context situates the evidence geographically and historically, examining basic details such as size and audience, as well as establishing its physical or material form. Content elaborates on the message or narrative of the source as well as what information it gives the audience and the modern dress historian. Finally, function examines the purpose of the source – its use within North African society – and its relationship to the local dress rhetoric. Using these criteria reflects the understanding that each source is situationally constitutive and a cultural production for different types of consumption. But, just as dress cannot be limited to just its textile and material qualities, dress rhetoric cannot be studied in just one form of its existence. It must instead be understood and studied as pieces of a composite and complex dress system.

Chapter 4: Gender Differentiation: Female Dress

This chapter surveys female dress in Roman Africa in both secular and religious contexts. I focus solely on female dress, not least since there is a wealth of information for such activities as male authors frequently censured deviant actions and gave incorrect male dress feminine characterisations. Pitting garments as diametrically opposing, the North African gendered system for dressing the body – as evidenced by textual and visual material – was a hugely significant social institution and a marker of identity.

I begin by interrogating documentary evidence – Diocletian's Price Edict, Justinian's legal *Digest* and the late fifth-century dowry of Janurilla – to consider if legal conceptions of gendered clothing are irreconcilable with historical practice. This establishes what accusations of effeminate dress tell us about late Roman and late antique gender ideals. Since care for bodily appearance was a stereotypically female occupation, I explore how clothing behaviours, particularly expressions of wealth, articulated a female identity. I then move on to explore Christian debates on female clothing practice. This centres on the Christian association between modest female attire and morality. For instance, Tertullian, in his *De cultu feminarum*, ascribed increasing soteriological significance to female garb: female dress was a means of gaining salvation for men and women. My discussion follows this thread of thought to explore the problems of transgressive female clothing. I examine Tertullian's *De virginibus velandis* and Cyprian's *De habitu virginum* to investigate how male authorities rationalised the sartorial performance enacted by virgins and the dangers that the uncovered head represented. The active rejection of normative practice also resonates with my final section, which tracks how aspects of the martyr Perpetua's cross-dressing narrative were adapted to suit the perceived sensibilities of contemporary audiences and the agendas of their Christian authors.

My discussion demonstrates that while male authors frequently discuss and censure female sartorial practice, this does not preclude the social or religious capital gained through correct clothing actions. Rather than being just a method of social control, gendered dress should be recognised as a significant mechanism for female self-expression.

4.1 Non-Christian Gendered Dress: Gender Boundaries and Difference

4.1.1 *The Gendering of Clothing*

Documents such as Diocletian's Price Edict attest to how far, theoretically, gendered clothing forms were embedded in social interactions and quotidian practice. Notwithstanding methodological concerns (see Chapter 3.3.3), this legislation shows the division of clothing along gendered lines. For example, the prices for various qualities and types of linen dalmatic tunics are given first for female use followed by the prices for the male version (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 26). Although not intended to expand on garment details, but rather as a method of resolving inflated prices, this Edict of maximum prices complements the literary portrayal of gendered clothing through the delineation of garments in various categories. The most illuminating section for this discussion is in Chapter 26, which covers the cost of linen objects. The transparency of the figures enables a direct comparison of prices: in all instances, the maximum price listed for female garments is set equal to or higher than that of the male equivalent. Women's clothing is thus more expensive – presumably, a practical consideration since female clothing was usually longer and required more material. The Edict does not offer any insight into the process behind the gendering of clothing, whether such things were obvious or how the merchant or consumer would identify the intended gender of the wearer. Yet, the promulgation of an edict using these gender distinctions does imply that either a convenient or familiar mechanism. The presence of copies of this Edict throughout the Roman world also shows how this gendering was considered applicable to multiple geographical or cultural audiences.

Gender distinctions in clothing were also judicially defined. In Book 34 of Justinian's *Digest* – repeating the early third-century AD Ulpian's law code – the category of 'female' clothing is matter-of-factly laid out:

Women's clothes are those acquired for the benefit of the matron of the household, which a man cannot easily use without incurring censure, such as robes, wraps, undergarments, head coverings, belts, turbans, which have been acquired more with a view to covering the head than for their decorative effect, coverlets, and mantles (*Dig.* 34.2.23).

Placed in opposition to male clothing, ‘that provided for the benefit of the head of the household, such as togas, tunics, cloaks, bedspreads, coverlets, and blankets, and the like’ (*Dig.* 34.2.23), such sartorial difference echoes earlier formulations such as the late first century AD Quintilian’s (*Inst.* 11.1.3). At first glance, these legal references suggest a clear delineation of clothing for each gender. Importantly this is only with regard to the clothing of non-slaves; slaves’ clothing is ‘that acquired for dressing the household, such as blankets, tunics, mantles, bed linen and the like’ (*Dig.* 34.2.23). A corresponding classification is found in Diocletian’s Price Edict. Commenting on a section of Sextus Pomponius’ *Sabinus* Book 22, the third-century jurist Ulpian notes that Pomponius ‘rightly observes’ that ‘a legacy of women’s clothes includes baby clothes, female children’s clothes and young girl’s clothes; for all those of the female sex are classed as women’ (*Dig.* 34.2.25). By this logic, gendered clothing is clear. Yet, Ulpian also states:

Clothes adapted to the use of either sex are those which a woman shares in common with her husband, for instance, where a mantle or cloak is of the type that a man or his wife may use it without criticism, and other garments of this nature (*Dig.* 34.2.23).

This phrasing suggests, however, a somewhat blurred legal definition of ‘female’ dress – reflecting ambiguous garment use in actual experience; gendered clothing becomes gendered because it is imbued with these significations, a notion confirmed later in the *Digest* where the gender designation of clothing is socially, not legally, constructed: ‘it must be held that clothing constitutes the legacy [of clothing] which the testator intended, not what is in fact male or female’ (*Dig.* 34.2.32). The wearing of ‘gendered’ clothing serves to reinforce gender norms as such dress designates the wearer as a participant in this clothing system and announces the wearer’s acceptance of and adherence to these sartorial regulations.

A pivotal factor in this construction of gender is social criticism, seen in reference to ideas of clothing that can be worn ‘without criticism’ or ‘without incurring censure’ (*Dig.* 34.2.23). Societal critique of costume was a powerful motivator, although notions of appropriate dress for the genders did evolve as the frequent citation of the *tunica strictoria* in late antique sources demonstrates (see Chapter 1.4.2.1). Diocletian’s Price Edict, for instance, lists wages for an embroiderer (*plumarius*) working on a ‘*strictoria*

holoserica’, or an all-silk long sleeved tunic (*Edict. imp. Diocl. 20.2*). This would have horrified any (respectable) Roman male in the late Republican period where it was considered *effeminatus* to wear a long-sleeved *tunica* and could result in an accusation of being *mollis*, as enacted by Cicero in his derision of Cataline’s followers (*Cat. 2.22*). But, by the fourth century AD, the *tunica strictoria* was a respectable male garment. It appears frequently in mosaic imagery, as in the late fourth- or early fifth-century depiction of the seated *dominus* (Fig. 4.1) in the Dominus Julius Mosaic, decorating the floor of a wealthy residence in Carthage. This type of tunic also remained appropriate for female use, although the garment was usually longer for women. Changing attitudes to particular garment styles shows that, although censure for transgressive sartorial behaviours remained prominent in the late Roman mentality, what exactly constituted ‘transgressive’ was a matter of specific historical contexts and authorial deployment.

Often when late Roman literature references gendered dressing activities, it implicitly investigates transgressive dress and, in doing so, perpetuates gender



Figure 4.1: Dominus Julius wearing a tunica strictoria, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

boundaries. Such references demonstrate the general acceptance of gendered clothing practices as normative, highlighting that instances of deviant dress could and *did* provoke a reaction from an audience. There are, however, occasions where deviant dress is only an outward performance and therefore not critiqued as true cross-dressing. The writings of Apuleius, the second-century prose author, include numerous passing references to male transgressive clothing. Importantly, these instances occur in the context of disguise, offering a somewhat comic commentary on the accepted alignment of outward appearance and inward disposition: thus, the robber who disguises himself as a woman can be brave (Apul., *Met.* 7.8). Apuleius outlines the transgressive dress behaviour and its extraordinary nature: '*Sumpta veste muliebri florida, in sinus flaccidos abundante*, I put on a woman's flowery robe with loose billowy folds... under the deceptive cover of my alien garb' (Apul., *Met.* 7.8). Apuleius' North African heritage probably did not contribute directly to this caricature, but for this discussion of North African dress, it suggests an authorial world, and audience, familiar with the implications of such sartorial behaviours.

In rhetorical and literary constructions, transgressive gendered dress provoked a reaction from the audience who, through their own normative gender roles, legitimise gender transgressions. When deviant dress functioned as disguise, cross-dressing was permissible precisely because it was temporary. In other instances, when gender was re-assigned, transgressive dress was disturbing. Tertullian, the early third century AD orator and theologian, somewhat undermines the traditional heroism of the Greco-Roman heroes Achilles and Hercules in his *De pallio* by reminding his audience – likely both Christian and non-Christian – of their transvestitism. This rhetorical digression also references historical figures such as the boxer Cleomachus, and Alexander the Great (Tert., *De pall.* 4.3-4.6). Tertullian isolates specific elements of dress, gesture and physical appearance that provide an effeminate caricature:

adhunc sustinet stolam fundere, when he [Achilles] still put up with a woman's flowing robe, doing his hair, applying make-up, consulting the mirror, caressing his neck, effeminated as far as his ears by holes (*De pall.* 4.2.3).

Tertullian's polemical intent is overt in this digression, but while a foray into transgressive gendered dress does not explicitly fit Tertullian's persuasive intentions – the adoption of the *pallium* instead of the toga – by evoking stories of cross-dressing Tertullian reinforces the inappropriateness of such actions, noticeably in a context that opposes two male garments. Even when associated with Homeric epics or successful kings, effeminate dress is contrary to nature (Tert., *De pall.* 4.2.1). Achilles' story was of course widely known (Stat., *Achil.* 1.845-850; Ov., *Ars. am.* 1.690-705), allowing Tertullian to leave the hero anonymous, but nonetheless identifiable through his dress actions. In the *Heroides*, Ovid finalised Hercules' gender reassignment: not only does he dress like a woman, but, by participating in the female activity of wool-spinning, he even acts like a woman (Ov., *Her.* 9.73). No doubt, the effeminate characterisations that Tertullian deploys held sway with his North African audience.

The acceptance and promotion of such figures in effeminate guises had a long tradition in Greco-Roman culture and Christian authors like Tertullian were not the first to criticise such transgressive dress (Eppinger 2017: 205). Roman discourses of ancient sexuality and deviancy posited effeminates as transgressive, so Tertullian's 'Christian' prose merely refashioned pre-existing social discourse in a new religious light positing Achilles' sartorial deviance as contravening social norms. Aspects of the text surely played upon known contemporary stereotypes and Tertullian intends to allude to contemporary discussions of inappropriate clothing: the early third-century emperor Elagabalus was credited as the first Roman to wear clothing entirely of silk (SHA, *Heliogab.* 26.1). Reference to the emperors guides the audience to think about recent historical figures, not just distant heroes (Tert., *De pall.* 4.5; Kuefler 2001: 218). Hence, Tertullian's digression operates on two levels. It both reinforces the contemporary identification of gender boundaries while simultaneously ascribing a moral judgement – framed from his Christian perspective – on contemporary transgressive cross-dressing practices.

Tertullian's concern over contemporary transgressive dress is confirmed a short while later: 'Such clothing therefore, that estranges from nature and modesty, deserves sharply fixing gazes, pointing fingers, and exposing nods', Tertullian exclaims (*De pall.*

4.8.1). To Tertullian's dismay, his audience no longer censures inappropriate dress (*De pall.* 4.8.3). This lack of peer critique had a terrible consequence:

freedmen in the attire of knights, slaves loaded with floggings in that of the nobility, captives in that of freeborn, bumpkins in that of city dwellers, buffoons in that of men of the forum, citizens in that of soldiers. The corpse-bearer, the pimp, and the trainer of gladiators; they dress like you (Tert., *De pall.* 4.8.3).

Although not explicitly dealing with gender, Tertullian's viewpoint is clear: contemporary clothing no longer cultivates distinction or difference. Woefully, the various social classes have usurped the dress of each other. Such social mobility was dangerous, even if only metaphorical: a disregard for dress demonstrates a dismissal of normative dress systems, which, in turn, results in an increase of immorality. In the case of Achilles, this led to the continued presence of a statue depicting Achilles in an effeminate manner at Cape Sigeum during Tertullian's day (Tert., *De pall.* 4.2.3). Ironically, Tertullian's censure of the Achilles statue made no effect on audiences and a reference by the fourth-century grammarian Servius, in his commentary on Vergil, attests to the statue's continued presence (*Aen.* 1.30).

Tertullian makes the problem of transgressive dress and its relationship to gendered dress more explicit:

There you may see ... matrons without *stolae* (*Habes spectare ... matronas sine stola*) ... But now committing lechery against themselves, making themselves more easily accessible, they have renounced the stole, the linen garb, the rustling bonnet, the hairy headdress (*At nunc in semetipsas lenocinando, quo planius adeantur, et stolam et supparum et crepidulum et caliendrum*) ... you had better turn your eyes away from such infamies of publicly slaughtered chastity, yet just look from above and you will see they are matrons! (*De pall.* 4.9).

Tertullian's *De pallio* was not intended to be a polemic against gendered dress. Instead, he exploits the idea of transgressive dress, signalled by inappropriate gender clothing, to emphasise moral systems and the need for strict clothing systems. In defending the adoption of the *pallium* as a change in convention, not nature, Tertullian anticipates and dismisses rebuttals to his argument. Further, he situates his treatise in a rhetorical landscape that is explicitly concerned with critiquing and debating dress-codes. By

associating effeminate dress with contemporary anxieties over incorrect dress, Tertullian places his solution, the *pallium*, as the method for maintaining social integrity and morality, in a discussion that is less about Christianity than it would first seem (see Chapter 5.1). Tertullian mobilises ideas of gendered dress in his rhetoric, and re-affirmed the distinction constructed by gendered sartorial behaviours as a litmus test of societal morality. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that Tertullian moved in a world where no one dressed in gender appropriate clothing, merely that such themes held some social sway and could act as a rhetorical device.

4.1.2 Dressing as Female Activity

It is no coincidence that in his didactic diversion in *De pallio* Tertullian spills more ink over the censure of contemporary female dress than he does on male clothing. As we will see, the characterisation of the feminine sphere as the realm where preoccupation for bodily appearance resided had a long and established history. In *De pallio*, Tertullian's mechanism for critiquing effeminate dress relies on the association of care for outward presentation as a female action. Subversion of normative dress behaviours is dangerous, as Tertullian remarks, and boundaries between the sexes must be maintained lest society fall into disarray. Tertullian's moralising discourse was not new. His innovation, however, was to ascribe religious significance to the maintenance of societal morality through acceptable female dress. The moralising that characterised subsequent Christian rhetoric directed towards females (see below), appropriated and built upon established traditions of dressing behaviours. Items of female dress implicitly cultivated a sense of modesty through their bodily coverage and the way in which specific aspects, like the *palla*, served to control the wearer's movement (Harlow 2012b: 40). Interestingly though, the *palla* is not Tertullian's focus, but rather the wider concept that wearing clothing appropriately visually signals acceptance of gender norms.

Writing in the last decades of the first century BC, but discussing the repeal of the *Lex Oppia* of 195 BC, Livy also capitalised on the long-standing association between dress and female identity. Using the tribune of the plebs, Lucius Valerius, as a

mouthpiece, Livy remarks that ‘elegance, and ornamentation, and care of the self- these are the insignia of women, in these they delight and glory; this our ancestors called ‘woman’s world’’ (34.7.9). Two hundred years later, Tertullian plays on the same gender stereotypes saying that ‘*ornatus*’ and ‘*cultus*’ were ‘long-standing enthusiasms’ of women (*De cult. fem.* 2.1). Although his purpose was to criticise female sartorial practices, not celebrate them as Livy’s Lucius Valerius had, Tertullian’s rhetoric assumes that sartorial preoccupation was feminine. In light of this knowledge, it is possible to read Tertullian’s reference in *De Pallio* of the general disuse of the *stola* ‘*matronas sine stola in publico*’ (*De pall.* 4.9) not as a female rejection of modest clothing, but instead as female sartorial innovation, perhaps because the *stola* was too impractical (Harlow 2012b: 39). Yet, that Tertullian could frame innovation as transgression in *De pallio* (and also in *De virginibus velandis* – see below) attests that traditional cultural customs could be bolstered through female dress, but these strategies had to be endorsed by society more broadly.

If elite feminine clothing practices erred towards excess, male rhetoric was quick to note its deviant nature. Such accusations reiterated gender norms as they associated female weakness with immoral extremes, such as *luxuria* (see Weeber 2003). By indulging in *luxuria*, such women displayed their moral deviance. This notion, however, was in tension with the fact that certain dress objects showcased wealth and status (Stout 1994: 77). For virtuous women who, at least ideally, spent most of their time in private, public displays of wealth through dress were an opportunity for empowerment and positive self-expression. Transgressive practice was thus a subjective assessment; accusations of *luxuria* could be levied without precision or true justification. A similar paradox existed in the association of Roman *matronae* with Venus where female identity capitalised on this virtuous association (Wyke 1994). Such virtues were part of a wider rhetoric of Roman status and authority which boasted of participation in the cultural elite and the ability to spend energy on such behaviours and the lack of manual labour (Upson Saia 2011: 27). The art of beautification was seen as a marker of respectability whereby *dominae* advertised their social status and participation among the cultural elite through the process of adorning the body (for the manifestation of such ideas in North African visual media see Chapter 6.1). Textual evidence, as a product

of male authors, only conveys the dominant male perspective. This succinctly demonstrates how dress functioned to perpetuate gendered practices: dress rhetoric endorsed sartorial innovation when it was agreeable to its male voices.

Male problematising of female dressing practices was long-established. As a signifier of social integrity, female dress mattered. By critiquing female attire, male moral superiority was endorsed. In Roman society, 'dress' was a woman's world and was frequently manifested in cultural rhetoric through the gender ideology of domestic textile production. Textile activity was posited as virtuous and cultivated the female ideal (Larsson Lovén 2013: 123). Augustus, as part of his revival of traditional *mores*, claimed to wear homemade clothes when in private (Suet., *Aug* 73). While it is difficult to establish how far this gender ideology actually influenced mainstream textile production – the male focus of source material and genre conventions often obscure the social reality (Larsson Lovén 2013: 122-124) – that this trope could be deployed as a litmus test of societal virtue is significant. Columella, writing in the mid-first century AD, correlates moral decline with a feminine disregard for traditional female textile tasks, including the supervision of textile activities (*Rust.* 12.*praef.* 9-10). Centuries later, a Pseudo-Augustinian sermon, *De sobrietate et castitate*, perpetuates these gender roles and exhorts its audience (women) to act appropriately. Despite demonstrating no specific North African traits (Dossey 2010: 168 n.154), this homily clearly interacts with visual instances of female virtue and textile activity in North Africa, such as the previously discussed *Pars Rustica* panel from the Tabarka Rural Scenes Mosaic (Fig. 4.2). Failure to act appropriately would have far-reaching consequences, not just for the women, but also for the entire household. Here, moral deficiency is made manifest by a lack of care for textile activities:

The whole *domus* resounds with the clamours of the undisciplined *familia*. The weaving is neglected, abandoned or done with utter carelessness... The mistress no longer sets up the looms for the purpose of weaving garments for chastity, the need for which she has long dismissed from the household from drunkenness. The looms which she has withdrawn from the leisured slave-girls are given over to weaving- spider webs! (Ps-Aug. *Sobr.* PL 40: 1110).



Figure 4.2: Pars Rustica Panel, Rural Scenes Mosaic, Tabarka, Tunisia. Late fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.

Although an artefact of homiletic discourse directed at a Christian audience, this excerpt attests to the continued correlation between domestic textile production, female occupation and morality (Clark 2015: 51-52). This matron is too drunk to weave and her failure to conduct herself properly is a direct product of abandonment of moral integrity and, most significantly, her textile role. As with female clothing practices, the inability to control bodily presentation mirrored a total disregard for feminine virtue. As guardians of collective morality, women constituted gender norms through their sartorial and textile behaviours.

4.1.3 Female Dress as Financial Capital

Clothing, as a symbol of feminine identity, fashioned the woman as modest and controlled, yet in its broadest cultural conception, it offered women another mechanism of identity designation – that of wealth and status. As an arena for self-expression (within the confines of normative practice, of course), sartorial possessions were

significant personal items. Their financial capital was an important factor and made a woman economically visible (Olson 2008: 96). Legally, items of adornment were separate to clothing: ‘women’s clothing is not included under the head of adornment’ (*Dig.* 34.2.37). Adornment, then, was fundamentally superfluous to clothing the body:

Women's jewellery is of the kind with which a woman adorns herself, such as earrings, bracelets, small bangles, rings, with the exception of signet rings, and everything acquired for no other purpose than adornment. And the following, too, belong to this category: gold, gems, and [precious] stones, because in themselves they have no other use (*Dig.* 34.2.25).

Roman sources often exaggerated the value of jewellery, thus Tertullian offers the reproach: ‘The slender lobes of ears exhaust a small fortune; and on the left hand, on every finger, plays with a single money bag. Such are the powers of ambition’ (*De cult. fem.* 1.9.3). His contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, uses similar imagery when he describes necklaces as ‘gold fetters’ (*Paed.* 2.13). Although the moralising overtones in these two examples stem from a Christian agenda (Dunn 2004a; Maier 2013), the employment of this gender association attests to its continued use and significance. However, it is at odds to the extant visual material from North Africa (see below). Attempts to delineate items considered as ‘female’ also had a practical application and, in theory, such definitions made legalities clearer.

The transfer of objects and possessions, as documented in dowries or wills, required guidelines and structures. The *Digest* showcases historic attempts to establish frameworks for interpreting legacies and, in doing so, demonstrates how Roman law sought to protect a woman’s property. Of course, the *Digest* overwhelmingly characterises women in terms of stereotypically female items, as encapsulated in the following entry recording third-century AD practice:

A man instituted his sons as heirs, legated to his wife clothing, female toiletries, wool, flax, and other things, and added: “However, I want the ownership of the items listed above to revert to my daughters or to whichever of them are living at the time” (*Dig.* 34.2.39).

To characterise the woman's 'worth' primarily in terms of her 'female possessions' is very significant. The *tabula dotis* of Geminia Januarilla, part of the 'Albertini Tablets', attests to characterisation of a woman in these terms. All but four of the 33 tablets relate to the sale of agricultural land (Hitchner 1995: 134) and the dowry of Geminia Januarilla (T1) is the only document of this kind in these wooden tablets so cannot be correlated or compared to another dowry example from this specific historical context. Januarilla's dowry is concerned with the female domain, particularly clothing, jewellery and tools for weaving wool (Evans-Grubbs 2010: 88), and the presence of domestic objects such as furnishing and bedding also supports her complete characterisation in a feminine, domestic sphere. The most expensive item listed is a pure African dalmatic tunic valued at 2000 *folles* – out of the dowry's total value of 12,000 *folles*.

The exact relationship between Geminia Januarilla and the owner of the *Fundus Tuletianus* estate, Flavius Geminus Catullinus, is uncertain, but the *nomen* suggests familial association (Evans-Grubbs 2007: 84). As such, Januarilla's dowry should not be considered as representative of widespread sartorial possessions in Vandal North Africa, as the use of marriage documents for groups of various socio-economic make-up is known from elsewhere (e.g. Droß-Krüpe 2017). Reflecting the bride's social status, though, this list must have resonated with Januarilla's identity. Certainly, the use of the term *maforsenu* instead of the more common *mafortium* suggests localised terminology (T1.6; Adams 2007: 561). The use of dowries was not of course just limited to North Africa and evidence also comes from Dura-Europos, Syria, and Egypt (Baird 2016; Evans-Grubbs 2010). The universality of clothing and jewellery in dowry lists confirms that there was some degree of realism in the association between clothing and women as suggested by textual sources.

Jonathan Conant notes the potential for comparison of these garments with Tabarkan mosaic imagery (2012: 281-282). Certainly, both corpora attest to the construction of female identity through 'modest' clothing. Januarilla's dalmatic tunic and *mafors*, a veil that covered the head and neck, signals clothing appropriate for a virtuous woman – details also apparent in Tabarkan iconography (Fig. 4.3). Droß-Krüpe's examination of terminology in dowries from Roman Egypt posited a female dress ensemble composed of a dalmatic tunic and a *mafortium* (2017: 298-299) and it is



Figure 4.3: Victoria wearing a dalmatica tunic and mafortium, Victoria and the Scribe Mosaic, Tabarka. First quarter of the fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

possible that this was a popular female ensemble given how Nonius mentions a *dalmaticomafortium* (Non. 542; Pausch 2003: 185-186). It is also attested in Diocletian's Price Edict (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 19.8, 12, 13) A dowry list from Dura-Europos, Syria, written in Greek and dating to AD 232, also includes a red dalmatic cape with purple hood (Evans-Grubbs 2002: 133) and is the most expensive item at 75 *denarii* (Baird 2016: 37 n.43). The North African dowry list implies a similar association between the dalmatic tunic and the *mafors*, although the apparent diversity in dates and contexts caution against extrapolating interpretations too far (the dowries surveyed by Droß-Krüpe are late second and early third century AD). Januarilla's dowry list and other ancient references (e.g. Isid., *Etym.* 19.25.4; Non. 542.1) confirm the use of such terminology for female clothing. Its use to describe male priestly garb (Cassian, *Inst.* 1.7), however, does not disprove this costume as exclusively female since the later date of these

references and their extra-African context negate such problems for my discussion. The sheer value of Januarilla's dowry, however, suggests this form of 'modesty' signified the covering and concealing of the body, not an unornamented or financially modest appearance. While such ideas do not correspond with the rhetoric espoused by early Christian authors, they do mirror dressing behaviours apparent at Tabarka (see Chapter 5.5). Although male Roman rhetoric might denounce the unrestrained *matronae* as transgressive through the greed of *luxuria*, this trope existed predominantly in the rhetorical sphere, acting as a social ideal, not a notion to be enforced. Januarilla's dowry both proudly and pragmatically established her social worth. As we will see in Chapter 6, her actions find resonance with broad late antique dress rhetoric used to demonstrate status and wealth.

Cultural ideology and social forces motivated ostentatious appearances. Visual media offer an illuminating glimpse at female adornment rhetoric at work and, most significantly, its interaction with reality. These visual artefacts encode sartorial ideals in imagery, highlighting the contexts which broadcast elaborate female clothing and precisely what form acceptable versions of female dress took. Confronting the paradox between female modesty and participation in elite activities, two well-known North African mosaics – the late fourth-century Dominus Julius Mosaic from Carthage (Fig. 4.4) and the Lady at her Toilette mosaic from Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia (Fig. 4.8), which dates to the late fourth or early fifth century AD – demonstrate how the depicted female form mediated cultural norms of female virtue and dress. Despite being ubiquitously cited in modern scholarship for broad exploration of late Roman culture, their value to exploring North African dress rhetoric is incontestable and they exemplify complex gender rhetoric.

The first mosaic studied here is the Dominus Julius mosaic from Carthage (Fig 4.4). Dating to around AD 380-400 (Nevett 2010: 121), the mosaic measures 4.5 x 5.65m (Merlin 1921: 95) and is composed of three registers, with small vignettes organised around an image of a substantial building. This central register situates the imagery – the depiction of the elite *habitus* – through the representation of an elite estate, including activities associated with its inhabitants. Flanking the estate is a mounted rider on the left, the *dominus*, accompanied by a servant. On the other side of the house are



Figure 4.4: Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

two hunters departing with their hunting dogs. While the central register provides context for the viewer, the upper and lower registers showcase pertinent gender ideologies. In the centre of the upper register, the *domina* is depicted wearing a short-sleeved tunic decorated with single *clavi* (Fig. 4.5); her figure is accentuated by the thinness of her gauzy garment which falls slightly down, revealing her shoulder in an echo of the Venus Genetrix statue types (Gigante 1999: 449). Her leisurely pose is further communicated in the act of her fanning herself. To the far left of the figure a man carries two ducks and two tiny figures collect olives from a tree. To the *domina's* immediate left, a woman carries a basket; on her right side a woman offers the *domina* a lamb. A partially preserved vignette of agricultural activities completes this register's composition. The *domina* is depicted again in the lower register where she wears a thin *tunica strictoria* decorated with thick *clavi* from shoulder to hem (Fig. 4.6). She leans on a pillar and she is posed in the action of accepting a necklace from her attendant holding a casket. This attendant wears a *tunica strictoria*, but with a dalmatic tunic over it. In the far right, a figure carries a basket of roses. The other scene in this register depicts



Figure 4.5: The Domina leisurely fans herself, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

the seated *dominus* who receives a scroll from a figure dressed in a short tunic. Completing this episode is another worker dressed in a short tunic. He carries a basket and holds a rabbit by the hind legs.



Figure 4.6: The Domina in a tunic strictoria, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

Composed of scenes of daily life, but realised in an unconventional composition, this mosaic exemplifies a more personalised and selective approach to domestic decoration (Dunbabin 1978: 24-26). The overt propagation of gender ideals thus appears to be a purposeful mode of self-representation. Due to poor documentation, details of the mosaic's provenance, including its precise architectural setting, are uncertain (Nevett 2010: 123). Of course, this does not devalue the importance of the mosaic iconography; the depiction of a rural domestic building in the centre recalls the elite ideal of *otium* and, being found in an urban context, the mosaic invites the viewer to think beyond the confines of the immediate environment, conjuring ideas of elite pursuits. Merlin vaguely asserts that the mosaic was discovered near an apse (1921: 95). Based on the area's measurements (4.5 x 5.65m) and the idea that this apse was designed to contain a *stibadium*, or a curved dining couch, Nevett (2010: 123, 125) proposes a hypothetical plan of the room (Fig. 4.7). To this end, the mosaic functionally divided the space and the orientation directly influenced viewer interpretation. Accordingly, the mosaic and its message were directed to the visiting audience, rather than at those already situated in the apse since the imagery would be inverted from this position. This mosaic was a statement of patron identity, composed for and directed to external parties. By physically separating depictions of the *dominus* and the *domina*, this mosaic explicitly perpetuates gender difference. Although united within the same physical context, each gender commands a particular sphere of influence. For the

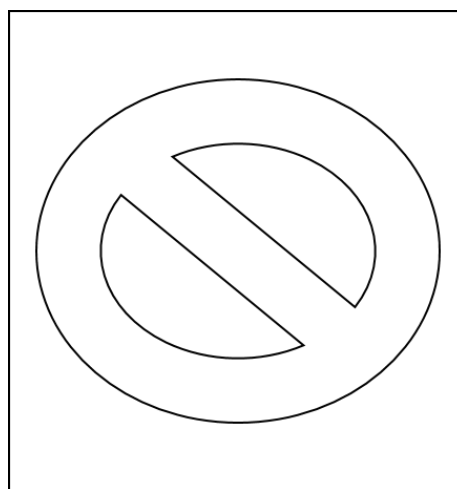


Figure 4.7: Three-dimensional hypothetical plan of the room containing the Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage.

domina, this is the realm of beautification. These are positive instances of self-expression: the *domina* highlights virtuous aspects of her identity. In the lower register, an immediate association of the *domina* with sartorial activities is suggested through her luxurious clothing and her acceptance of a necklace. In contrast, the female attendants in the upper and lower register are depicted in the same costume. Discussion of the display of social status in this image is given in Chapter 6.1.

The second mosaic (Fig. 4.8), from Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia, demonstrates an overt manifestation of female dress rhetoric in mosaic form. Excavated in the private baths of an extensive rural villa located 30 km southwest of Carthage, this mosaic decorated a vestibule area. It is a late fourth-century or early fifth-century example (Dunbabin 1999: 322; Thébert 2003: 149), with excavated pottery offering a firm *terminus post quem*, rather than art historical chronologies (Ennabli 1986: 55). The mosaic shows a Matron at her toilette, attended by two other females. The all-female composition solidifies a gendered association, but other details also express gender economies. In the centre of the panel, the matron sits upon a chair with her feet on a dais. She is dressed in a multi-coloured sleeveless *colobium* tunic decorated with several multi-coloured *clavi*; the



Figure 4.8: Matron at her Toilette Mosaic, Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia. Late fourth or early fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

tunic style leaves her arms bare. Her accessories include several bracelets on her left arm with an armlet on her upper arm, a single bracelet on her right wrist, a double row necklace, drop earrings and a hair-covering. Her feet are encased in slippers. To the left of this figure, a woman stands offering a bowl. She wears a floor-length, light-coloured dalmatic tunic, with large, open sleeves. The tunic is decorated with *clavi* from shoulder to hem. The draping of the material, shown to flare at the hips, indicates a tunic belted at the waist; slippers are also visible. Due to damage it is difficult to discern whether she is wearing any jewellery about her face or head. The third figure in the mosaic also wears a light-coloured, long dalmatic tunic, with identical *clavi*. Her tunic is similarly belted and slippers are likewise visible. She also wears a simple necklace and earrings, and perhaps a bracelet on her left wrist.

This mosaic's interaction with gender ideologies is immediately communicated through its architectural context. Located in a vestibule (3.01 x 1.76m) by the entrance, as can be seen from a plan of the bath complex (Fig. 4.9), this floor mosaic covered a space of 2.84 x 1.69m and is mirrored by an almost identical mosaic (2.09 x 1.75m) depicting three persons on foot, the so-called 'Departure for the Hunt mosaic' (Fig. 4.10). This latter mosaic – to be discussed in Chapter 6.2.3 – depicts the husband going off to hunt (Ennabli 1986: 45), although this interpretation is contested (Schade 2009: 222). Nevertheless, this parallel panel is all-male. Both mosaics, therefore, offer complementary interpretations of clothing and gendered practices as well as the separation, both figuratively and literally, of these activities. It is pertinent to note that the female activity re-affirms associations with a domestic, internal environment, while the depicting of hunting activities places the *dominus'* sphere of action outside the house. In the Matron at her Toilette mosaic, the motif of dressing the body is expressed as an intimate, all-female activity. And yet this is tempered by the public nature of the architectural setting. Although located in a private bathing complex, the identities expressed through these mosaics were not just for patron consumption, their purpose was to directly 'speak' to guests and other individuals using the complex.

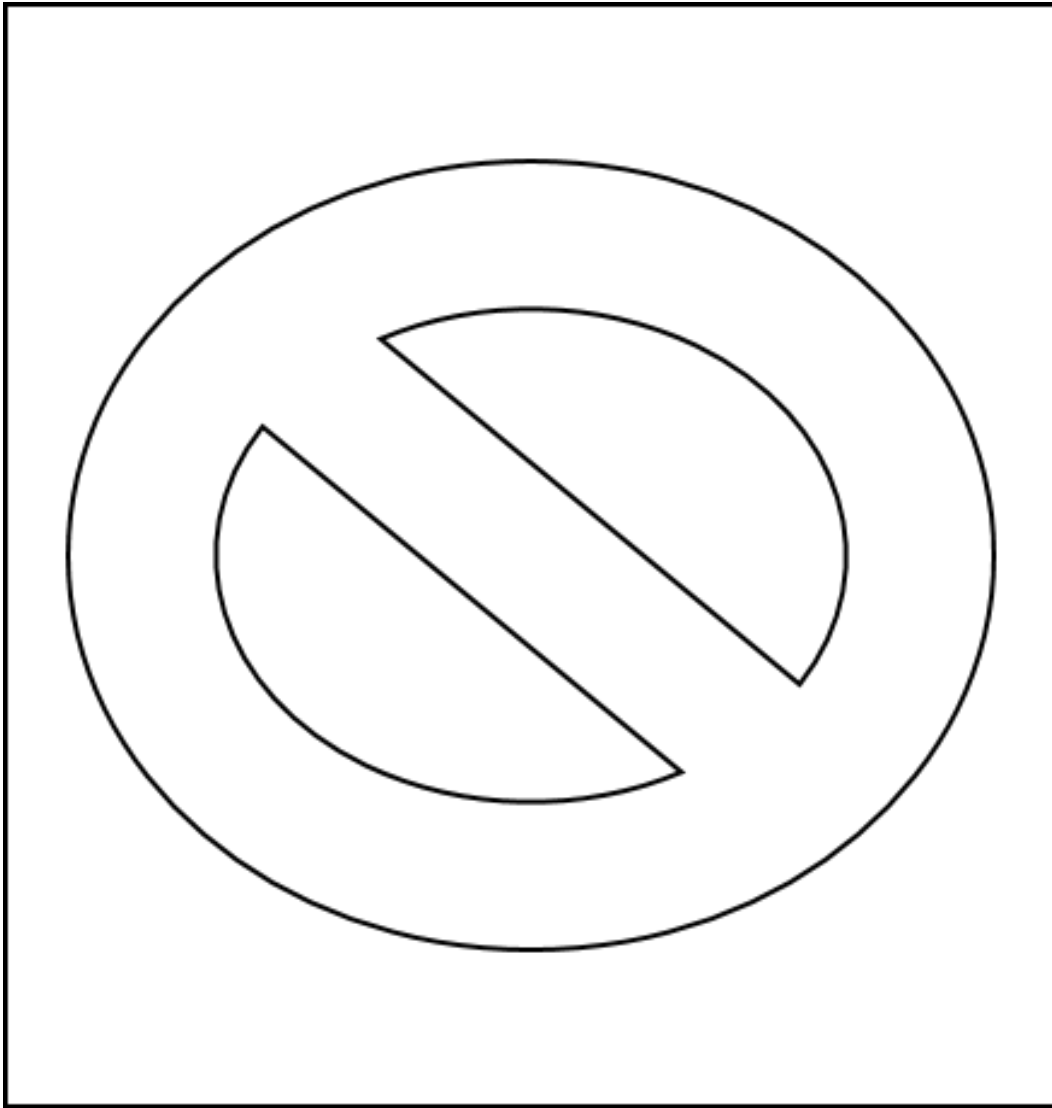


Figure 4.9: Plan of Sidi Ghrib Bath Complex, Tunisia, with Matron at her Toilette Mosaic (Red) and Departure for the Hunt Mosaic (Blue).

The mosaic imagery re-affirms the contemporary gender dialogue and the composition makes a visual allusion to the ‘Venus at her Toilette’ motif. The theme of Venus at her toilette is a common iconographic repertoire for architectural decoration in private contexts, especially in baths or bathing accoutrements (Ennabli 1986: 44). It is even deployed in parallel to Christian symbolism as in the case of the Projecta Casket (Elsner 2007) – see below. At Sidi Ghrib, as can be seen, the *domina* is depicted dressed amply and warmly (Fig 4.11), though her arms are bare perhaps to recall the Venus Genetrix iconography. Allusions to Venus rest particularly in the matron’s movements and actions of dressing her hair and viewing her reflection in a pearl-studded mirror, the

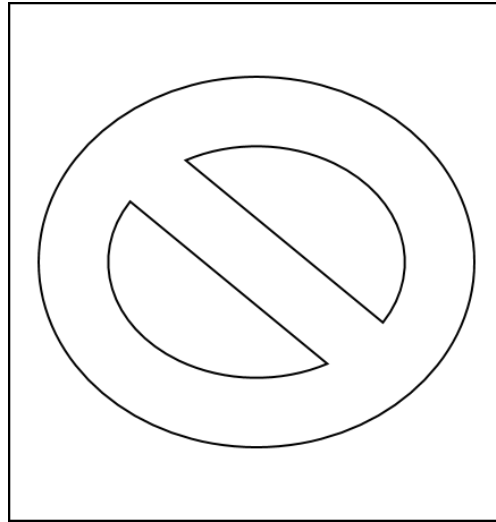


Figure 4.10: *Departure for the Hunt Mosaic, Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia. Late fourth or early fifth century AD. Bardo Museum Stores.*

very act of beautifying herself, but are most obvious in the inclusion of a basin in the form of a scalloped shell and a jewellery casket. The matron gazes at herself in the offered mirror which engages the audience in the process of gazing at the *domina*. This mosaic ‘speaks’ to the viewer through this active iconography. The connection between the mirror, female adornment and morality is noted by scholars (e.g. Taylor 2008), as the mirror emphasised the female contemplation of her image and her active self-presentation (Wyke 1994). Such agency offers a glimpse at a possibility for female self-display.

It would be easy to categorise the presentation of the *domina* in this manner as trivialising her identity and subsuming it purely in terms of her beauty. This, however, fails to understand the cultural significance of such dressing practices: through her clothing and accessories, the *domina* is empowered by her wealth and status and her proclamation of elite identity is performed through using mosaic iconography as a visual medium. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, North African mosaics proclaimed patrons as members of the elite. In the late antique world, two-dimensional depictions, again expressing gender ideologies, replaced earlier forms of self-representation that had used portrait statuary (Schade 2016: 253). The Sidi Ghrib mosaic is part of this emerging tradition. The very act of decorating this physical space with material allusions to dress mimicked the economic outlay invested in mosaic pavements. Such expenditure further



Figure 4.11: Matron in a colobium tunic, Matron at her Toilette Mosaic, Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia. Late fourth or early fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

echoes the economic investment in dress that the matron is seen to symbolise. Here the inclusion of clothing emphasises the process of dressing the body and being dressed; this is a representation of reality. Elsewhere in this bath complex, the apse has been identified as including a representation of the marine Venus (Ennabli 1986: 33-34), although Blanchard-Lemée, argues that this figure is merely a Nereid, rather than being Venus; however, he reconstructs mosaic Carpet 11 to the west of the *frigidarium*, currently with a vast lacuna in the centre, as showcasing a marine Venus, semi-nude seated on a scalloped shell (1988: 371-372). Whatever the historical reality and architectural configuration, both interpretations feature nudity and their close proximity to the mosaic of the Lady at her Toilette fosters a spatial and iconographic link between these two scenes, as well as reaffirming its suitability in decorating the bath complex. The fact that the baths were decorated in one stage (Wilson 2018: 284) further supports this idea.

Other forms of visual culture demonstrate that such iconography – the beautification of the matron – had Mediterranean-wide appeal. The Projecta Casket is a well-known late antique artefact that also documents aspects of female dress. Being broadly contemporary with one another, the Projecta Casket, Dominus Julius Mosaic and Matron at her Toilette mosaic are often discussed together (e.g. Elsner 2003). Part of the Esquiline treasure from Rome, the Projecta Casket dates to the second or third quarter of the fourth century AD and is a domestic silver casket, likely part of a toilet service. It has a trapezoidal lid and is formed of nine decorated surfaces, five in the lid and four in the base (Shelton 1981: 28). Its iconography is incredibly rich and is ostensibly female-centric, although a couple appear in a *tondo* on the lid. Popular interpretations read the imagery as representations of a wedding ceremony, or the construction of scenes appropriate for the female marital role (Shelton 1981: 31; Wyke 1994: 143-144). Regular reference is made to the panels that depict aspects of female adornment, including the procession of the *domina* to the baths and toilet scenes of dressing (Fig 4.12). Elsner, for instance, notes the juxtaposition between the nude Venus and the richly adorned matron in an object that is understood to promote female subjectivity (2003: 31-32). He rightly recognises the contradictions inherent in rhetoric



Figure 4.12: Side panel of the Projecta Casket depicting the seated domina assisted by two attendants, part of the Esquiline Treasure, Rome. Late fourth century AD. British Museum.

of female dress and adornment, although the portable nature of this object places its use in a private, not public sphere, unlike mosaics (Elsner 2003: 32). Attempts to identify the portraits of the individuals in the *tondo* with known historical persons are also symptomatic of treatments of late Roman visual media (e.g. Cameron 1985; Shelton 1985), and the desire to 'read' iconography as a direct depiction of reality. All three visual artefacts, but especially the African mosaics, feed into, and help develop, the boundaries and limits of dress-codes and systems in the late Roman and late antique world.

4.2 Christian 'Female' Dress

4.2.1 *Pudicitia as the Soteriological Silver Bullet*

In the Roman world, care for clothing and appearance was formulated, by both men and women in elite circles, as a feminine pursuit and signified moral integrity. Traditional Roman garments were constitutive of this conceptualisation and clothing articles like the *palla* encoded gendered morality into daily practice. The growth of Christianity, however, saw significant new strands woven into this discourse. By the third century AD, ideas of morality incorporated religious facets, positing gendered dress as social *and* religious integrity. As Tertullian's *De cultu feminarum* demonstrates, early Christian rhetoric adopted and adapted this Roman sartorial discourse, positing Christian female dress as a multivalent anxiety. Primarily motivated by the need to theologise modest dress, Tertullian absorbed contemporary rhetoric and transformed motivations from societal morality into religious *mores*. In *De cultu feminarum*, he connected female appearance with atonement for Eve as the 'Devil's Gateway': women must dress modestly, even sombrely, without ornamentation (Tert., *De cult. fem.* 1.1). The importance of the Devil's Gateway passage in *De cultu feminarum* is its function as *pathos* by evoking a sense of shame in his audience. It is not, as is often cited by feminist scholars, a microcosm of hatred of women involving 'a theology that evidences a deep misogynist contempt and fear of women' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 55). Tertullian's argument is neatly encapsulated in the following reference:

Female habit carries with it a twofold idea- dress and ornament. By 'dress' we mean what they call womanly gracing (*mundum*); by 'ornament', what it is suitable should be called womanly disgracing (*immundum*). The former is accounted [to consist] in gold, and silver, and gems, and garments; the latter in care of the hair, and of the skin, and of those parts of the body which attract the eye. Against the one we lay the charge of ambition, against the other of prostitution; so that even from this early stage [of our discussion] you may look forward and see what, out of [all] these, is suitable, handmaid of God, to your discipline, inasmuch as you are assessed on different principles [from other women] – those, namely, of humility and chastity (*De cult. fem.* 4.1-2).

Tertullian's summation of female dress corresponded with contemporary non-Christian ideas, both conforming to and re-affirming the association between dress and the female gender. The Christian theologian and contemporary of Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, too, extrapolated the association between female and dress, although his contribution to debates of female attire is less referenced (Miles 2008: 105; see Maier 2013). In his view, the cultivation of 'feminine' grooming habits in men was a visual symptom and reflection of internal immorality and a lack of masculinity (*Paed.* 3.3.23). Such thinking appropriated pagan moralising discourse that postulated that external deviancy infected inner character (Gleason 1995: 69) and shows the transformation of traditional Roman rhetoric of the disease of sartorial immorality into a religious sphere. Pliny the Elder, speaking about *luxuria* in the first century AD, plays on the same association, but only in terms of social, not religious, decline (*HN* 33. 95; Batten 2009: 496). A similar idea is maintained in the North African Christian apologist Arnobius' *Adversus nationes*, written at the turn of the fourth century AD, where he deploys the association between female dress habits and *luxuria* as a marker of male effeminacy. Arnobius criticises contemporary pagan behaviour:

Was it for this he sent souls, that ... they should acquire gems, precious stones, at the expense of their purity; should entwine their necks with these, pierce the tips of their ears, bind their foreheads with fillets, seek for cosmetics to deck their bodies, darken their eyes with henna; nor, though in the forms of men, blush to curl their hair with crimping-pins, to make the skin of the body smooth, to walk with bare knees, and with every other [kind of] wantonness, both to lay aside the strength of their manhood, and to grow in effeminacy to a woman's habits and luxury? (Arn., *Adv. nat.* 2.41).

Later, the late fourth-century writer Ambrose of Milan deployed the same trope in a letter to Irenaeus, citing *luxuria* as one reason why men appropriate female dress (*Epist.* 78). These ideas built on Tertullian's moralising conception of female attire where the cultivation of 'female' beauty was immoral and motivated by nefarious impulses – the inflammation of male concupiscence, or lust. Caring too much for appearance was not only vain, but was also framed as an explicit desire for male attention. As a visual communicative tool, clothing signalled gender identity, namely, a modest female identity.

Tertullian sought to reform contemporary feminine virtue, although the actual necessity for such moral rehabilitation should not be automatically assumed. Instead, we should note the fact that Tertullian *could* construct and propagate such an argument. By placing concupiscence as a product of transgressive female action, Tertullian burdened third-century feminine virtue with Christian morality (*De cult. fem.* 2.1.1), but proposed a sartorial solution: the counter-balance for knowledgeable, irreverent spectacles of female sexuality was the performative display of *pudicitia*, or chastity. The Latin term *pudicitia* does not exactly translate as 'modesty', as is conventional in modern translations (e.g. Quain 1959). In fact, Tertullian uses *modestia* in contrast to *verecundia*, or decency, and *pudicitia*, or chastity, in *Apologeticus* (35.5). For Tertullian 'It is not enough for Christian *pudicitia* merely to be so, but to seem so, too. For so great ought its plenitude be, that it may flow out from the mind to the garb, and burst out from the conscience to the outward appearance' (*De cult. fem.* 2.13.3). Thus, chastity involved the careful, even meticulous, display of the body: 'Let a holy woman, if naturally beautiful, give none so great occasion [for carnal appetite]. Certainly, if even she be so, she ought not to set off her beauty, but even to obscure it' (Tert., *De cult. fem.* 2.3.3). Through the rejection of natural beauty, the Christian woman is an agent in the performance of her religious and gender identity. *Pudicitia* was not the primary theme in *De cultu feminarum*, but acted as a vehicle by which to discuss, debate and make manifest Tertullian's theological argument (Tert., *De cult. fem.* 2.1.2).

Such self-fashioning was paradoxical: by cultivating inward and outward *pudicitia* Christian women were, by their very actions, adopting a particular dress form. This, in fact, was the very message of *De cultu feminarum*, the exhibition of *modestia*,

when matched with internal integrity, *pudicitia*, brought Christian salvation. This visual performance of chaste dress, in turn, contrasted with that of virtuous pagan women whose modest actions are imperfect and undisciplined because this type of chastity ‘although it be actively tenacious of itself in the mind up to a certain point, it yet allows itself to relax into licentious extravagances of attire’ (Tert., *De cult. fem.* 2.1.2). By not eschewing bodily ornamentation, in Tertullian’s formulation, non-Christian women do not correctly perform *pudicitia*. Tertullian does not explicitly outline what a modest Christian wardrobe entails, but references at the beginning of *De cultu feminarum* offer some clues. Milesian wools, Chinese silk, Tyrian purple, pearls and gold are objects that were coveted by Eve (Tert., *De cult. fem.* 1.3). Thus, their unsuitability for virtuous Christian women is overt, and Tertullian’s immediate comparison of his audience to Eve implies that such things are still popular and worn (*De cult. fem.* 1.1). Tertullian later systematically attacks the immoral ambition of possessing gold and silver, precious stones and pearls and coloured clothing, again with the implication that such objects resonated with his audience (*De cult. fem.* 1.5-1.8). For those women at whom this treatise was directed, their ideal dress should not include these items. Significantly though, other than the directive to wear the veil (see below), Tertullian’s writings offer very little actual guidance on what garments to wear. His lack of prescriptive costume is symptomatic of the absence of ‘Christian’ clothing in general as will be seen in Chapter 5.1.

As a treatise featuring anti-ornament rhetoric, *De cultu feminarum* does not undermine the traditional association between female virtue and dress, nor divorce sartorial behaviours as a male preoccupation. Instead, it merely ascribes adapted parameters of practice, delineated by new, religious motivations. By positing two antitheses – glory versus humility and beauty versus chastity (Tert., *De cult. fem.* 1.4.1-2) – Tertullian encouraged behavioural reformation in his audience who lived in a still heavily pagan world. Woven into the very fabric of social practice and identity ascription, clothing behaviours were meaningful and constitutive. The fact that Tertullian takes pains to outline suitable female sartorial behaviours attests to this. How receptive his audience was can be established from his later writing. That Tertullian’s work *De pudicitia*, a product of his ‘Montantist’ phase, makes no mention of clothing as

either a soteriological mechanism or a strategy for ensuring earthly moral integrity is interesting. Due to Montanism's and Tertullian's generally positive attitude towards women at this time (Hoffman 1995: 214), who were valued as confessors and could even obtain ministerial position (Klawiter 1980: 254, 257), this would be an obvious place to emphasise the virtuous actions of correct female dress. Perhaps Tertullian felt his rhetoric had been suitably internalised.

Cyprian of Carthage, writing only a few generations later in AD 249, took up the mantle of concern for female dress. Reflecting many similarities with Tertullian's *De cultu feminarum*, Cyprian's *De habitu virginum* targeted a specific category of women – dedicated virgins – to discuss and problematise female sartorial behaviours. The social performance of these clothing guidelines embedded the concept of *pudicitia* to such an extent that it became the embodiment of this Christian ideal and the dangers of communal sin could be avoided through the maintenance of modest female garb. Visual conformity thus announced moral conformity. Cyprian draws more on Tertullian's *De cultu feminarum* than the *De virginibus velandis* in his isolation of theology for female dress (Dunn 2003b: 6-7), likely because Cyprian sought to delineate appropriate virginal practice in general, not respond to a particular historical context as Tertullian had done. As a recognised category (Castelli 1986: 78), representing the Church and its conduct (Cypr., *De hab. virg.* 3), the appearance of these virgins was a paramount concern for Cyprian. Intending to reinforce ecclesiastical authority and discipline, Cyprian disseminated his views through 'affection not authority' (Cypr., *De hab. virg.* 3) and he offers practical pastoral policy. He therefore posits a more concrete version of female dress than Tertullian, although a bastion of this rhetoric remained in the inherited notion that immoral behaviour was predicated in shameful dress. Correct sartorial management again proved moral and sexual integrity:

For the rest, if you dress your hair sumptuously, and walk so as to draw attention in public, and attract the eyes of youth upon you, and draw the sighs of young men after you, nourish the lust of concupiscence, and inflame the fuel of sighs, so that, although you yourself perish not, yet you cause others to perish, and offer yourself, as it were, a sword or poison to the spectators; you cannot be excused on the pretence that you are chaste and modest in mind. Your shameful dress and immodest ornament accuse you; nor can you be counted now among

Christ's maidens and virgins, since you live in such a manner as to make yourselves objects of desire (Cyprian, *De hab. virg.* 9).

Such ideas corresponded with the earlier second-century treatise by Clement of Alexandria that aligned bodily adornment with immorality (*Paed* 3.2). In *De Habitu Virginum*, Cyprian aligned virtuous dress with complete moral integrity. Using the rhetoric of shame and specifically echoing the sartorial subject matter, Cyprian proclaimed that: 'You are discovered, O virgin, you are exposed; you boast of being one thing and you are striving to be another. You defile yourself with the stains of carnal concupiscence, although you are a candidate for innocence and modesty' (*De hab. virg.* 6).

Despite their sexual abstinence, adorned virgins transgress when they, even mistakenly, use jewellery and the like for self-advertisement. As a mechanism for capturing the male gaze, these virgins were drawing the wrong sort of attention, according to Cyprian and instead of being noted for their virtue, such virgins were noticed for their bodies (Batten 2011: 14-15). Importantly, Cyprian increased the soteriological stakes, claiming that virgins who did not dress modestly were contagions, whose impurity infected the Church congregation (*De hab. virg.* 17; Dunn 2003b: 11). Like Tertullian, Cyprian constructed anti-adornment rhetoric:

But continence and chastity consist not alone in the purity of the body, but also in dignity as well as in modesty of dress and adornment, so that, as the Apostle says, she who is unmarried may be holy both in body and in spirit (*De hab. virg.* 5).

Cyprian too highlights the performative and visual necessity of modest dress: 'A virgin should not only be a virgin, but she ought to be known and considered as such. No one on seeing a virgin should doubt whether she is one' (*De hab. virg.* 5). A sense of societal judgement is crucial here and places female dress in the public sphere as a communal concern. Cyprian further enhances his model of ascetic practice by arguing that the desire for the male gaze motivates adorned virgins (Upson-Saia 2011: 37-38). Why else would a virgin braid her hair or beautify herself, if not to garner this kind of immoral

attention? (Cypr., *De hab. virg.* 5). It did not only matter how virgins appeared, but also why they did so.

While Tertullian had placed ornamentation in opposition to humility and chastity, and thus as a marker of human ambition, Cyprian provided a sharper impetus for modest female, specifically virginal, appearance: ornamentation is contrary to God's will. By transforming themselves, Cyprian's Carthaginian virgins also show contempt for God's will and mistakenly believe that they can improve on God's creation with immoral practices – dyed cloth, cosmetics, elaborate hairstyles and jewellery – that contravene God's creation (Cypr., *De hab. virg.* 15). Like Tertullian's women in *De cultu feminarum*, the virgins in *De habitu virginum* are presented in similarly ornate apparel. For the accusations and reforms to ring true, this portrayal was an impression of reality, informed by it to at least some degree. Although adorned virgins were not necessarily motivated by the desire of male approval, their bodily presentation was interpreted as such. As role models and paragons of virtue, the modest dress of virgins symbolised Christian ideals (Cypr., *De hab. virg.* 5) and by presumptuously altering their appearance these virgins no longer embody virginal virtue. A true virgin shuns wealth and beauty.

The issues addressed in Cyprian's *De habitu virginum* were very real and immediate concerns. Watson previously argued that Cyprian makes extensive use of Tertullian's writings and therefore *De habitu virginum* could not be motivated by his historical reality, but was instead a wholly rhetorical construction (1920-1: 363). This view, however, does not consider Cyprian's ecclesiastical position and his pastoral obligations. While Christian rhetoric was often a rhetorical construction, it was purposed towards responding to issues or debates (Dunn 2018: 114). In its ornamentation, elaborate female dress proclaimed immoral intentions. Both in the advertisement of the female body and in the hubris of cultivating a deceptive appearance, the transgressive clothing of female virgins was wholly unsuitable for those devoted to God. Cyprian's treatment of virginal female dress stressed the purity of intentions behind presenting the body. Instead of being physically attractive, Cyprian's virgins must be morally attractive. Cyprian provides guidelines on how to achieve this and what sartorial behaviours to avoid. His treatise is directed to female virgins, but its

applicability to the entire female gender is also suggested (Cypr., *De hab. virg.* 15). In this way, the female gender retained the burden of maintaining societal integrity.

Central to this anxiety of female dress was the male debate over incorrect dress. The fact that this anti-adornment rhetoric was shared by many Christian (male) authorities – not just those in Roman Africa – demonstrates how wide-spread this concern was. Clement of Alexandria, a contemporary of Tertullian, also espoused anti-adornment rhetoric (*Paed.* 3.2). Addressing similar aspects as Tertullian he denounced immoral sartorial forms. This issue of self-awareness echoes the male anxiety documented in Tertullian's *De virginibus velandis*. The use of inappropriate clothing was again viewed as a blatant encouragement of sexual availability. Women who dressed as such did so with immoral intentions.

4.2.2 Female Sexuality, Sinful Dress, and Female Agency

While Cyprian had been concerned with general virginal dress, his predecessor Tertullian addressed a more specific issue for dedicated women – veiling – and in early third-century Carthage, the head of the Christian female became a highly contested commodity. In the Montanist period of his theology, Tertullian became increasingly concerned with outlining correct Christian praxis (Wilhite 2007: 171), this not only ensured correct earthly conduct, but guaranteed salvation too. There is nothing distinctly Montanist about Tertullian's purpose in *De virginibus velandis*, although there are passing references that cause scholars to situate this work during this phase (e.g. *De virg. vel.* 17.3; Dunn 2005: 25). Tertullian's rhetoric also served another purpose, namely to reinforce and naturalise gender ideologies (Daniel-Hughes 2010: 186-187; 2011). As an exercise of deliberative oratory, in *De virginibus velandis* Tertullian sought to argue for a reform of virginal, and female, behaviour; the outward appearance of virgins, including the wearing of a veil, should match their inward moral virtue. Tertullian's aim is apparent from the outset:

I shall show in Latin as well as that it is proper that our virgins be veiled from when they reach puberty. [I shall show] truth, to which nothing- either intervals

of time, or patronages of person, or privilege of places- is able to object, demands, this (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 1.1).

Using this deliberative piece of rhetoric, Tertullian intended to advise his North African communities – that is, Christian communities – as to appropriate behaviours, a motivation reflected in other moralising works on topics such as the place of marriage and chastity (Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 1.29). This suggests that North African communities were still negotiating the theological disposition and practicalities of Christian identity, in this case dress. Previously, issues of head-coverings had briefly been discussed in Tertullian's *De oratione* (21-22) and, as described above, he discussed female dress in general terms in *De cultu feminarum*. That female attire receives a more extensive treatment in *De virginibus velandis* signals a perceived, intensified need to problematise Christian female action. His later work addressed a particular contemporary concern: virgins and the veil.

In *De virginibus velandis*, Tertullian's *narratio* summarises the history of the two customs of veiling and not veiling virgins in the assembly (§ 2 and 3), offering insight into its socio-historical context. In Tertullian's day, such dress issues were not completely formalised and were thus open to interpretation. By basing his discussion on custom, Tertullian situates his narrative in his present environment using the phrase '*apud nos ad usque proxime*, until very recently amongst us' (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 3.1), suggesting the immediacy of these practices in his own historical environment. His terminology also identifies the presence of veiling issues within the whole Church, not just the Catholic churches (Rankin 1995: 36). Tertullian deploys his rhetorical skill in the use of a *confirmatio* and *refutatio* to outline supporting arguments and anticipate contrary arguments and this suggests possible interpretations of veiling habits throughout Africa and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. He cites internal and external influences:

we are not able to reject a custom that we are not able to condemn, as [it is] not a strange [custom] since it does not belong to strangers, [but to those] with home of course we share the law of peace and the name of fraternity (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 2.2).

Tertullian presents his Carthaginian virgins as appealing to a de-veiling custom elsewhere in the Christian world (D'Angelo 1995: 143) and since he does not dismiss this notion immediately, perhaps such knowledge was prevalent in Carthaginian circles. Clement of Alexandria also used directives for feminine veiling, highlighting the widespread acceptance of his rhetoric (Clem. Al., *Paed.* 2.114, 3.79-80).

Clement's ideas, while finding some correspondence with later Christian ideals, such as in Augustine, were quite specific to his Alexandrian context. As a gnostic, Clement's beliefs purported a vision of Christian action that understood perfect humanity as 'manly and perfect' (*Strom.* 4.132). The condition of virginity was mandatory, unlike in other orthodoxies where it was a desirable endeavour (Miles 1989: 66). Tertullian's rhetoric, written for a Carthaginian audience, targets sartorial aspects that resonate in both contexts and the underlying message of his Christian rhetoric capitalised on pre-existing anti-adornment moralising discourse. Despite geographical and doctrinal variances, both discourses reinforced traditional gender ideologies.

Articulating gender practices not only becomes the content of Tertullian's treatise, but also interacts with its form and function. The audience is clear and '*virgins nostras*' speaks to a male group (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 1.1), those present in the Carthaginian church where this controversy exists, but potentially those elsewhere in North Africa. Significantly, in Tertullian's account and subsequent advice, normative gender behaviours are enforced (Daniel-Hughes 2018: 261). In both action of debating and the theological interpretation, the impetus was placed on male action and female passivity; men are complicit in moral degeneracy through inaction, and women transgress convention through their deliberate action. As Cyprian would later argue, it was the role of men, particularly ecclesiastical figures, to guide and censure inappropriate female action (e.g. Cypr., *De hab. virg.* 1-2, *Epist.* 4). Thus, these gender dynamics seek to reproduce dress activities: female dress is the concern of and, more importantly, the purview of the male community. Tertullian's argument ultimately rests on the 'correct' interpretation of Pauline doctrine:

But since they use the name 'women' in such a way that they do not consider that [term] is suitable except for her alone who has submitted [to a man], it falls to us to prove the appropriateness of this designation to the [female] sex as

such, [and] not to relate [it] to [one] category of the [female] sex, in order that even virgins may be counted as belonging to it (*De virg. vel.* 5.1).

Of course, Tertullian's reading is selective, mobilised to suit his exegetical principles (Clark 2013: 127-128). Daniel-Hughes' work on the connection between female dress and Christian salvation has sought to highlight the role of female clothing in Tertullian's soteriology (2010, 2011: 94-100). In her view, Tertullian 'envision[s] flesh not only as the indicator of one's inner disposition, but also specifically as the indicator of human sinfulness' (2010: 183). By framing the act of unveiling in Judith Butler's terms of 'performativity', Daniel-Hughes argues that 'de-nuding' 'challenges the link between shame and a woman's flesh that Tertullian works to naturalise' (2010: 189; Butler 1989). Tertullian's discussion of virginal dress centres on gender and universalising categorisations, not dress. While his comments on transgressive clothing practices foreground his social concern, Tertullian's treatise becomes pertinent through gender, and sub-gender, differentiations and is replicated and re-enforced through his rhetorical methods. Such a framework echoes that apparent in the *Digest* where categories rely on social constitution rather than implicit or innate qualities. 'Correct' scriptural exegesis is constructed through the use of multiple dichotomies and Tertullian's tract is fashioned to showcase male and female gender hierarchies. Tertullian employs the comparison of 'virgins of God' and 'virgins of men' to qualify the intentions of various female dress actions (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 3.3): those who wear the veil are spiritually whole, while those who choose not to be veiled are endangered by their moral deficiencies. The crux of Tertullian's argument, the inclusion of virgins (*virgines*) within the broader group of women (*mulieres*) supports a binary construction of gender (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 4.8) and re-affirms female practice in direct opposition to male control, even subordinate to it. Hence, the practice of veiling is employed as a means of social control.

Cyprian's lengthier and more descriptive account of virginal dressing practices, *De habitu virginum*, composed only decades later, makes no mention of the veil. In fact, Cyprian alludes to virgins wearing elaborate hairstyles. His complaint is not that they are unveiled, but that these virgins covet public attention (Cypr., *De hab. virg.* 5). Had the Christian community at Carthage forgone the veil by this time? In truth, the historical veracity of veiled virgins in the Carthaginian assembly is not of consequence for my

discussion. Rather more pertinent is Tertullian's construction that the voluntary absence of a veil is an act of overt exhibitionism:

In fact the eyes that will desire a virgin once seen, are the same kind as a virgin has who will desire to be seen. The same kinds of eyes desire each other mutually. To be seen and to see is of the same passion (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 2.4).

The veil – as a symbolic gendered garment – acts as a vehicle for Tertullian to address his wider purpose: male control of female dress and the perceived decrease in male control of female behaviour. The decision not to be veiled in church is thus seen as a deliberate act of self-display not fitting for those virgins. Tertullian remarks:

Is the reason for your indulgence concerning the veil made for her so that she may enter the [gathered] church notable and distinguished? In order that she may show the honour of sanctity in the freedom of her head? (Tert., *De virg vel.* 9.1).

He continues: 'therefore it is acknowledged that the spotlight is the motive' (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 14.1). The development of sexual self-awareness was a worrying issue for Tertullian as it suggested a lack of moral virtue for the unveiled. This sentiment would be later echoed by Cyprian.

Tertullian's arguments for appropriate female behaviour, exemplified through 'respectable' dress, were motivated by the need to maintain gender hierarchies and boundaries. Tertullian comments: 'Perhaps some [women] will say: To me it is not necessary to be approved by men; for I do not require the testimony of men: God is the inspector of my heart. (Tert., *De cult. fem.* 2.13). Yet, *De virginibus velandis* is not a rumination of female dress, but instead vocal persuasion for the veil as 'armour of shame' for Christians (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 16.4-5). By contesting the veil as a necessity, from the male view, these female virgins actually confirmed the need for male re-education and re-inscribed gender importance on this garment. Transgressive female attire highlighted the very potential for female self-action and Tertullian's tract on the virginal veiling attributes social concern stemming from such agency: 'The matter had been entrusted to personal choice, such that each [virgin] had resolved either to be covered or exposed' (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 3.1). Since dress functioned as a visual identity

communicator, the outward performance of virginity was integral to the construction of Christian identity. As with the issues of veiling, it was the interplay between dress, action and authority that worried male authors. To these male critics, for virgins to fashion themselves in such an overtly sexualised way was a display of ‘petulance and shamefulness of ostentatious virginity’ (Tert., *De virg. vel.* 3.4).

4.2.3 Gender-Bending: Female Appropriation of Male Dress

The compass of sartorial activity, and corresponding inward disposition, centred on its relationship to female behaviour. In *De cultu feminarum*, Tertullian discusses male dress in terms of forbidden vanity and modesty and, in doing so, cements the association between modest dress and the female realm in North African rhetoric: ‘to take every opportunity for consulting the mirror, all these things are rejected as frivolous, as hostile to modesty’ (*De cult. fem.* 2.8). Women should look like women and men should look like men. Yet, there exist permissible occasions of transgressive dress. Importantly, though, this was confined to male endorsed rhetoric that adhered to and propagated male ideas of female dress. The *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, the tale of two young Christian women who, alongside male companions, were sentenced to death in AD 203, provides a positive framing of Christian female self-action in reference to gender-crossing, as well as the inversion of traditional familial relationships (Rhee 2005: 150, see also Cooper 2011). Vibia Perpetua was from a prominent wealthy family and lived in the Carthaginian area (Gold 2011: 238). She is described using the traditional framework of a Roman woman – ‘well-born, brought up in a manner befitting a free person, and married in the fashion of a respectable Roman woman’ (*Pass. Perp.* 2.1). Though only a catechumen at the time of her arrest, Perpetua’s religious identity overwhelms her gender identity throughout the *Passio*. At times, she appears and acts like a woman, at others, however, she takes on a male identity in action and dress. During these occasions, clothing is a narrative component that signals the inversion of gender identity; religious identity is also a component and I will return to this concept in Chapter 5.

Composed as a hagiography detailing the account Perpetua's martyrdom, the narrative is composite, with episodes narrated by Perpetua herself (*Pass. Perp.* § 3-10) and those by a narrator and editor (*Pass. Perp.* § 1-2, 11.1, 14.21; Gold 2018: 9-10). This prison diary includes four visions. The fourth, and most extensive, came the day before execution. In this episode, Perpetua is cast as an athlete in battle against paganism (Gold 2018). In this dream, Perpetua is led to an amphitheatre by the deacon Pomponius, but instead of facing wild beasts, her opponent is a hideous Egyptian (*Pass. Perp.* 10.4-10.6). To fight her foe, Perpetua is transformed into a man, '*facta sum masculus*', significantly occurring after she has disrobed '*expoliata sum*' (*Pass. Perp.* 10.7). Perpetua's fight is arduous, but she is victorious and exits the arena through the *Porta Sanavivaria*, or the Gate of Life, a somewhat ironic premonition of her actual fate, but one that symbolised that martyrdom brought salvation (Salisbury 1997: 143-144). On waking from this dream, Perpetua interprets her destiny: tomorrow she would successfully face the Devil in the arena (*Pass. Perp.* 10.14).

As Castelli notes, Perpetua's victory 'is described *as* and *by* the stripping off of her feminine gender' (1991: 41, her emphasis). Yet, her transvestism and adoption of the male body were merely temporary. While depicted in a male guise, she remains female and the ancient author recounts this autobiographical episode, using the feminine form of the participle *facta* (Gold 2011: 245). Gold discusses the use of the masculinising plural in Perpetua's *Passio*, highlighting that she subsumes herself under this masculine umbrella when part of a group (2011: 246). She does not, however, recognise that Perpetua's feminine subordination is also signalled by her use of the feminine while describing her male form. At the end of her suffering – her actual martyrdom in the arena – Perpetua is characterised by traditional feminine virtue, again signalled by her sartorial actions: she ensures appropriate dress and covers her exposed thigh; 'thinking more of her modesty than of her pain' (*Pass. Perp.* 20.4). Her identity, while acquiring male characteristics during her vision, reverts back into female, Christian terms. It was only in her dream that Perpetua was shown inhabiting a masculine form and identity; during her mortal demise she maintains her female gender.

Perpetua's gender was further exaggerated when Perpetua and Felicity fight against two wild heifers in the arena – a firm visual affirmation of their gender (Torjesen

1996: 81). Initially appearing before the crowd semi-naked, after refusing to wear pagan garments as instructed (see Chapter 5.1), the women's gender identity as passive victims is signalled through the exposure of their bodies and the physical reminders of their gender. The crowd were horrified 'seeing that one was a delicate young girl and the other had recently given birth' and so the women were subsequently dressed in tunics (*Pass. Perp.* 20.2). Moments before her death, Perpetua is thrown to the ground by a cow, an action that causes her tunic to expose her leg and dishevels her hair (*Pass. Perp.* 20.4-5). Perpetua's dishevelled hair is a signal of her female shame, alongside her exposed body (Torjesen 1996: 82). Adhering to normative gender behaviours, Perpetua adjusts her tunic and requests a pin to re-style her hair. In addition to her return to the virtuous state of modesty, something of which Tertullian no doubt approved – although he uses the *Passio* merely to justify the claim that only martyrs ascend directly to Heaven while others must wait until the Judgement Day (Tert., *De anim.* 55.4; Gonzalez 2013) – the action of pinning her dishevelled hair showcases Perpetua's triumphal attitude. Unkempt hair could be interpreted as a signal of mourning (*Pass. Perp.* 20.5). Perpetua, however, was celebrating her death.

The *Passio* of Perpetua and Felicitas provides the first attestation of *martyram*, or female witnessing (Ronsse 2006: 302). As the fifth-century Carthaginian bishop Quodvultdeus later notes – with a degree of incredulity – gender sits at the very heart of this story:

A few days ago we celebrated the birthdays of the martyrs Perpetua and Felicity, and their companions. And, although there are so many men in that group, why are those two women named above them all, unless because the weaker sex has either equalled or surpassed manly bravery' (Quod., *temp. barb.* 1.5).

This rhetoric is adapted directly from Augustine's homiletic writings which justified the naming of the martyr festival after the two female protagonists, rather than its male members (*Serm.* 281.1; Kitzler 2012: 196). By the third century AD, this was a story that was admired (Streete 2009: 50-51). Most importantly, though, it functioned as an idealised celebration of the witnessing of Christian identity. Its exceptional nature allowed gender inversion to be rationalised; such transgressive actions were permissible as an ideal, but not in daily practice. Later transformations of this *martyrdam* story

highlight adaptations of Perpetua's example. Augustine, writing two centuries after Perpetua's martyrdom, in fact uses Perpetua's visions as a means of re-enforcing gender hierarchies, and does not mobilise her martyrdom in discussions of dress. The actions of female martyrs only allow them to mimic male action; importantly their bodies still remain the female sex:

St. Perpetua, for instance, seemed to herself in dreams to be wrestling with an Egyptian, after being changed into a man. Now, who can doubt that it was her soul in that apparent bodily form, not her body, which, of course, remained in her own sex as a woman, and lay on the bed with her senses steeped in sleep, while her soul was struggling in the similitude of a man's body? What have you to say to this? Was that male likeness a veritable body, or was it no body at all, although possessing the appearance of a body? Choose your alternative. If it was a body, why did it not maintain its sexual integrity? For in that woman's flesh were found no virile functions of generation, whence by any such process as that which you call congelation could be moulded this similitude of a man's body. We will conclude then, if you please, that, as her body was still alive while she slept, notwithstanding the wrestling of her soul, she remained in her own natural sex, enclosed, of course, in all her proper limbs which belong to her in her living state, and was still in possession of that bodily shape and the lineaments of which she had been originally formed (August., *De anim.* 4.26).

As Bishop of Hippo, Augustine faced the problem of re-contextualising the *Passio* in a historical context where martyrdom was no longer the ideal performance of Christian identity, but where the tradition of martyrdom narratives were still strongly felt (Kitzler 2015: 8). Martyr cults still held a strong physical and spiritual presence in North Africa during the fourth century and after (see Duval 1982). The presence of these martyr cults required Augustine to deploy the actions of Perpetua, Felicity and their companions in a framework that suited his pastoral agenda, rather than challenge the male ecclesiastical hierarchy (Sebesta 2002: 108). By presenting the actions of Perpetua and Felicity as a 'safe' performance of religious and gender identity, Augustine weakens their masculine characterisations by emphasising their identities as wives (*Serm.* 282auct.2).

In North Africa, the apocryphal story of Thecla received a similar treatment. Thecla was a young virgin of Iconium who, on hearing the Apostle Paul preach, was enthused by the idea of continence and the resurrection. In a series of events in which Thecla rejects normative gender activities – including refusing to continue her betrothal

to Thamyris – Thecla eventually baptises herself and devotes herself to teaching the word of God. Thecla's life, composed in the *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, promotes the narrative of heroic transvestism and her story shares many similarities with Perpetua's. In the city of Antioch, Thecla is stripped and stylised as a gladiator to fight *ad bestias*. After surviving the arena, Thecla exclaims: 'He who clothed me when I was naked among the beasts shall clothe me with salvation in the day of judgement'. After a short stay in the house of her wealthy widowed sponsor, Thecla returns to Iconium wearing a cloak 'in the fashion of men'. This story was known to Carthaginian communities in the time of Tertullian, but it produces derision from this author (Tert., *De bapt.* 17; Welch 1996: 66). Augustine too notes that Thecla was posited as a figurehead for Christian action in fourth-century Africa (*C. Faust* 30.4). His deliberate silence regarding Thecla's transvestism, while highlighting presumed knowledge of Thecla's story (Hyllen 2015: 98-99), actually devalues the gender actions in her martyrdom, and her comparison to Saint Crispina – the epitome of wifeliness – subsumes her actions under the concept of virginity, not transvestism (August., *virg.* 45). In this way, even heroic transvestites could fall victim to the pull of traditional gender ideologies. Innovation does not always elicit imitation.

The reconstitution of gender hierarchy through references to *Passio Perpetuae* has significant implications for the study of female dress of the period. Perpetua's actions, although outwardly signalling the appropriation of male characterisation, are subsumed in the discussion that situates the female in relation to the male. Thus, Perpetua's manly strength, 'the manly spirit', the marker of her imagined gender transformation, stems from her husband, Christ (August., *Serm.* 281.2). Her sartorial actions and temporary transvestism are tempered by her relationship to her 'spouse' and, although in a male guise, Perpetua's characterisation is re-cast as female. Such imagery also interacts with normative Roman marital dynamics and those directives found in the Gospel (e.g. Eph. 5:22-24). In order to reconcile Perpetua and Felicity with the contemporary religious and social structures, Augustine notes that 'men can more easily admire [these women] than imitate' (*Serm.* 280.1). This is not because 'the women were ranked higher than the men in the quality of their conduct, but that it was a greater miracle for women in their weakness to overcome the ancient enemy, and

that the men in their strength engaged in the contest for the sake of perpetual felicity' (August., *Serm.* 282auct.3). Imitating the *Passio*, Augustine's sermon also utilised feminine grammar in describing Perpetua's gender transformation, '*virum se factam certasse cum diabolo*', she was made a man to fight with the devil (*Serm.* 281.2; Cotter-Lynch 2016: 75). Such vocabulary supports Perpetua's male transformation and indeed here she is described as a man as opposed to the *Passio*, where she inhabits masculine characteristics (Cotter-Lynch 2016: 75). Augustine's ultimate message is that Perpetua must be male to fight her foe. In this way, normative gender hierarchies for the North African context are restored and perpetuated. To praise a woman's transcendence of her normative gender identity was to use terminology that perpetuated male dominance and female subordination (Torjesen 1996: 89). Augustine's transformation of the Perpetua narrative demonstrates that in fifth-century AD Hippo, and potentially North Africa more broadly, cross-dressing was still considered transgressive, even if only performed in a dream. To this end, it was incumbent upon Augustine to redress the *Passio* in a guise that concealed aspects of the radical and deviant exempla, less the story encourage cross-dressing behaviours in enthusiastic Christian women.

Besides Augustine's three sermons that re-write the story of Perpetua and her companions (*Serm.* 280, 281 and 282), the two texts known collectively as the *Acta Perpetuae* also highlight the subsequent dissemination and transformation of the *Passio* narrative³. *Acta A* and *Acta B* employ elements of the original *Passio* differently and are different lengths (Cotter-Lynch 2016: 44). Both texts focus less on Perpetua as an individual and more on the martyr group as a whole (Halporn 1991: 227). No doubt diffusing controversial elements of Perpetua's *Passio*, these later *Acta* attest to an authorship that considered Perpetua's original story as too revolutionary for the contemporary audience who were more receptive to the reification of a binary gender

³ There is substantial debate as to the precise chronology of the *Acta*, especially in relation to Augustine's deployment of Perpetua's narrative in his sermons. *Acta A* is generally accepted as earlier in date, while *Acta B* represents an abridgement. Correspondence between *Acta B* and Augustine's *Sermo* 282 isolates verbal echoes, the direction of which is uncertain. Jan Bremmer and Marco Formisano posit Augustine as quoting the *Acta*, therefore giving *Acta B* a fourth-century AD date (2012: 5). Kitzler, however, argues that *Acta B* quotes Augustine and is a response to the Donatist schism and therefore must be mid-fifth-century AD in date, or later (2015: 114). The argument in my discussion does not rest on precise dating, but rather on the general manipulation of Perpetua's story and the social circumstances that led to this.

system (Kitzler 2015: 107-108). Significantly, in *Acta A*, Perpetua's amphitheatre vision, the very narrative element that contrasts her male depiction with her ultimate female re-characterisation, is reduced to one sentence and is re-imagined as a collective endeavour:

And when they were in prison, Perpetua saw another vision: a certain Egyptian, horrible and black, thrown down and rolling under their feet, and she recounted this to her saintly siblings, her fellow martyrs (*Acta Thecli* 8.2-3).

This, of course, makes no reference to Perpetua's gender transformation, nor fashions her as a cross-dressing heroine. By neutralising gender ambiguities and re-framing the martyr's ordeal as a communal triumph, the story of the *Passio* became a story to be admired, not imitated in the same vein of Augustine and the role of dress and crossdressing was silenced.

Of course, the uncertainty as to the authorship of the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* limits how far this female dress rhetoric can be understood as direct evidence of female self-fashioning, although it must be significant that it is in the autobiographical part of this account that Perpetua is at her most vocal and confident. Gold notes the juxtaposition in characterisation (2011: 248). Yet, if this is an account 'written' by Perpetua, it is notable that the narrative ultimately reiterates normative gender behaviours, signalled to the reader through clothing actions: although Perpetua may imagine and present herself as male during her vision, her natural sex is inescapable. As Upson-Saia recognises:

although the cross-dresser who is able to pass beyond spectator's recognition might remake and newly understand his/her *own* gender identity, s/he is still understood by *viewers* to fit within conventional gender categories and in turn s/he stabilises the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity that s/he mimics (2011: 85).

Despite discussing martyr stories from the fourth to seventh centuries AD, Upson-Saia might have equally been discussing the *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. It is difficult to substantiate how far the *Passio Perpetuae* encouraged Christian females to replicate Perpetua's gender re-enforcing actions – whatever form this might take –

especially during later periods where persecution no longer provided a means of performing Christian identity. In fact, Augustine's version of this *Passio* completely transforms focus from physical presence of these female martyrs to their spirituality (Martin 2011: 40; Kitzler 2015: 118-121). In this sense, Perpetua's corporeality and her dress are subsumed by her spiritual actions. While dress had initially functioned as a narrative component, the erasure of such details in the fourth- and fifth-century accounts signalled their waning applicability in the contemporary social context.

4.3 Conclusion

Gendered clothing systems were both an implicit and explicit part of daily life in Roman Africa and structured male and female actors in a relative gender hierarchy. My examination of sartorial discourse in the female sphere highlights the cultural function of dress where clothing behaviours were manipulated to suit their contextual requirements. Although this chapter has artificially divided the textual evidence into non-Christian and Christian sections, so as to unpick the various strands of study more easily, the social and religious facets of gendered dress in North Africa were woven together as part of the composite social fabric. While the display of gender difference was integral to sartorial performance, the essence of this gender difference signalled a host of further associations. By conforming to gendered clothing, ideologies were validated. Equally, though, conformity should not be relegated to passivity and, in this way, the latent potential of female sartorial agency in North Africa should not be disregarded.

The gendered grammar of the dressed body was a significant anxiety for male groups and the sartorial dress-codes prescribed by Christian male authorities appropriated many elements of non-Christian discourse. Since an individual's *habitus* was articulated through appearance, the manifestation of this rhetoric aimed at the same goal: the production of gender difference. Chastity was a central component to both threads of rhetoric, although the exact manifestation of 'chastity' varied in these two conceptualisations, often becoming more akin to modesty. As made evident in their

vocal polemics against female adornment or ostentation, clothing systems were a method of power and control. Tertullian does not show 'ambivalence' to female dressing systems (Clark 1994: 15), but instead deploys the theme of female attire precisely because it was a familiar *topos* by which he could theologise and espouse his beliefs. This does not devalue his written material as evidence for contemporary practice, nor confirm that his peers were exactly how he describes, but rather that the historical reality allowed such claims to hold cultural sway.

Male power over female clothing was somewhat paradoxical and precarious. As the perceived microcosm of societal morality, female dress was constitutive of and constituted by the associations it was imbued with. Ostentatious clothing displays were an avenue of cultural censure, yet also a means of expressing wealth and status. Clothing comprised expensive possessions and the anti-adornment rhetoric endorsed by secular and Christian rhetoric should not be taken as evidence that late antique North Africa was a world without jewellery, gold or expensive fabrics. Such rhetoric professed an ideal. That Patristic authors target such female 'insignia' proves its continued presence in gender ideologies, and perhaps even that previous attempts to curtail female ornamentation were unsuccessful. Dowry lists such as Januarilla's late fifth century example and legacies containing clothes and jewellery also attest to their pecuniary function. The use of gendered iconography on mosaics also re-iterated the ability and suitability of depicting affluent groups in elaborate clothing and jewellery, as seen in the late fourth-century Matron at her Toilette mosaic and later Dominus Julius mosaic.

As a mechanism for gender articulation, clothing held a visual and material presence. Similarly, as a rhetorical device, ideas of appropriate or deviant dress could be deployed to bolster arguments. Representing a quotidian artefact, clothing was a familiar point of reference for all. Characterising individuals or groups in terms of their correct or transgressive gendered dress deployed cultural shorthand that both evoked the desired response from the audience and also re-iterated the association between such a caricature and this dressing fashion. Constructing gender difference and distinction through dress occurred in both secular and religious contexts, with Christian discourse extrapolating pre-existing sartorial ideals and infusing it with its own religious

discourse. Despite the prominence of Christian dress ideals in the textual record – especially relating to female attire – women clearly positively endorsed their gender identity through the appearance. Clothing maintained, signalled and confirmed participation in normative gendered actions and these ideals changed according to the context. As a nexus of social mores, gendered clothing mattered to both male and female groups.

Chapter 5: Christian Dedication

This chapter investigates Christian clothing constructions in North Africa, synthesising a combination of different dress practices that advertised a Christian identity, as recovered from diverse textual and visual material ranging from the mid-second century AD to the sixth century AD.

I begin by examining why, for all the vocal debates of Christian sartorial activities from the third century AD onwards – particularly Tertullian's *De pallio* – there is a conspicuous absence of elements of a Christian wardrobe or uniform. My focus then turns to other ways of displaying Christian identity and specifically the role of baptismal clothing. Here, clothing demonstrated commitment to Christian belief and this idea is explored in the subsequent discussion of the use of the dressed body as a canvas for ascetic practice, as exemplified in the *vita* of Melania the Younger. Following on from this I consider the function of dress in processes of almsgiving, by establishing the ideology and reality of clothing charity in North Africa through a mixture of literary sources. My study of clothed Christian bodies is further substantiated by the analysis of fifth-century North African mosaic covers, which outlines important aspects of Christian dress performance, this time in the visual sphere. I concentrate on the site of Tabarka where there is a predilection for this mode of commemoration, in both orant and bust form, although I also investigate a number of examples recently excavated from Leptiminus. My last section looks to Augustine's *Regulae* to problematise clerical and monastic clothing and explore the implications of religious authority not exhibited through dressing performances.

My discussion highlights that, even though there was no exclusive Christian garment, Christians employed a catalogue of sartorial behaviours to profess their Christian identity. The intricacies of many of these practices, while being somewhat familiar to other Christian groups, were peculiar to early Christian communities in North Africa, especially in the use of mosaic tomb covers. Christian dress rhetoric in North Africa evolved in accordance with the developments in Christian practice, and the act of dressing the body – whatever form this took – reflected participation in Christian structures.

5.1 The Absence of a Christian Wardrobe

Elements of 'Christian' clothing are conspicuously absent in Minucius Felix's late second-century apologist work the *Octavius*. In this exoteric piece (Price 1999: 112), accusations 'of secret marks and signs' instead stand as signifiers of Christian identity (Min. Fel., *Oct.* 9.2). This accusation and its counterargument – 'we do in fact readily recognise one another, not as you suppose by some token on the body, but by the sign of innocence and modesty' (Min. Fel., *Oct.* 31.8) – contextualises the formulation of early 'Christian' clothing systems in North Africa. Although set in Ostia, there is a 'distinct North African flavour' to the text (Frend 2006: 6) and Minucius Felix notes the origin of fellow citizen of Cirta, *Numidia*, M. Cornelius Fronto (*Oct.* 2.3, 9.6). With Caecilius as pagan prosecutor, Octavius as the Christian defence and Minucius Felix as the arbiter, the *Octavius* outlines various misconceptions about the Christian community. Minucius Felix initiates this dialogue after allowing Caecilius – who, at the end of the text converts to Christianity – to venerate a statue of Serapis, much to the censure of Octavius (Min. Fel., *Oct.* 2.4, 3.1). Showing a disregard for theology and extensive Christology, the *Octavius* is not a statement of what Christians believe, but rather what Christians *do* and offers a contrast to later works by prominent Church figures whose purpose was to support contemporary theological ideals. The *Octavius* attests to the lack of a 'Christian' costume: 'As for us [Christians], our wisdom manifests itself not by what we wear, but by our inner disposition' (Min. Fel., *Oct.* 31.6). There was good reason for this: rather than represent a lack of group identity, or the secretive nature of this religion, the absence of Christian dress confirms that clothing was not a significant visual marker of the Christian *habitus*. Instead, the *Octavius* must refer to moral character as a marker of Christian identity; no visible mechanism for identification existed. This alleged *signum* might refer to the sign of the cross traced on the forehead that Tertullian recounts (*Coron.* 3.4), used as a means of identifying Christian members to outsiders (Rebillard 2012: 18).

A lack of Christian costume held major advantages. Firstly, it presents this fledgling cult in a familiar way and converted Christians appear as 'Romans' with no sartorial differentiation. Rhetoric rejecting earthly wealth and status does suggest,

however, a mediated sartorial performance: 'It is a foolish mistake of man and an empty display of grandeur to shine in purple [robes] while the mind is vile' (Min. Fel., Oct. 37.10). Secondly, by aligning participation in Christian practices with moral integrity rather than a specific bodily appearance, this countered pagan scepticism of immoral actions (Min. Fel., Oct. 31.5). Followers of this new religion thus appear more pious than devout pagans whose misguided actions are implicitly negative.

Apostolic communities originally had no blueprint for sartorial behaviour beyond its function as demonstration of morality. The clothing of Jesus and his disciples is noted as being 'ordinary' – in fact, during his trial, Herod dresses Jesus in 'an elegant robe' as a form of mockery (Luke 23:11). Jesus also gave no explicit description of clothing in his directives to his apostles, other than to 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt' (Mark 6:8-11; see also Luke 9:3-5 and Matt 10:9-10). The Apostles' clothing is not noteworthy. In fact, as previously discussed in Chapter 4.2.3, in the *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, Thecla's transformation into Paul's disciple is marked simply by her adoption of 'a man's cloak' (APTh 40; Davis 2002: 15). This, then, offered very little direction for later Christians seeking to establish a distinctive sartorial identity, but at the same time allowed the growing Christian membership to have the appearance of their fellow pagans. Importantly, these Scriptural passages encouraged early Christians to dress moderately, not in extreme forms of clothing, and the rise of acetic dress, discussed below, stemmed from readings of general religious behaviours and not specific clothing directives.

Early Christian authors exploited the socio-cultural significance and familiarity of certain garments to target and appropriate specific aspects of pagan dress. A couple of decades after the production of the *Octavius*, Tertullian played on the connotations of elite 'Roman' dress, the *toga praetexta*, to draw a sartorial correlation between Christianity and elite behaviours: There, the blood of the Lord serves for your purple robe and your broad stripe is His own cross, '*Illic purpurae tuae sanguis Domini, et clauus latus in cruce ipsius*' (Tert., *Coron.* 13). Cyprian of Carthage used similarly rich imagery when he described the figurative rewards offered to martyrs and almsgivers through 'white' and 'crimson' crowns (Cypr., *Eleem* 26; Dunn 2004b: 716). The use of this crown imagery likely plays on Tertullian's earlier counsel about the wearing of the military

crown. Within his treatise *De corona militis*, Tertullian constructs an opposition between Christian virtue and the wearing of the laurel crown – a symbol of military victory. Tertullian's account, responding to a historical event from the early third century AD (LeBohec 1992: 12), shows the increasing necessity of codifying Christian practice in the pagan world. He describes the martyrdom of a Christian soldier who thus replaced their military crown with the white crown of a martyr (Tert., *Coron.* 1.3). The choice to exemplify Christian virtue using a discussion that polarises military and Christian crowns aligned the martyr as a soldier of Christ, although ultimately Tertullian's aim is to instruct Christians in the wider rejection of pagan behaviours such as idolatry (Sider 2001: 115). Such symbolism is also significant as it creates juxtaposition between a Christian discourse that encourages modesty and a lack of ornamentation (see below) and the reward of a crown. Tertullian's actions also exemplify his ongoing use of rhetorical reasoning to craft sartorial directions not explicitly covered in the Bible (Dunn 2015: 87-88), while simultaneously highlighting the perceived importance of these material artefacts as communicators as well as the underlying malleability of this dress discourse which allowed such Christian re-dressing.

While early Christian authorities employed references to abstractions of clothing and metaphorical dress to express the ideals of martyrdom, actual martyr stories also emphasised the religious significance of 'worldly' clothing. In the account of the *Passio sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (see Chapter 4.2.3), the robes of the priestesses of Ceres and the priests of Saturn demonstrates how symbolic a change of clothing could be (*Pass. Perp.* 18.4). The *passio*'s narrator shows Perpetua as steadfast in her refusal to don this pagan clothing and her inversion of the intended visual sartorial insult. The subsequent refusal by the Christians to wear such apparel echoes Perpetua's martyrial triumph: 'We came to this of our own free will, that our freedom should not be violated' (*Pass. Perp.* 18.5). A rejection of pagan apparel confirmed Perpetua's identity, to both the spectators and those reading this *passio* and Perpetua's actions associated bodily presentation with inner disposition: her refusal of the clothing symbolised her rejection of pagan authority altogether.

An apparent absence of a discernible Christian wardrobe is initially very surprising considering Tertullian's third-century composition *De pallio*. The *De pallio* is

a notoriously complex and intriguing piece of Latin prose (Brennan 2008: 175), purporting to convince a Carthaginian audience to re-adopt the *pallium* in place of the toga: Tertullian implies that Punic communities previously wore the *pallium*, but its usage had since waned. While Monceaux regard this piece as esoteric in nature (1901: 413), it is perhaps more beneficial to understand *De pallio* as a speech sympathetic to Christianity, using the pre-existing implications of the *pallium* as clothing worn by particular groups who implicitly reject extravagance (Tert., *De pall.* 6.1-2). For a text ostensibly detailing a Christian garment, there is very little evidence that contemporary practice in early Christian communities in North Africa resembled the situation that Tertullian describes. It is more realistic to view Tertullian's debate as a rhetorical exposition on processes of sartorial transformation, with the ultimate aim of promoting and affirming that change, because of nature – not custom – is the only acceptable type. As Chapter 4.1.1 discussed, Tertullian also uses this opportunity to criticise the increasingly transgressive clothing performance he believes are occurring in Carthage and, while his reference to the Christian *pallium* is not inherently disingenuous, it is more reflective of an ideal construction than sartorial reality.

In many respects, the *De pallio* is more informative for exploring another traditional Roman dress behaviour – the wearing of the toga. In Tertullian's construction, the toga is cumbersome and oppressive while the *pallium* is much simpler apparel (*De pall.* 5.1-2). If Tertullian wore the *pallium* when delivering his speech, as has been suggested (McKechnie 1992: 55, 66), no doubt this enhanced his argument. To some degree such a visual display might help further associate the *pallium* with Christian identity – after all, the *pallium* speaks for itself near the end of the piece (Tert., *De pall.* 5.1-6.2) – yet, the *persona* adopted throughout the rest of the speech is not overtly Christian, nor the composition itself apologetic in nature (McKechnie 1992: 45-46). It is indeed questionable whether Tertullian was sincerely expecting his audience to conceptualise the *pallium* as a symbol of Christian identity and if he thought his speech would change the Carthaginian *habitus* (Brennan 2008: 178).

5.2 Clothing and Character

Despite the absence of distinctively 'Christian' articles of clothing, the construction of 'Christian' identity through sartorial means frequently occurred through 'written-clothing'. Clothing metaphors functioned didactically and were familiar to Christian audiences. Such instances often alluded to the daily action of clothing the body: the Apostolic voice in Romans 13:14 extols his audience to 'Put on the Lord Jesus Christ'; the statement in Col 3:9-10 exemplified transformative bodily processes: 'You have put off the old nature and put on the new nature'. Further, there was a specific point in a Christian's life that highlights quasi-uniformity for Christian appearance: baptism. In the absence of a Christian 'uniform', all baptised Christians wore the same clothing at one stage of their lives.

As a method for assuming Christian identity, the idea of changing nature mirrors the actual practice of baptism: 'As many of you as were Baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ' (Gal 3:27). Evoking this ritual was a mechanism that aligned the concrete with the abstract, with the baptism ritual involving de-robing of the previous life of sin and re-dressing in white robes that represented the pure life of Christianity devoid of sin (Ferguson 2009). Baptismal clothing – white linen robes – carried social importance, rather than reflecting theological prescriptions. Harrill (2002: 259) contextualises clothing in the Pauline baptismal formula in the framework of the epideictic rhetoric of the *toga virilis* ceremony, where a Roman boy changed his *toga praetexta* for the *toga virilis* as a dramatisation of his transformation. This hypothesis reminds us that elements of the baptismal process held social significance.

Influence might have also stemmed from contemporary mystery cults (Graf 2011: 105-106). While white clothing echoed the 'enormous crowd... from every race, tribe, nation, and language... dressed in white robes' in Revelation 7:9, worn by the persecuted, it was not a Scriptural requirement. A further reference in Revelation to 'fine linen is the righteousness of saints' might have influenced the chosen material. Interestingly, priests and initiates of Isis also wore white linen tunics (Apul., *Met.* 11. 9). In Tertullian's view, the white clothing was a sartorial ideal and it was in fact the act of cleansing the body with water that marked its preparation for the acceptance of the

Holy Spirit (*De bapt.* 6.1, 12.1). His treatise, *De baptismo*, however, was not concerned with outlining the various stages of the baptismal ritual, but rather providing reasons for their performance. Clothing does not form part of this rhetoric, yet reference to such clothing elsewhere attests to its contemporary social importance. In this way, the very acts of undressing and re-robing the body were 'constitutive practice' (Davis 2005: 355) and baptismal performance was fused with sartorial display. Baptismal robes were highly symbolic; they visually communicated a new committed identity and thus represented the end of catechesis. The catechetical preparation process could be very long, as Ecclesiastical authorities ensured the dedication of the candidates (Nelson 1996: 446). Thus, these white robes symbolised the end of one life and the birth of another.

In the act of baptism, candidates were visibly transformed. Whether this process involved explicit nakedness, or whether references to unclothed bodies is more a result of the imprecise Greek or Roman terminology is uncertain (Guy 2003: 138). African sources do not favour one side of this debate, but rather their focus is on this new clothing. Despite changing views of the meaning of baptism in various orthodoxies in the third, fourth and fifth centuries AD (see Burris 2012), white robes remains a constant and even intensified. Augustine refers to the process where, during Lenten preparation and in the examination stage of the baptism process, candidates would individually stand on a *cilicium*, or goat's-skin mat, while their suitability for the new Christian lifestyle was questioned (*De civ. D.* 15.20.4; Patout Burns and Jensen 2014: 205). Here, the *cilicium* signified human sinfulness and its origins in Adam in Eve (Gen 3:21) and the act of stamping on the *cilicium* symbolised the rejection of old lifestyles and repenting: 'Strip yourselves of the old man that you may be clothed with the new' (August., *Serm.* 216.2). The *cilicium* provided a great contrast to the white linen robes given after the completion of baptism. Neophytes wore their white linen robes for eight days and their visibility to the congregation when celebrating the Eucharist was emphasised. After this time, the newly baptised returned to their home and continued their normal lives (August., *Serm.* 259, 260), presumably taking off their white tunic.

Although just a temporary, ceremonial garment, these white robes were a fixed presence in Christian rhetoric. According to Augustine, the use of linen had practical

benefits, although he does not correlate this to baptismal clothing, but rather his explanation of Peter's vision in Acts 10:

You see, we know linen is resistant to moths, which spoils other fabrics. Let us shut out from our hearts the moths of bad desires, and thus keep ourselves strong and unspoiled in the faith, with no depraved thoughts eating into it like moths, if we wish to belong to the sacred reality signified by that linen sheet, in which the Church is represented (*Serm.* 149.9).

In his *Baptismal Instructions*, John Chrysostom also alludes to 'caring' for the baptismal garment and he exhorts the newly baptised to: 'Each day look to the lustre of your garment, that it may never receive any spot or wrinkle' (8.25). Recalling Ephesians 5:27, this direction abstracts the white robes, presenting an allegorical, not physical, garment. Nevertheless, a reference in Victor of Vita's late fifth-century *Historia Persecutionis* suggests the actual re-use of these garments and the emphasis placed on its materiality. Victor recounts an episode during the persecution featuring a deacon of Carthage, Muritta, who had baptised a man called Elpidoforus into the Nicene religion. During the Vandal persecution, however, Elpidoforus had 'forsaken his religion', converted to Arianism and had been give the job to 'tearing in pieces the limbs of the confessors of Christ' (Vict. Vit. 3.34). While under torture, Muritta brandished the linen cloths that had clothed Elpidoforus after his first baptism and claimed that he would keep them as 'testimony' of Elpidoforus' 'perdition' (Vict. Vit. 3.36). It is difficult to substantiate how Muritta retained these baptismal robes and whether these were the actual garments Elpidoforus wore after baptism, or just a metaphor for Elpidoforus' baptismal garb. But, in a later episode, Catholics who had been forcefully re-baptised as Arian 'tore into shreds the linen cloths' as a symbol of their rejection of this heresy (Vict. Vita 3.48), suggesting that the real clothing was retained as a symbol of religious transformation. These instances present baptismal garments as physical articles of clothing imbued with religious signification. White baptismal robes were powerful, abstract signifiers of a Christian's dedication and their acceptance of Communion, as physical garments they also represented the transformative process of baptism.

5.3 Asceticism: Looking the Part

But baptismal clothing was not every-day Christian dress. The legacy of early Patristic concerns with clothing and moral integrity, discussed previously, outlined what ‘correct’ Christian clothing should signify, but in most cases was vague in actual clothing habits. The rise of ascetic clothing behaviours offered some formulation of how a fifth-century Christian should appear – albeit framed in the context of exemplary devout action. Narratives of the early fifth-century dedication of Melania the Younger, a young and pious Christian from the prominent Anicii family, and her husband, Pinian, adopted such terms. Of course, elites like Melania occupied a privileged social space where class aided their ascetic aspirations (Patout Burns 2015: 30). Written by the priest Gerontius over ten years after Melania’s death in AD 439, this hagiography describes Melania’s life, including her relocation to Africa to escape the Visigothic sack of Rome in AD 410 (Dietz 2005: 124).

Gerontius clearly uses clothing as a marker of Melania’s identity and a visible allusion to transformative processes (Brown 2012: 292). The accounts of Melania and Pinian’s ascetic conversion, although potentially highly idealised and catering to a broad Christian audience, do highlight the significance of clothing in the performance of ascetic identity. Upson-Saia correlates the association between asceticism and clothing within a discourse of ‘wounding by divine love’ (2016). Her discussion frames an episode where the young Melania is wounded through contact with embroidered clothing. She argues that Gerontius creates a parallel between this literal wound and a corporeal wound where the impious clothing mirrors the wounding of Melania’s soul through ‘divine love’ (Upson-Saia 2016: 97). The symbolism of this event is momentous as it precedes her life of renunciation: the healing of her soul and physical wound is achieved through asceticism.

A parallel association between physical punishment and immoral dressing habits is seen in the story of Praetextata at Rome. Praetextata was the aunt of the virgin Eustochium, who, in the 380s AD (Cain 2009: 112), embellished Eustochium’s appearance, paying particular attention to her hair (Jer., *Ep.* 107.5). Since Praetextata acted against the wishes of both Eustochium and her mother, Jerome’s narrative acts

as a warning, positing Praetextata's premature death as divine retribution (Clope 1995: 31). In Jerome's conception, there was a direct connection between transgressing the prescribed dressing behaviours, trying to subvert God's chosen disciple and physical penalty.

Of course, it is Gerontius' voice that presents us with this account of Melania's life. By recounting Melania's experience of the asceticism ideal, including the myriad of emotions she inhabits, Gerontius's Melania is a paragon of action, navigating herself towards a successful transformation (Schroeder 2016: 50-51), as embodied in her dress. This *vita* – with its instructional overtones – posits Melania as an *exemplum* of ascetic devotion and practice (Clark 1984: 153-170), even recounting her subterfuge when 'under her silken clothing she [Melania] began to wear a coarse woollen garment' (Gerontius, *VM* 5). Later she renounces her lavish clothing as a signal of her new lifestyle and, joined by her husband, they perform their shared *askesis* through sordid clothing (Gerontius, *VM* 6, 8; Coon 1997: 110). Although the adoption of an ascetic lifestyle did not occur while Melania and Pinian were living in North Africa, according to Gerontius, Augustine did guide their ascetic renunciation (Gerontius, *VM* 20). The ascetic couple also left a physical mark on the African landscape when they established two monasteries at Thagaste, Numidia, one for 80 men and the other for 130 virgins (Gerontius, *VM* 21-22).

However, Gerontius' portrayal of Melania's use of clothing in her quest for the ascetic ideal is more focused on her distribution of her substantial wealth (Brown 2005, 2012: 292-293) which, in some instances, is unwelcome – as in the case of some Egyptian monks (Gerontius, *VM* 38; Dietz 2005: 125); her clothing merely mirrors her ascetic journey. To be authoritative figures of ascetic self-abnegation and voluntary impoverishment, Melania and Pinian needed to embody the ascetic ideal in both spirit and body. Gerontius even mobilises clothing as a mechanism by which Melania questions Pinian's commitment, since his choice of Cilician tunic belies his professed ascetic commitment (Gerontius, *VM* 8; Clem Al., *Paed.* 2.10.115). Melania argues that their marital chastity should signal complete commitment to the ascetic lifestyle; as such Pinian's clothing should properly pronounce his dedication. Melania is persuasive and from this point on, Gerontius notes, Pinian's clothing is austere and projects his

dedication – his inward and outward states aligned (VM 8). That Gerontius deploys dress rhetoric in his ascetic narrative attests not only to its centrality in the projection of Christian identity, but also the intrinsic association between wealth, dress and religious performance. While Melania's costume might advertise her extreme ascetic renunciation, the ongoing re-distribution of her wealth signalled that her transformation was not a case of radical dispossession, but measured almsgiving (Dunn 2014a: 94-95).

Church authorities sought to outline the practicalities of wealth distribution and asceticism and such ideas are especially evident in Augustine's writings (Nightingale 2011: 181). His attempts to delineate and construct a Christian lifestyle that strove for the common good – later exemplified in his *Regulae* (see below) do not explicitly focus on clothing, but rather situates dress in the broader context of human needs and relationships. In fact, in a reply to Possidius, Augustine only forbids 'ornaments of gold or costly dress' for virgins (August., *Ep.* 245). For Augustine, Christian asceticism should benefit the whole community (Lawless 2000), as reflected in his suggestion that Melania and Pinian give an estate and its income to further their ascetic intentions and secure salvation (Gerontius, VM 20). In contrast to the eschatological explanation of communal moral integrity pronounced by early Patristics like Tertullian and Cyprian, who, as addressed in Chapter 4.2, viewed clothing as a means to ensure sexual continence, Augustine saw dress as a means to maintaining and encouraging social norms and hierarchies. His *Regulae*, for instance, notes that clothing should be distributed fairly in monasteries – though 'fair' was in correlation to the social status of the individual when they entered the monastery (August., *Reg.* 3.5.1.230).

Augustine's opinion echoes his advice to Christian individuals to use their wealth appropriately; exemplified through his criticism of the married woman Ecdicia for her 'arrogant' behaviour (August., *Ep.* 262; Wilkinson 2015: 46). After persuading her husband to take a vow of continence, Ecdicia assumed the wardrobe of a widow, but without consulting her husband. Further, she donated a substantial proportion of property to wandering monks and thus stripped her son of his patrimony (August., *Ep.* 262). Here, Augustine's concern focused on Ecdicia's rejection of normative gender roles, her usurpation of unsuitable dress and the lack of mutual consent as befits a

married couple: 'you should have taken counsel together about everything' (August., *Ep.* 262.8; Vuolanto 2016: 180). Her actions – however honourably intended – were inappropriate because they contravened *normative* marital power dynamics (August., *Ep.* 262.5; Cooper 2007: 174-175). By appropriating a widow's dress, Ecdicia had intended to display her asceticism, but her actions were unpraiseworthy because her outward appearance did not reflect her true inward disposition because her husband had since renounced his vow of chastity. Augustine saw the preservation of social relationships and institutions as crucial to the construction and perpetuation of his ascetic communities. This co-existence between monastic groups and the secular world in early Christian North Africa contrasted to the strict asceticism John Cassian (c. AD 360-435) expected of his ascetics, whose renunciation encompassed all material possessions, wealth and familial ties (Cassian, *Inst.* 4, 5; Goodrich 2007: 151-207).

5.4 Clothing and Charity: Almsgiving

However, dress could be employed in other contexts to demonstrate religious dedication and such ideas are especially prominent in Augustine's conception of Christian ideals where his rhetoric provides pastoral guidance and proscriptions. Clothing charity – the act of donating clothing to church stores – functioned as a conduit between the donor and the recipient. An inventory list from a church at Cirta, Numidia, dated to AD 303 (Finn 2006: 81), shows how charity was realised at least in part through donations of clothing: '82 women's tunics, 38 capes, 16 men's tunics, 13 pairs of men's shoes, 47 pairs of women's shoes, 19 peasant clasps'⁴. Composed during Diocletian's persecution, this list is recorded in the *Gesta apud Zenophilum* and thus its purpose was not to elucidate charitable clothing donations, but provide an account of the confiscated books and liturgical items taken in the *acta* of Munatius Felix (Optat., *App.* 3; Duval 2000: 70-85). Thus, these dress items were part of a wider inventory which also lists books as well as gold and silver objects. Just how representative this list is of donations throughout Roman Africa is uncertain, especially given the potential discrepancy

⁴ *Tunicas muliebres LXXXII, maforteas XXXVIII, tunicas viriles XVI, caligas viriles paria XIII, caligas muliebres paria XLVII, capulas rusticanas XVIII.*

between the theology and practice of almsgiving. Yet, the Cirta inventory invites us to begin to problematise the logistics of clothing collection and distribution. Richard Finn (2006: 81), for instance, dismisses Ramsay MacMullen's explanation for the discrepancy in the number of female and male garments (1999: 164), rejected because it presupposed that clothing donations were directly from the donor's personal wardrobes, rather than the household's clothing supply. More plausible is the explanation that this form of episcopal almsgiving catered to those considered needier, such as widows, women or children (see below), which accounts for the higher number of female garments.

It is unclear as to the exact process of dress donations, whether these donations were of second-hand clothing or new garments, a reference from Augustine that the exchange of eternal salvation for 'a morsel of bread, for a coin, for an old coat' (August., *Serm.* 350b) does suggest the donation of worn clothing, though this comment sought to further Augustine's pastoral agenda. For Augustine, the link between almsgiving and expiation necessitated such actions (Brown 2012: 362). The trope of wealthy female ascetics, like Melania the Younger, renouncing their sartorial possessions also supports the argument for the donation of used clothing, but the wide dissemination of these stories as moral *exempla* might produce an over-emphasis on such mechanisms. Writing over a century after the Cirta inventory list, Augustine urges his congregation to give clothing donations to the 'common store' from which it can be re-distributed (August., *Serm.* 356.13). Augustine states that he is in the 'habit' of selling donations of clothing that are too fine and donating the proceeds to the poor (August. *Serm.* 356.13). The system of clothing donation is unclear and whether these proceeds mentioned by Augustine were money or clothing is also unknown. Sermon 356 was not a homily on almsgiving, but more concerned with defending the function and role of clergy in the contemporary religious landscape (see below), so Augustine's comments engaged with a wider conversation of Christian practice. Finn, however, includes this sermon in a list of 45 which discuss almsgiving as well as other important topics, but notes ten sermons where the promotion of almsgiving is the primary purpose (2006: 147-148). Brown also argues that charity formed an important theme in Augustine's homilies (2002: 63-64). Nevertheless, Augustine's remarks attest to the movement of clothing within the

Christian community and his ability (and decision) to frame Christian behaviours in the form of sartorial distribution is significant and suggests some verisimilitude.

A letter of Augustine in AD 410 directed to the Christian community at the city of Hippo reminds them of their obligation for clothing the poor: 'It has been reported to me that you have forgotten your custom of providing raiment for the poor, to which work of charity I exhorted you when I was present with you' (August., *Ep.* 122.2). While his correspondence, however, offers very little concrete guidance as to what these donations should be – 'let every one of you, according to his ability, of which he himself is the best judge, do with a portion of his substance as you were wont to do' (August. *Ep.* 122.2) – his ambiguity is purposeful: by framing Christian obligation vaguely, and not providing a form of 'clothing quota', he placed the impetus on the donors to act as they felt appropriate. In this way, Augustine's congregation were encouraged to reflect continually on their almsgiving activities. Importantly, such benefits were conceived in favour of the donor, not the recipient, 'God treats his beggar as you treat yours' (August., *Serm.* 350b). Augustine presents the soteriological drive as more pressing than the social alleviation of poverty or hardship (Dunn 2013). The ambiguity as to the extent of this financial and material asceticism is an object of great debate for scholars (e.g. Finn 2006; Dunn 2012, Shanzer 2009). Nevertheless, that clothing formed part of this call to charity is significant as it highlights the movement and distribution of clothing items within Christian communities.

The importance of almsgiving in the construction of Christian morality played on inherited social relationships, but adopted new motivations (Brown 2012: 349-350). Early Christian references to the exhortation of charity demonstrate a shift in the motivations for such practice: personal salvation:

Almsgiving therefore is a good thing, even as repentance from sin; Fasting is better than prayer, but almsgiving better than both. And love covereth a multitude of sins, but prayer out of a good conscience delivereth from death. Blessed is every man that is found full of these. For almsgiving lifteth off the burden of sin (2 *Clement* 16.4).

Characterised as 'redemptive almsgiving' (Tuckett 2012: 62-63), the type of charity vocally exposed in 2 *Clement* is almsgiving as an eschatological assurance (Downs 2011:

493). This homily is conventionally assigned a mid second-century date (Tuckett 2012: 64), but an explicit reference by Eusebius provides a *terminus ante quem* of the early fourth century AD (*Hist. eccl.* 3.38.4). Importantly, this homily established almsgiving on multiple social levels, directing the rhetoric to all classes of Christian (Downs 2011: 517 *contra* Garrison 1993: 104-105). It is thought to be the first text to link almsgiving to 1 Pet 4:8 and to the pardon of sin (Rhee 2011: 76). Later, Cyprian, writing in the mid-third century AD and motivated by eschatological anxiety, offered a much stricter reason for almsgiving, dividing his audience into a binary of 'rich' and 'poor' (Merianos and Gotsis 2017: 59). He linked his contemporary situation of the Decian persecution with complacent Christian practice: 'but how can they follow Christ, who are held back by the chain of their wealth?' (Cypr. *Laps.* 12; Rhee 2011: 76-77). Interestingly, Cyprian also deploys anti-adornment rhetoric, styling Christian bodies as manifestations of the desire for wealth: 'In men, their beards were defaced; in women, their complexion was dyed: the eyes were falsified from what God's hand had made them; their hair was stained with a falsehood' (Cypr. *Laps.* 6). His discourse sought to reconcile wealthy elites with Christian practice, arguing for almsgiving as a method of atonement (Cypr. *Eleem.* 5).

This perspective contrasts to Clement of Alexandria's earlier *Quis Dives Salvetur*, which proposed that the desire for wealth, not the possession of wealth, was sinful (*Quis div.* 12). Clement's aim was to outline the mission and place of the Alexandrian Church in its early third-century context (Rhee 2012). This, of course, found resonance in Augustine who would encourage his congregation to give when they could. Unlike Clement who advocated for a top-down approach to almsgiving, whereby the wealthy give material possessions in return for the poor's advocacy with God (*Quis div.* 32; Downs 2011: 496), the sharing of resources posited by 2 Clement (and Augustine after this), implicated all early Christians in North Africa in the almsgiving process. As a malleable concept, almsgiving evolved and was adapted by various members of clergy – in response to particular historical contexts – to suit their pastoral agendas and perception of the role of charity.

As a model for charitable behaviour, this new type of almsgiving changed the relationship between the rich and the poor. Unlike patron-client relationships where elements of reciprocity functioned to perpetuate the use and maintenance of this

system (Neil 2009: 219), in strategies of almsgiving the new poor had no means of ‘giving back’. Recently, Erlend MacGillivray has challenged the assumptions held of reciprocal dynamics in all forms of patronage – itself a loosely defined phenomenon – calling for greater specificity in modern terminology to designate power relationships (2009: 45, 42). Although these two forms of charity, patronage and almsgiving, are not identical, the close association between them allowed almsgiving to act as a broad form of benefaction aimed at those in need. Of course, ‘poor’ was a fluid term in homiletic discourse, either referring to those who were financially poor, those who were spiritually lacking or, with a more positive connotation, reflecting those with the virtue of humility. As evident in the use of *matricula*, in the context of almsgiving those considered as ‘poor’ were ‘households of faith’ who lacked financial means (Jer., *C. Vigil.* 14), so this system constructed a sense of exclusive religious and spiritual identity, as the previous version of patronage had done in the profane, not religious, sphere (Woolf and Garnsey 1989). This transformed and anonymised the process of charitable-giving, as the reward for the donor was eternal salvation, rather than a tangible benefit (August., *Serm.* 350c). Importantly, this new form of patronage required no reciprocal action from the poor (Straw 1989) and, in fact, Augustine’s rhetoric actually re-characterised donors as beggars themselves: ‘Let the beggar hammer your door, while you for your part hammer at the door of your Lord (August., *Serm.* 350b).

As demonstrated above, Augustine presented charity and the giving of alms as in the self-interest of the donor. Yet, as well as offering spiritual benefits, the donating of clothing (and other alms) also gave material relief to those in need. The establishment of *matricula*, or poor lists, shows attempts at delineating those considered to be ‘the poor’, and also marked a method for stabilising the population (Brown 1992: 98). As the cited Circa inventory shows, such poor lists were also likely a means of cataloguing and organising the distribution of donations and perhaps even to emphasise the importance of the Church as a physical location of this behaviour, as supported by Augustine’s later reference to the Church’s ‘common store’ (*Serm.* 356). In a letter to the wealthy matron Fabiola, Augustine recounts the story of Antoninus of Fussala, a bishop (August., *Ep.* 20*). Augustine explains that Antoninus’ mother was placed on the *matricula* at Hippo while Antoninus and his step-father entered a monastery (August., *Ep.* 20*.2). Her

inclusion on the *matricula* suggests that she was eligible to be registered on the poor list, although Augustine stresses that she became a pastoral responsibility after she was unable to renounce her sexual relationship with Antonius' step-father (August., *Ep* 20*.2). Augustine does not explain the concept of the *matricula* in his writing, nor is the term well attested in ancient sources (Finn 2006: 75). This suggests a general social familiarity with such terminology, although this reference does represent the first western attestation for the poor-roll of a church (Allen and Morgan 2009: 124). Of course, in discussing Antonius' formative years, Augustine's purpose is to put his later indiscretions into context (August., *Ep*. 20*.6-8; Shaw 2011: 400), not to provide an extensive social commentary on the organisation of *matricula*. Whether clothing donations were frequent, therefore, is a matter of speculation. What should be noted is that clothing was often cited and highlighted by Christian leaders as an appropriate and necessary donation in the performance of this Christian duty, thereby confirming – at least in terms of rhetoric – the importance of clothing as a form of charity.

Donations of clothing thus acted as a conduit between the donor and the needy; the wealthy could help their salvation through these garments. Equally, the production of donated garments, set in the wider discourse of appropriate ascetic behaviours, provided an economic enterprise benefiting the poor, as well as a means of distraction for chaste women from earthly temptation. In his letter detailing suitable behaviours for the new virgin Demetrias (Dunn 2014b: 179-180), who had fled to Africa after the Visigothic sack of Rome in AD 410, Jerome recommends that she spend her time weaving and spinning to avoid the dangers of idleness (Jer., *Ep*. 130). This, of course, parallels the cultural trope of the good *matrona* spinning evidenced in Greco-Roman rhetoric and iconography (see Chapter 3.3). Jerome presents the justification for such actions through two ideas: first: 'that being always busy you [Demetrias] may think only of the service of the Lord'; second, Jerome suggests that 'Christ will value nothing more highly than what you have wrought with your own hands' (Jer., *Ep*. 130.15). There was, of course, a financial aspect to this domestic activity and a clearly acknowledged audience (Dunn 2014b: 180): Jerome notes that the garments woven by Demetrias and the virgins living in her care could be passed to Demetrias' mother and grandmother to sell and the proceeds donated to the relief of the poor (Jer., *Ep*. 130.15). In doing this,

Demetrias suitably performed her duty (Jer., *Ep.* 130.14; Lamprecht 2019: 72). This offhand reference to textile production also implies that selling woven garments was more profitable than donating finished clothes to the poor. To this end, it is possible that this idea of domestic clothing production informed the practices of other Christians. Although this letter was intended for the wealthy virgin Demetrias, her role as an *exemplum* of ascetic practice to her household (Wilkinson 2015: 84) – and further afield – might encourage others to partake in this economy of female modesty and donate the profits to the poor. It is possible that clothing donations were a more realistic gift for less wealthy, but still ‘non-poor’, Christians than overt acts of self-dispossession.

Although almsgiving could be a financially appropriate form of charity for non-wealthy Christians, clergy also led by example. The mosaic inscription for the late fourth-century AD bishop Alexander, from the central nave of the funerary basilica at Tipasa (Février 1970), highlights these role-model behaviours:

Bishop Alexander, born to these very laws and altars, having discharged his times and honours in the Catholic church, guardian of chastity, dedicated to love and to peace, through whose teaching innumerable people in Tipasa flourished, lover of the poor, wholly devoted to almsgiving, who never lacked the resources from which he performed his heavenly work: this man’s soul is refreshed while his body rests in peace, so he may become a partaker with the saints in gaining the Kingdom of Heaven (*CIL* 8.20905)⁵.

Unfortunately, the lack of his funerary portraiture means that we cannot derive details of personal appearance from a *pauper amator aelemosinae deditus*, or lover of the poor devoted to almsgiving. Equally, similarities between this mosaic inscription and another found at Djemila, *Numidia*, for the Bishop Cresconius (*AE* 1922 25), posit these commemorations as local variations on a model inscription and therefore not individualised portraits (Albertini 1922: xxvi-xxxii). Indeed, these were characterisations deemed appropriate for the deceased and their context. That a mid sixth-century AD date is argued for Cresconius’ mosaic (Finn 2006: 199), confirms the longevity of such

⁵ *Alexander episcopu[s] l]egibus ipsis et altaribus natus aetatibus honoribusque in ecclesia catholica functus castitatis custos karitati pacique dicatus cuius doctrina .florete innumera plebs Tipasensis pauperum amator aelemosinae deditus omnis cui nunquam defuere unde opus caeleste fecisset huius anima refrigerat corpus hic in pace quiescit resurrectionem expectans futuram de mortuis primam consors ut fiat sanctis in possessione regni caelestis.*

characterisations. The construction of Christian identity through acts of almsgiving meant that clothing provided a tangible benefit to Christian communities, while simultaneously linking actions in life with the afterlife. Clothing donations provided Christians (of all backgrounds) with a mechanism for gaining eternal salvation. At the same time, this form of almsgiving provided material relief to the poor and established the Church as a centre of charity.

5.5 Funerary Representations

5.5.1 Introducing the Tabarkan Context

Christian tomb mosaics represent a very characteristic feature of the late Antique North African Church and for my study of dress they represent an understudied corpus of evidence that, when critically examined, can offer new insight into how clothing was mobilised as a cultural force. Often heralded as an innovation by North African ateliers, the site of Tabarka (Fig. 5.1) has yielded the largest number of these funerary monuments in one location – over 140 tomb covers (Downs 2007: 1). They date to the late fourth or early fifth centuries AD. Demonstrating a mixture of different forms, with variations in iconography and epigraphy, these funerary artefacts highlight a particular,



Figure 5.1: Map of Roman Africa showing Tabarka.

but not unique, performance of Christian identity in North Africa. Christian burial practices at this time transformed the traditional Classical Roman burial practices, which often situated the deceased in a familial context, into statements of religious solidarity through participation in Christian rituals (Yasin 2009: 61). How clothing behaviours intersected with these practices is interesting, especially as the range of sartorial iconography attested at Tabarka exhibits a simultaneous mixture of shared and individualised characteristics. In this way, it mimics the complex relationship between individuals and their Christian communities recently scrutinised in scholarship (e.g. Rebillard 2009; Yasin 2009).

Communal burial sites arguably cemented the Christian identity of the dead, emphasising their religious, not familial, ties (Yasin 2005: 433). A survey of the find spots for the Tabarkan examples shows a mix across a variety of archaeological contexts in churches, (the Urban Basilica and the Chapel of the Martyrs) and open-air cemeteries (Urban Basilica cemetery, the Eastern Cemetery) or dedicated funerary chapels (Northwest Chapel/Cemetery) (Fig 5.2). Burial arrangements at Tabarka vary from site

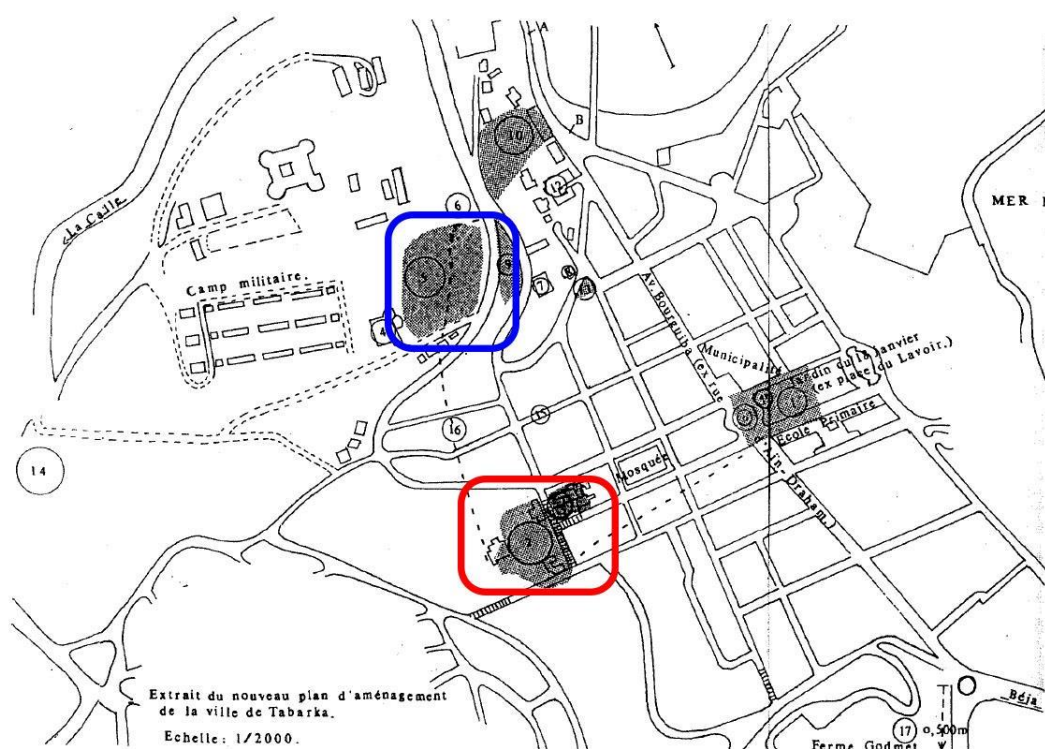


Figure 5.2: Plan of Tabarka, Tunisia, showing Urban Basilica and Urban Basilica Cemetery (Red) and Chapel of the Martyrs (Blue).

to site, with the Urban Basilica Cemetery seeing interments placed *ad hoc* – in some instances even intersecting other burials – while the Chapel of the Martyrs has a more orderly organisation as is evident from Gauckler’s plan of 1906 (Fig. 5.3) which also demonstrates how close these tomb mosaics could be. This apparently inconsistent approach to burial locations suggests that despite being an area of intensively decorated funerary covers, practices were not seemingly formalised and had no precise regulations.

A lack of secure stratigraphical information for these mortuary locations makes it difficult to establish the area’s precise chronological development. Rebora, however, noted the presence of a Classical-Roman cemetery in the vicinity (1894: 125) and the recovery of 74 pagan *stele*, attests to pre-Christian mortuary activities (Downs 2007:

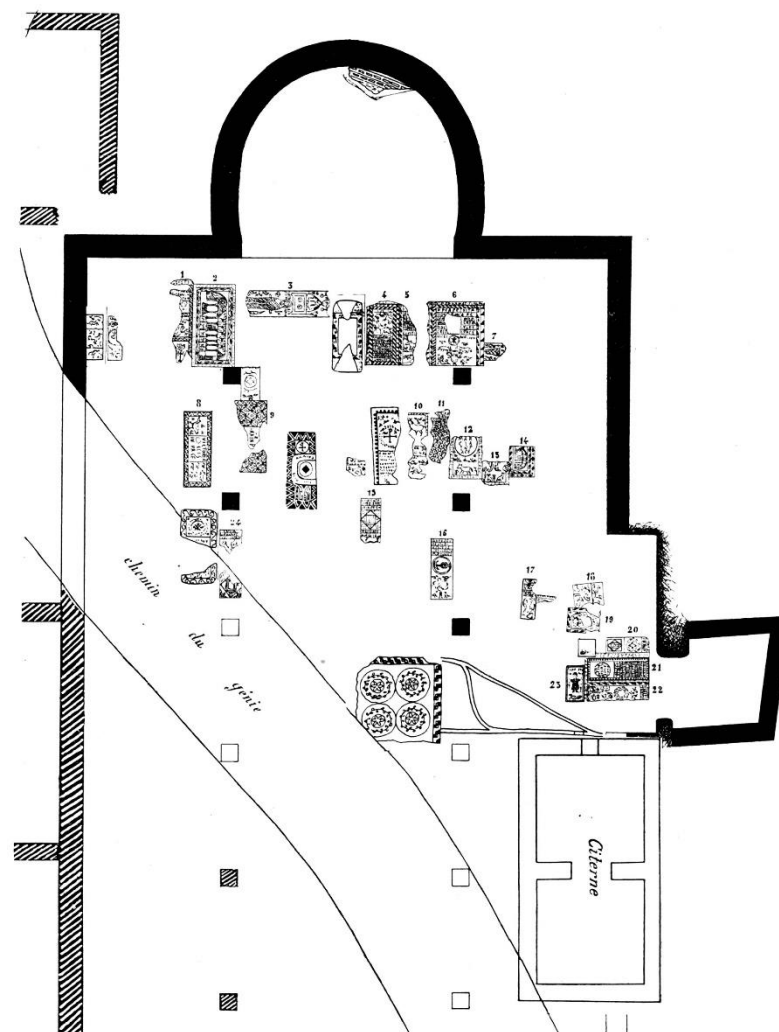


Figure 5.3: Plan of the Chapel of the Martyrs in 1906.

74). These *stele* were not necessarily highly ornate commemorations, but the epigraphic details do showcase a long-term occupation of these pagan sites with the majority using the traditional *D(iis) M(anibus) s(acrum)* formula (Cagnat 1883, 1884). Their original locations are now lost due to later reuse, including a handful in later Christian burials (Cagnat 1883: 106; Downs 2007: 117).

In themselves, these Christian tomb mosaics are notoriously and frustratingly difficult to date. A general lack of diagnostic palaeographic details – a consequence of the mosaic medium and the brief inscription length – complicates precise dating. Conventionally, most of the Christian tomb mosaics are dated to the late fourth century or fifth century AD (Alexander 1958; Downs 2007), and this is supported by my analysis of the clothing depictions, but a more rigorous dating system would, of course, provide better contextualisation of the impact of socio-political events on representational schemes. Indeed, the presence of mosaics specifically dating to the Vandal occupation might offer insight into visual distinctions between Arian or Catholic commemoration, or if indeed Arians used this form of funerary commemoration. Susan Stevens' work on cemeteries in Carthage suggested a lack of Germanic names at Bir el Knissa, whereas their presence is attested in Bir el Knissa 2 and other Carthaginian cemeteries (1993: 1-6; 2008: 85) – an indication of cemetery usage based on Christian denomination. Unfortunately, one securely dated mosaic example of Romanilla for July 6th AD 446 was produced in *Mauretania Sitifensis*, an area outside Vandal influence at that time (*CIL* 8.2064).

Visual correspondence with the Tabarkan examples does provide a framework for the dissemination of the orant figure from Tabarka to other locations by this time. The North African region is noted for its predilection of full-length mosaic portraits (Panofsky 1964: 50; Breckenridge 1974) and the transposition of this orant motif is a significant factor in how we should interpret the sartorial iconography, as it presents the viewer with a figurative representation of the deceased, itself a specific active decision. The site of Tabarka has become synonymous with these innovative mosaic portraits, possibly even outnumbering those found in the rest of Tunisia (Duval 1976: 62; Alexander 1987: 1), although such statements do not take into account the newly discovered examples from Leptiminus during excavations in 2004-6 (see Lazreg *et al.* 2006). Deriving from a strong tradition of paving basilicas with mosaics (Alexander

1958), North African tomb mosaics reflect the predilection for mosaic decoration in Africa more generally – I give a study of some secular figurative imagery in Chapter 6.2. As seen already in many mechanisms for the display of ‘Christian’ identity, funerary mosaics were rooted in Greco-Roman traditions and non-Christian fourth-century examples from Thaenae (see Patout Burns and Jensen 2014: Figs. 145 and 147) prove that these are not exclusive to Christian communities, nor limited to just to the province of *Africa Proconsularis*. However, in modern scholarship, Christian tomb mosaics are most commonly associated with sites in *Africa Proconsularis* – especially Tabarka. Although these pagan examples lack the same composition as that which came to characterise most figurative tomb covers, they represent the beginnings of this practice. It appears that Christian communities adopted and adapted this funerary behaviour, using burial location along with symbolism, but not dress, to signal affiliation.

Discussing Tabarka, Downs notes purposeful attempts to create distinguishing statements of identity (2007: 5-6). Figurative images go some way to providing details of the costume of Christians. Although, in the same vein as the evidence previously discussed, not necessarily direct evidence of ‘Christian’ dress, these images evidence intra-Christian forms of commemoration. Sartorial variety within iconography from the same contexts is one of the most defining characteristics of these Tabarkan figurative mosaics. This diversity, when contrasted to the uniformity of an-iconographic grave markers from elsewhere in North Africa, is striking (see below for the discussion of Sétif and Kébilia). The most popular composition employed at Tabarka depicts a single figure, presumably the deceased, either in bust form or full-length; those in full depiction adopt an orant pose. The Tabarkan funerary mosaics evidence a limited variety of tunic stylisations and ensembles, with figures shown in tunics or tunics with an outer garment. Tunics can be girded or unbelted. The decoration of the tunics vary and the following discussion does not provide an exhaustive catalogue of North African tomb mosaics, but rather offers pertinent readings from representative examples. While the corpus demonstrates a vast degree of similarity, it is important to note that all figurative depictions are individualised, highlighting the significance of personalised imagery.

5.5.2 Full-length Depictions at Tabarka

A combination of tunic and *paenula* is the most popular wardrobe for deceased males at Tabarka, an ensemble that proves that, from the late fourth century AD onwards, Tertullian's encouragement for the *pallium* was not heeded or at least not in visual contexts. Deriving from the secular sphere, but gaining Christian significance by the fifth century AD (Daniel-Hughes 2017: 83), the choice of the *paenula* was appropriate for this context. The combination of tunic and *paenula* is best demonstrated by the mosaic panel to Iovinus (Fig 5.4). Iovinus' commemoration, dating to the early fifth century (Downs 2007: 304), was erected in the Urban Basilica Cemetery Enclosure (*Inv. Tun.* 950) and measures 1.75 x 0.6m. It marks one of the most accomplished figurative renderings at Tabarka (Downs 2007). At the bottom of this composition, two lit candles flank an orant. A bird perches on either shoulder and a single rose occupies the space above each animal. On his panel, Iovinus is shown wearing a light-brown coloured long sleeved tunic, with black bands articulated at the cuffs and *orbiculi* at the hem. Over this, he

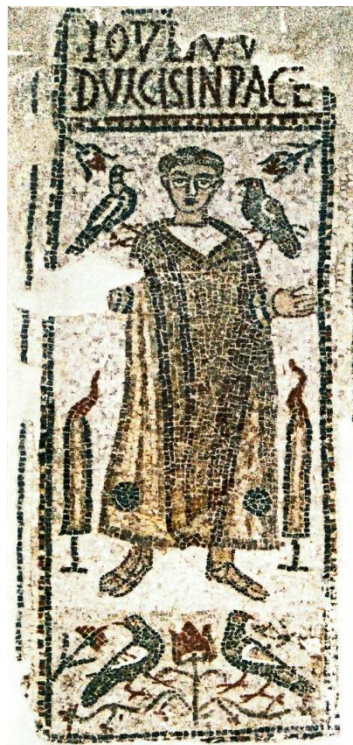


Figure 5.4: Iovinus Tomb Mosaic.
Urban Basilica Cemetery Enclosure,
Tabarka, Tunisia. Early fifth century
AD. Bardo Museum Stores.

wears a brown and green striped *paenula*. Little information is given in Iovinus' epitaph which sits above his head, other than the formulaic '*dulcis in pace*', but his artistic visualisation is notable for showing sandals, a feature not present in all figures wearing a tunic and *paenula*.

The Iovinus mosaic panel, in its composition and rendering, appears naturalistic. In contrast, the visualisation of Victor (Fig. 5.5) on his caisson (*Inv. Tun.* 1049f), which dates to the mid-fifth century AD (Downs 2007: 497), while also shown in an orant pose has a body that is heavily elongated and out of proportion. A disproportioned depiction is not necessarily a signal of poor artistic practice and the caisson's iconography suggests a great degree of care and attention. Like Iovinus, he is dressed in a long sleeved tunic, decorated at the cuff and with *orbiculi* at the hem, accompanied by a yellow coloured *paenula*. He is also shod in sandals. Located in the South Auxiliary Chapel to the left of



Figure 5.5: Victor Caisson Lid, South Auxiliary Chapel, Tabarka, Tunisia. Mid-fifth century AD. Bardo Museum Stores.

the Chapel of the Martyrs, this elaborate funerary monument suggests a discrepancy between the desire to produce an 'accurate' portrait of the deceased and the type of commemorative structure. Only the top of the caisson was decorated, unlike the neighbouring panel to Pompeia Maxima (see below). This accords with the overall impression of burial practices in the annexe to the Chapel of the Martyrs where these elaborate caisson tombs were placed alongside an anonymous tomb and the more modest resting place of Mellius (Downs 2007: 54). To this end it seems that there was very little correspondence between the location and technical quality of mosaics at Tabarka.

This lack of apparent hierarchy for mosaic panels or burial location does not negate the significance of the iconography on each commemoration. Indeed, the personalisation of each figurative design highlights that personal identity was still an important negotiated element, occurring within the wider context of collective funerary practices. While the clothing of Tabarkan males is multivalent, some pertinent conclusions about dress visualisations can be drawn. Along with the long-sleeved tunic and *paenula* combination, dalmatic tunics are equally suitable garb for boys, youths and adult men, although less common at Tabarka than the use of the *paenula* (Downs 2007: 197-198). That other apparel is utilised in depictions of the deceased suggests that the *paenula* was not viewed to be exclusively suitable for the Christian context. The commemoration for Covuldeus (Fig. 5.6) offers an example of the wardrobe of a male youth (*Inv. Tun.* 943). On his tomb cover, which measures 1.11 x 0.44m and dates to second quarter of the fifth century AD (Downs 2007: 313), Covuldeus is garbed in a green dalmatic tunic with thick brown *clavi* running from shoulder to hem. He appears to wear a white under-tunic and maybe a grey and blue necklace. The rendering of his tunic is rudimentary, with a column of light-coloured tesserae alluding to the dalmatic sleeves. Despite the inaccurate visualisation of dress, it is clear that this choice of wardrobe constructed a meaningful association to the deceased.

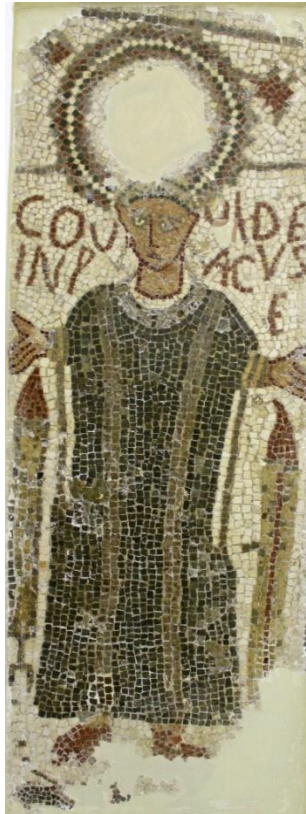


Figure 5.6: Covuldeus Tomb
Mosaic, Urban Basilica
Cemetery, Tabarka, Tunisia.
Second quarter of the fifth
century AD. Bardo Museum.

In contrast to Covuldeus' dark garments, the memorial to Dardanius (Fig. 5.7), excavated from the Urban Basilica Cemetery Enclosure, includes white clothing (*Inv. Tun.* 941). Representing arguably one of the finest tombs at Tabarka, the caisson is elaborate and well-executed. It likely dates to the second quarter of the fifth century AD (Downs 2007: 300). The central image is Dardanius who adopts an orant pose. He is dressed in a white dalmatic tunic that is decorated with *orbiculi* at the shoulders and hem, short *clavi* that run from the shoulders to waist, and articulated decoration at the cuffs. He also wears a scarf-like accessory with decoration in the same hues as his tunic. Without more biographical details recorded in the epitaphs, it is difficult to state the reasons for the variations of clothing styles and ensembles. Nevertheless, that such sartorial variations exist suggests an inherent cultural logic to dressing behaviours that would be understood by the contemporary viewer.



Figure 5.7: Dardanius Tomb Caisson, Urban Basilica Cemetery Enclosure, Tabarka, Tunisia. Second quarter of the fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

The costuming of females at Tabarka reveals a similar degree of variation, but again maintains some broad patterns, most prominently, in how it mirrors male clothing in the absence of uniquely Christian clothing. The burial of young girls and youths, however, can be distinguished from that of adult women and Downs notes that their depiction is frequently more varied than images of adults (2007: 211-214). The basic wardrobe of Tabarkan youths and girls consists of a dalmatic tunic, although there are a great variety of dalmatic stylisations at Tabarka and the draping of this garment varies according to the gesturing of the orant figure. Equally diverse is the textile decoration shown.

In the mosaic panel for Crescentia (Fig. 5.8), her long white dalmatic tunic is ornamented with *clavi* that run from shoulder to hem and there is further decoration at her chest linking the two stripes (*Inv. Tun.* 964). Such detail has been interpreted as an ochre belt with a blue buckle (Downs 2007: Cat. 32). The use of a belt at Tabarka is exclusive to the depiction of youths and children, although it is not an iconographic requirement. Of course, the reference to '*innoces in pace*' for Crescentia does not

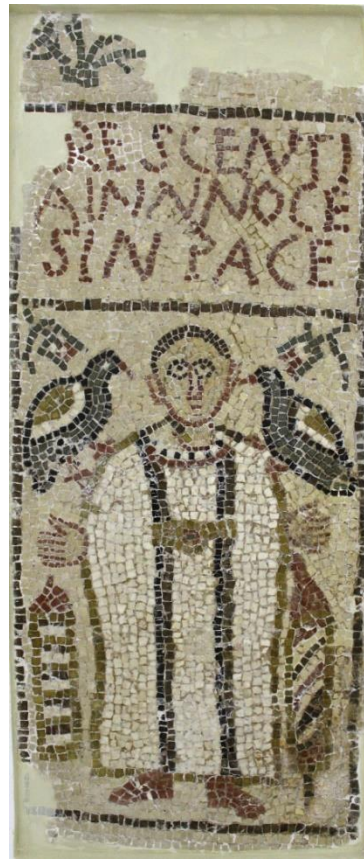


Figure 5.8: Crescentia Tomb Mosaic, Urban Basilica Cemetery, Tabarka, Tunisia. Second quarter of the fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

automatically correlate with a young child, but given the size of the tomb cover, 1.1 x 0.5m, it seems most plausible that Crescentia was not yet mature. Further, considering that her image includes an elaborate necklace, it is likely that this 'belt' is just another accessory or element of her clothing decoration. Despite being memorialised in a vivid visual depiction, it is notable that the inscription on this example is misspelt, showing 'Crescentia *innoces in pace*' instead of '*innoces in pace*'. The cover dates from the second quarter of the fifth century AD (Downs 2007: 348).

The tomb cover for Abundantia (Fig. 5.19) represents another elaborate depiction of the deceased. Excavated at the Urban Basilica Cemetery, the cover measures 1.30 x 0.57m (*Inv. Tun.* 953). With a golden dalmatic decorated in a highly stylised manner, much care has been taken to construct a personalised depiction. The golden stole that terminates with circle decoration and fringes also contributes to the



Figure 5.9: Abundantia Tomb Mosaic, Urban Basilica Cemetery, Tabarka, Tunisia. Second quarter of the fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

presentation of Abundantia as garbed in an elaborate costume. Abundantia's tunic is exceptional, but its decoration and undulating diagonal pattern on the body is at odds with the figure's somewhat schematic posture. Dating to the second quarter of the fifth century AD (Downs 2007: 328), the artistic rendering of the clothing and its ornamentation is striking and, when viewed in concert with the other contemporary funerary monuments at Tabarka, clearly fits into a general pattern of complex and varied sartorial visualisation of clothing.

In contrast to the bejewelled depictions of youths, female adults are portrayed in more sombre characterisations, often with veil, perhaps to display a modest characterisation. One such example is Pompeia Maxima (Fig. 5.10). Found in the South Auxiliary Chapel to the left of the Chapel of the Martyrs, this caisson is particularly large, measuring 2.5 x 0.75m (*Inv. Tun. suppl.* 1949e). It is a later example, dating to the mid-fifth century AD (Downs 2007: 495). Under an epitaph that declares her a 'servant of



Figure 5.10: Pompeia Maxima Tomb Cover, South Auxiliary Chapel, Tabarka, Tunisia. Mid fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

God', Pompeia Maxima is shown as an orant, dressed in a tunic and veil. Due to damage to the mosaic, it is uncertain what decoration, if any, the tunic was shown with and there is a possibility that the tunic she wore was of a dalmatic type, suggested by the extension of coloured tesserae below the arms. The inclusion of red decoration at her neck also hints at jewellery. The clothing of Pompeia Maxima can be taken as representative of depictions of mature females at Tabarka (Downs 2007: 201) and it is evident that such distinctions in wardrobe offer details about the deceased's age. Her costume resembles the burial clothing of the contemporary Melania the Younger which was 'worthy of her holiness', as recounted by Gerontius:

She had the tunic of a certain saint, the veil of another servant of God, another garment without sleeves, the belt of another which she had worn while she was alive, and the hood of another (VM 69).

Gerontius' lack of description for colours hinders a direct comparison to the Tabarkan imagery where the combination of a dark tunic and light-coloured veil appears, to some extent, to be a standardised costume for women. Downs posits a correlation between the colour of garments and financial status, arguing that coloured veils signified a wealthier individual (2007: 203-204). With laconic or absent epitaphs, it is impossible to nuance this suggestion, but it should also be remembered that this form of burial was itself a strategy of the moneyed classes. If there was a latent association between dark garments and ascetic classes, as exemplified in the story of Melania the Elder (Paul. Nol., *Epist.* 29.12), perhaps this was only in terms of female dress as a contrasting association is found in Pinian's complete ascetic transformation which was signalled through his adoption of un-dyed Antiochene clothing (Gerontius, VM 8). Whether the veil signalled mere modesty or formal virginity is uncertain, but the inclusion of a head-covering on many of the figurative depictions was a purposeful choice and must have been an intentional portrayal of the dead. In this regard, the hypothesis that the Chapel of the Martyrs was indeed the site of a nunnery, as argued by Benet, citing a reference by Victor of Vita, is plausible (1905; Vict. Vit. 1.32), but impossible to prove. As a 'Servant of God', Pompeia Maxima may have dedicated herself to the ascetic lifestyle, but her exact status will likely remain a mystery.

5.5.3 Bust Portraiture at Tabarka

The abovementioned examples are all of the orant type. The use of other compositional forms, sometimes featuring the deceased, offers further insight into the depiction of Christian individuals. Bust portraiture at Tabarka demonstrates a less layered wardrobe than its full-length counterparts. The portrait of the Grain Merchant (Fig. 5.11), a *ensor frumentarius*, depicts him in a rich green tunic, with light coloured *clavi* starting at the

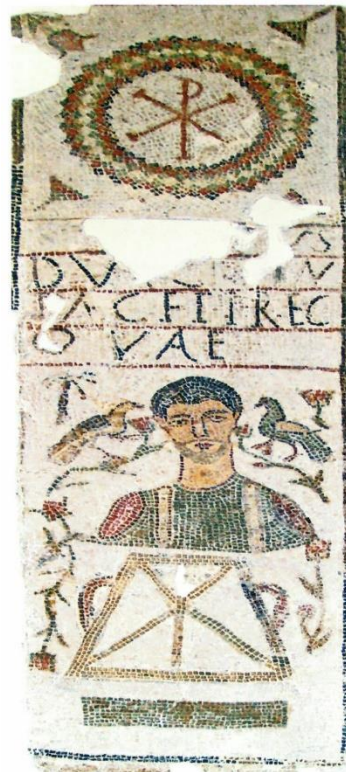


Figure 5.11: Grain Measurer Tomb
Mosaic, Urban Basilica Cemetery,
Tabarka, Tunisia. Second quarter of
the fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

shoulders and red *orbiculi* on the shoulders (*Inv. Tun.* 971). Known as such due to the identification of a *modius*, a device for measuring grain, and a *rutellum*, a levelling stick, as a funerary commemoration that memorialised the profession of the deceased, the secular nature of the tomb of the Grain Merchant is rather overt. Unfortunately, the use of a bust portrait instead of a full-figure limits the range of possible sartorial observations. Longerstay comments that the Grain Merchant is ‘richement vêtu’ and thus his clothing acted as a sign of status (1992: 149). Yet, such a claim is not justifiable when compared to the wardrobe of other burials at Tabarka, as even the monochromatic tunic decoration is not as complex as that evidenced elsewhere. What is significant about this tomb cover, which dates to the second quarter of the fifth century AD (Downs 2007: 358) is the reference to a profession. Perhaps the role of grain merchant was particularly important in the port of Tabarka, located on the busy sea route between Hippo and Carthage (Stone 2014).



Figure 5.12: Victoria and the Scribe Tomb Mosaic, Chapel of the Martyrs, Tabarka, Tunisia. First quarter of the fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

Another example of a bust depiction (Fig. 5.12), that of the bearded male figure on the upper register of the so-called Victoria and the Scribe grave at Tabarka (*Inv. Tun.* 1022), is stylised similarly with a red long-sleeved tunic with black *clavi* and *orbiculi* at the shoulders. The depiction dates from the first quarter of the fifth century AD (Downs 2007: 434). Noticeably, his *orbiculi* are more decorative than that of the Grain Merchant. His cuffs also display decoration and there appears to be a piece of cloth or a necklace encircling his neck. Interpreting this male figure is complicated by its association with

‘Victoria’ on the same grave marker. The interpretation of these two figures using clothing details is complex. Archaeological investigation of the tomb recovered one male and one female skeleton (Gauckler 1906: 198) leading Gauckler to conclude that, ‘sans doute’, these were the two people represented in the mosaic (1910: 326). To this end, interpretation of the iconography has been undertaken with reference to both figures, identifying both as ‘true’ portraits. However, matters are complicated by the damage to the inscription surrounding the heads of both figures: no information is recoverable from the inscription about the name or identity of the male (Gauckler 1906: 199), while a highly abbreviated inscription associated with Victoria is equally non-conclusive. One interpretation is VICTORIA [F]ILIA S[ACRA] IN PACE, perhaps suggesting the presence of a consecrated virgin in the grave. Another possibility is VICTORIA ELIAS IN PACE, identifying the figure as Victoria Elias (see Downs 2007: 432-434). Advocates for the first interpretation see the male figure as a clerical scribe or even hagiographer, arguing that the MAI or MAR just visible on the scribe’s work represents the production of a martyr’s calendar. This would correspond with the identification of the burial context as the Chapel of the Martyrs (Gauckler 1906) and the veiled head supports the claim of a devout female (Patout Burns and Jensen 2014: 463). In contrast, those agreeing with the ‘Elias’ interpretation see a more secular role for the male and posit a more familial relationship between the pair; thus Gauckler proposes, due to the age difference, a grave for mother and son (1906: 202). These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. In light of the presence of other veiled matrons in the Tabarkan funerary contexts, a combination of both interpretations is in fact possible, making the mosaic of Victoria and the Scribe a dedication to a consecrated virgin who shared a familial association with the male also depicted. The inherent difficulty in interpreting the iconography and its relationship with reality showcases the cultural knowledge required to read such imagery.

5.5.4 Non-figurative Funerary Covers

Burial customs at Tabarka – specifically the use of figurative mosaic tomb covers – were not unique in North Africa, as the evidence from Leptiminus attests (see below), but the high concentration of covers of this type do suggest a particular propensity for this form

of commemoration at this locale. Elsewhere, at both Sétif, *Mauretania Sitifensis* and Kébilia, *Africa Proconsularis*, there is complete lack of figurative iconography; perhaps the lack of human representations (or depictions of the deceased) stemmed from broader Christian rhetoric in these local communities. Why such displays and beliefs differ from those of the Tabarkan community is uncertain, but the geographic separation between these locations suggests that such practices were localised, on a community-level, rather than being a collective behaviour of a particular provincial area. In Kébilia, the lack of figurative representations appears to be part of continued local convention, as Duval and Cintas identify two different stages of innovation, with Type I somewhere between the end of the fourth century AD and the start of the fifth century AD and Type II for the fifth century AD onwards (1958: 243). As can be seen from the photograph of the excavation (Fig. 5.13) these mosaic covers were also placed in close proximity, just as at Tabarka. It seems that figurative imagery never became part of this local repertoire. For these individuals and their living communities, commemoration using Christogrammatic monograms, such as images of roses, birds, fish and grapes with inscriptions inside a medallion or a rectangular *tabula ansata* in 'Christian' landscapes,



Figure 5.13: Mosaic covers at Kélibia, Tunisia.



Figure 5.14: Tomb mosaic from Sétif, Algeria. Sétif Archaeological Museum.

was sufficient to advertise solidarity and their Christian identity (Yasin 2009: 84; Duval and Cintas 1958). The need to distinguish personal identity through figuration was surplus to requirement.

A similar process occurred at Sétif where Yasin notes that the Sétif markers (e.g. Fig. 5.14) all either have funerary inscriptions that fill the entire marker or are a combination of epitaph and geometric pattern (2009: 86). To some extent, a sense of 'groupness' is constructed through conformity and internal homogeneity of arrangement, iconography and epitaphs within burials at these locations. These local communities then did not place great significance on the depiction of the dead. So why does North Africa, and most importantly Tabarka, have so many 'Christian' figurative burials?

5.5.5 Figurative Depictions at Leptiminus

Elsewhere in Tunisia, other figurative mosaics demonstrate a high degree of realism, offering a potentially more ‘truthful’ depiction of the dress in which Christians wanted to be shown. Importantly, though, such images are composed snapshots of sartorial behaviours and a sense of active or passive activity may contribute to a particular costume portrayal (Downs 2007: 192) – I discuss the genre of hunting imagery, an ‘active’ practice, in Chapter 6.2.3. At Leptiminus recent excavations uncovered tomb mosaics believed to date from the mid-fourth century AD to mid-fifth century AD (Lazreg *et al.* 2006: 365). Located in the Large Vaulted Room in a subterranean Christian building built next to the Roman necropolis (Lazreg *et al.* 2006: 357), these images (Fig. 5.15) seem to be deliberately sympathetic depictions of the deceased. Their burial location

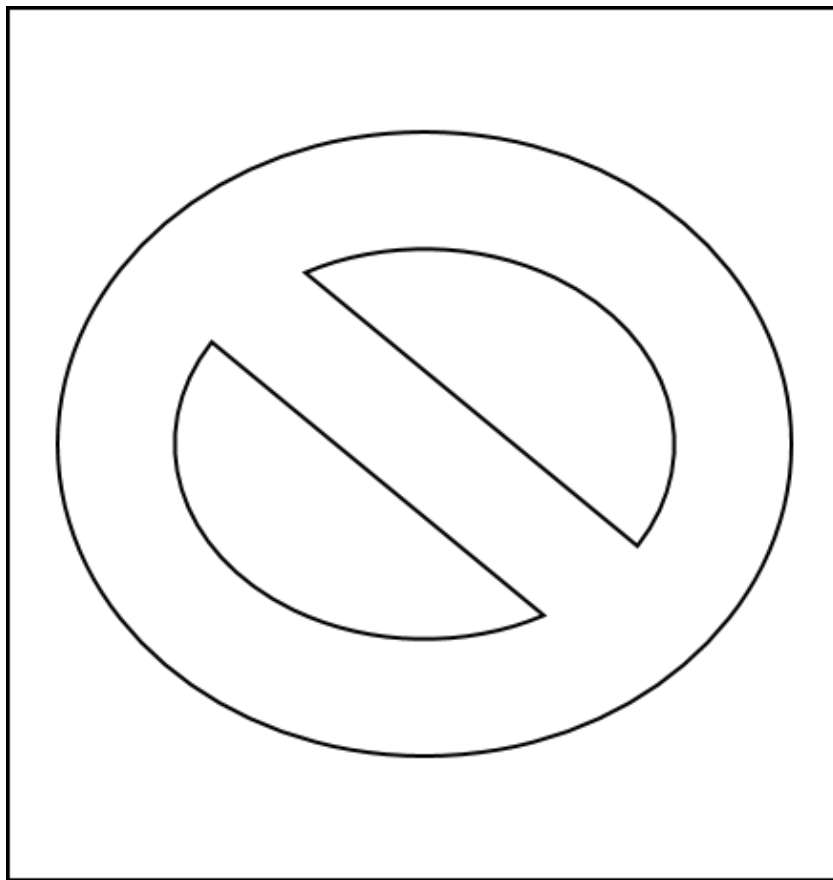


Figure 5.15: Plan of the Subterranean Early Christian Burial Complex, Leptiminus, Tunisia, with Large Vaulted Room (Red) and Small Vaulted Room (Blue).

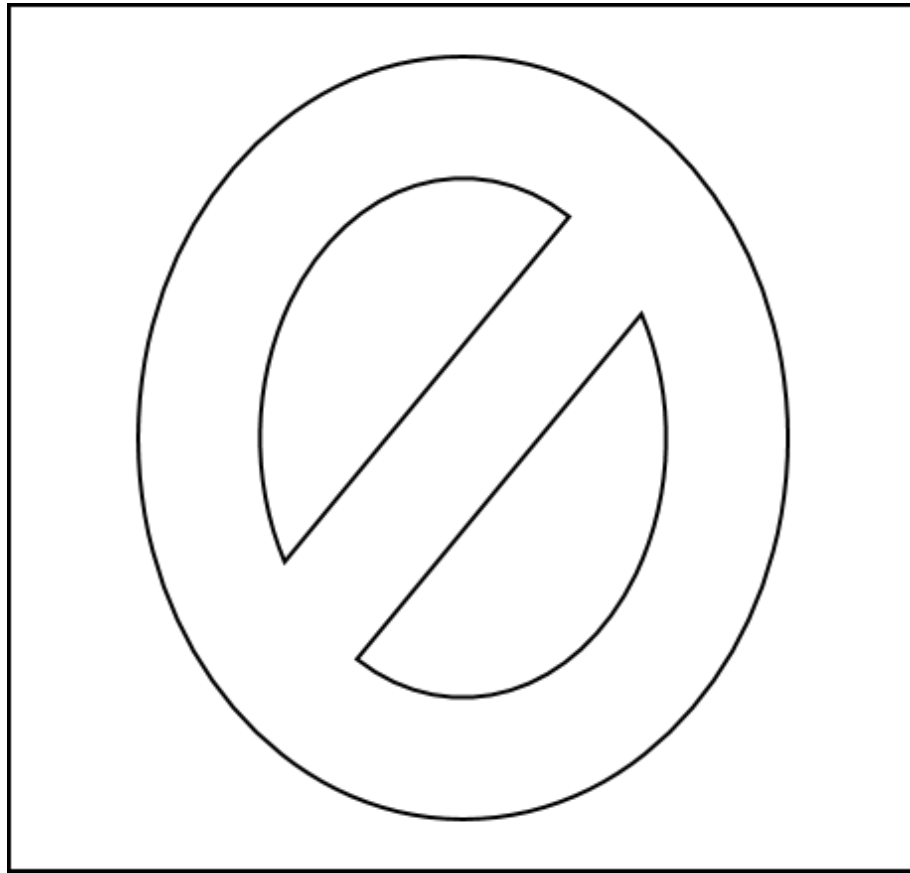


Figure 5.16: Overview of the floor of the Large Vaulted Room, Leptiminus, Tunisia. Mid- fourth to mid- fifth century AD.

(Fig. 5.16) also reflects a degree of consideration even if the burials were determined by the excavators to be '*ad hoc*' (Lazreg *et al.* 2006: 363). The tombs align with the walls and are orientated with the head to the west; there also seems to be a spatial distinction between the burial of children (to the south end of the room) and adults (to the north), as exhibited in other North African cemeteries (Lazreg *et al.* 2006: 367; Norman 2003). Only 11 of the (at least) 17 tombs in this room have been exposed leaving the possibility for better contextualisation of the positioning of covers at a later date.

The first group under discussion (Fig 5.17) comprises three female infants: Florentia, Elia Theodora and Agapia. These figures, like examples from Tabarka, are full-figure. They do not adopt an orant pose, but are shown in more narrative scenes forming a tripartite composition: inscription, figure, and symbols. Imagery on the children's graves demonstrates a range of clothing decoration across a small architectural context.

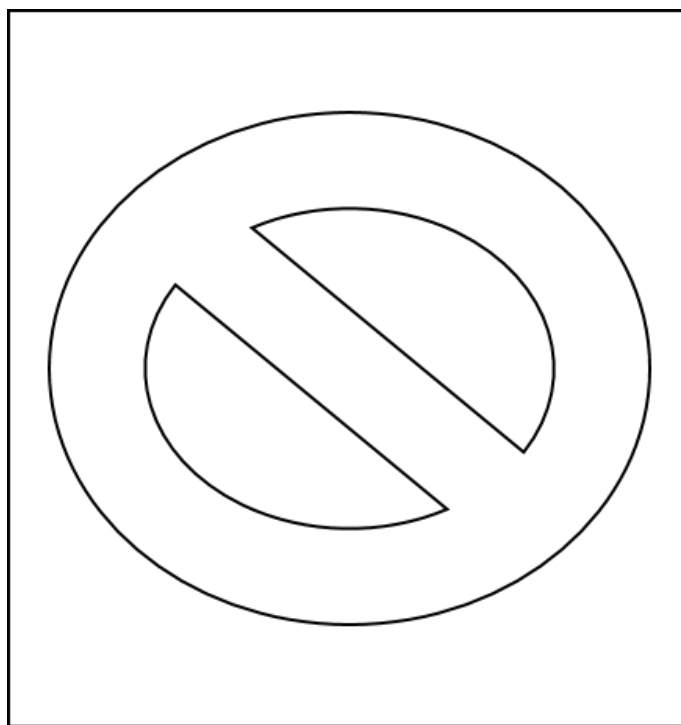


Figure 5.17: Tomb Mosaics for Florentia, Elia Theodora and Agapia, Large Vaulted Room, Leptiminus, Tunisia. Mid-fourth to mid- fifth century AD.

The oldest girl, Elia Theodora, wears a long, long-sleeved yellow tunic with multi-colour *clavi* from shoulder to hem. Behind her, a yellow and pink cloak flutters in the breeze and she wears a double row necklace around her neck. Her hair is shown as blond and curly, but still close cut. To her left, Florentia wears a similar combination of garments. Her tunic is light-coloured with thick *clavi* and her cloak is yellow and green striped. She too wears a necklace. Agapia wears a different costume. Her long white dalmatic tunic is loose at the cuffs and is decorated with thick *clavi* from shoulder to hem. In many respects, all three images are reminiscent of elements of the iconography for Crescentia from Tabarka (Fig. 5.8), whose costume echoes Agapia's tunic. Her short hair and jewellery – which, other than the name is perhaps the main gender identifier – match that of Florentia and Elia Theodora. Despite their schematic *contrapposto* poses, all three female mosaic portraits in this room convey ideas of individuality, especially when viewed together. While not presenting true portraits of the deceased, these mosaics from Leptiminus are more naturalistic than others from North Africa. There are certainly elements of idealisation, but the distinctions between the poses of the infant girls are

age-appropriate: Elia Theodora, at 14 months, stands, while Florentia and Agapia at 5 months are shown sitting on blankets and cushions. Differences in the costuming of the young girls attest to the considerable care and attention taken in creating separate and three-dimensional depictions of the deceased. The draping of their clothing befits their respective poses, although it is not possible to see quite how the cloaks are fastened around Florentia and Elia Theodora.

Despite differences in the overall figurative rendering, these three tomb covers are united in their individualism. Such distinction contrasts greatly to the figurative mosaics in another room in the complex, the Small-Vaulted Room. In contrast, a contemporaneous structure, the Small Vaulted Room, held five burials again with a West-East orientation (Fig 5.18). Less elaborate in decoration and form, only one burial – located in the corner – had evidence for mosaic use on the sarcophagus and notably this was an-iconographic in nature. This grave marker commemorated Eolius and featured a Christogram and roses. The presence of pitched-tile tombs in this room

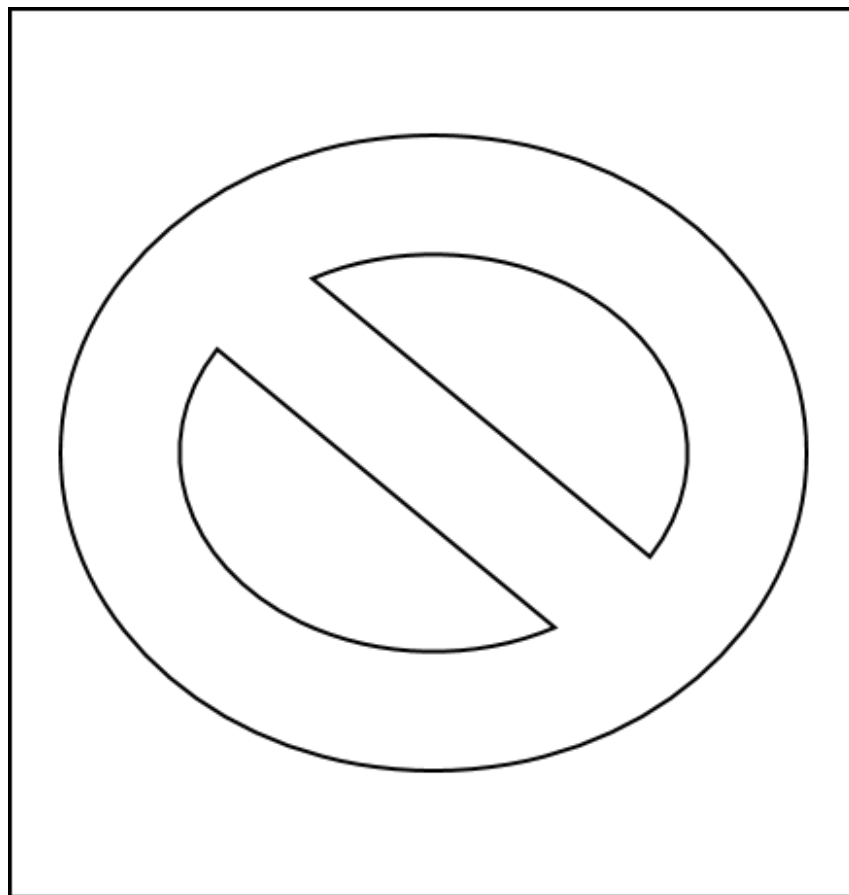


Figure 5.18: Overview of the Small Vaulted Room, Leptiminus, Tunisia. Mid- fourth to mid- fifth century AD.

attests to a divergent burial practice and the association with one such grave with the burial of an infant inside a fourth-century amphora further demonstrates the mixing of burial forms (Lazreg *et al.* 2006: 363). Nevertheless, these burials again reflect a personalised approach to interment. All the figurative tomb covers from the large vaulted room are statements of individual identity. The exclusivity of this room confirms this, most notably through the inclusion of these highly decorated covers alongside an-epigraphic covers (made of marble slabs). Assuming that financial capital – wealth or status – affected the use of this space, the figurative commemorations are seen as a deliberate choice on the part those organising the burial. In short, someone decided to include an image of the deceased or associated iconography on these covers.

5.5.6 Engaging with Funerary Depictions

The formulation of funerary practices in fourth- and fifth-century early Christian North Africa was a dynamic process and encouraged a re-configuration of social affiliations, whereby the Christian community confronted traditional familial ties (see Yasin 2005). While Tabarkan funerary covers present us with clearly defined expressions of religious identity, they only portray one perspective; yet these covers were nevertheless meaningful identity constructions. Funerary commemorations are useful bodies of evidence for understanding sartorial behaviours because such actions endorse collective perspectives. This recognition also highlights their communicative nature. Speaking about dress imagery on first- to fourth-century funerary monuments in Rhine-Moselle region, Rothe notes:

The everyday scenes and personalised portraits display an unmistakable urge on the part of the commissioners not only to portray wealth but also to give the viewer a snapshot, however fleeting, of their lives. The fact that the information used to construct an identity for the people on these stones may have been subject to selection and standardisation does not detract from their value... In other words, through the clothing chosen for the portraits on our gravestones, we have the unique opportunity to observe how the people of the Rhine-Moselle region saw themselves (2009: 29-30).

This statement is equally applicable to my North African Christian context, especially considering the intensified interaction of these burial sites as dynamic locations of Christian ritual performed by living Christian communities.

A sermon from Augustine dating to AD 406 provides some clues to processes of negotiation surrounding burial customs, as Augustine, likely motivated by an actual request, argues that catechumens should not be buried in the same ground as Christians (August., *Serm.* 142auct). Augustine's refusal is based on 'the dispositions of their souls' (August. *Serm.* 142auct.1; Rebillard 2012: 69) and such a concession would undermine the importance of baptism and instead privilege those who could afford such a prestigious position (August., *Serm.* 142auct.1). Of course, tomb mosaics were a feature of the moneyed classes, so to some extent status and wealth contributed to such burial practices, but – according to Augustine – these were not to be regarded as the most important feature. This rhetoric is at odds with the degree of iconographic personalisation visible in Tabarka. Reconciling these two 'versions' of Christian practice is possible, however, if we consider that funerary customs connected the dead with the living. In death, Christian theology proposed eternal life for the faithful. It was through the final 'stylisation' of the dead that this salvation could be proclaimed. Yet, as Augustine's exhortations demonstrate, this was an ongoing point of contestation both of clerical exposition and of congregational response.

As a place of interaction of living with the dead, funerary sites embedded the dead into Christian rituals and became 'venues for commemoration of the dead through ritualised invocation or through physical memorials' (Yasin 2009: 47). Christian authorities were as concerned with outlining acceptable forms of interaction with these burial spaces as with the implications for the deceased. Writing to Aurelius, Bishop of Carthage in AD 392, Augustine urges his colleague to re-ignite his attempts to curb funerary cult activities, specifically the celebration of funerary banquets, *parentalia*, with offering tables, *mensae*. This inherited Pagan tradition saw offerings of food and drink given to the dead at the time of burial and on specific occasions throughout the year (Jensen 2008). In Augustine's opinion, such behaviours demonstrated 'carnal taints and weaknesses' (*Ep.* 22.1). Tertullian had previously censured such behaviours as akin to idolatry (Tert., *De spect.* 13; *Apol.* 13). In Augustine's time this practice endured in North Africa, unlike other areas of the Christian world where feasting at the tombs had

been eradicated. Augustine's *Confessiones* notes that when attending a celebration at a martyr's shrine in Milan, Ambrose of Milan had censured Augustine's mother, Monica, who he told to distribute her gifts of food and drink to the poor, rather than offering them to the dead (*Conf.* 6.2). In a similar way, Augustine sought to bring moral reform to his congregation and he offers new interpretations of practice, rather than outrightly prohibiting them (van der Meer 1961: 517). By asking Aurelius for assistance, Augustine hoped that Carthaginian behaviour might act as an example for all (*Ep.* 22.1.4). Rebillard (2009) has recently queried the extent of ecclesiastical involvement in and organisation of Christian burial and this poses the question of how far we can accept Augustine's writings – and similar documents – as reflections of common contemporary practice.

In a sermon of AD 405, Augustine suggests progress had been successful at Carthage in stemming disorderly partying (August. *Serm.* 311.5-6). He makes no mention of the existence of funerary markers – iconic or aniconic – in his writings, so it is difficult to substantiate how keenly his suggestions targeted areas like Tabarka. In fact, his own pastoral concerns about funerary behaviours aligned with his emphasis on worldly actions, like almsgiving (Rose 2013: 43; Potthoff 2017: 150-151). Augustine even used his own mother's funeral wishes to exemplify this consideration: 'she took no thought to have her body sumptuously wound up, or embalmed with spices; nor was she ambitious of any choice of monument or cared to be buried in her own country' (*Conf.* 9.12.36; Rebillard 2009: 130). Augustine's opinion on burial must be read in the wider context of his discussions to modify contemporary Christian practice, such as the benefits of *depositio ad santos* (e.g. Rose 2013: 37-43). If the presumed martyrial function of the Chapel of the Martyrs at Tabarka is correct, Augustine's reforms may have targeted one such location, although not directly. He would later note explicitly that funerary customs were more for the benefit of the living than the dead, while still maintaining the significance of the body as a representation of the 'nature of the man' (*Cur. mort.* 4, 5). Augustine's focus on these locations as places of daily relevance could also attest to the prominence of mosaic tomb covers as frequented memorials to the deceased. In this way, the clothing images on these monuments were part of the performance of remembrance. Personalisation in these images would no doubt provide a notion of individualisation especially pertinent on specific days of commemoration for the dead.

5.6 Clerical and Monastic Dress

How, though, did Christian leaders and clerics use dress in their performances of Christian identity? As *exempla* of practice, the dress rhetoric associated with clergy provides another form of Christian dress in later Roman North Africa. Despite numerous examples of Patristic writings outlining correct sartorial behaviours for lay-persons, there are very few references mentioning articles of clerical dress. This lack of an explicit clerical costume hinders the identification of clergy in iconography. As Augustine's opinion in his *Regulae* – the *Ordo monasterii*, the *Praeceptum* and *Epistula* 211, collectively termed *Rules* and featuring various masculine and feminine versions – shows, monastic uniform was not a requirement for his community, and while the Augustinian oeuvre makes use of clothing, there is sadly no extended exposition on clerical garments.

The absence of formal discussions results in problems of modern interpretation, especially imagery, where the 'reading' of the image is limited by social and cultural knowledge. This is particularly true in the case of the Victoria and the Scribe mosaic at Tabarka (Fig. 5.12) where the more secular interpretation is based on a different reading of the inscription, as well as with reference to clothing. Conventionally, the cloth around the male's neck is described as an *orarium* (e.g. Patout Burns and Jensen 2014; Gauckler 1906). Yet, such sartorial terminology is heavily-charged. Gauckler identifies similarities between this scarf-like article and those worn in a late second-century banquet scene (Fig. 5.19) from Sidi-bou-Saïd, in Carthage (1906: 199 n.4; *Inv. Tun.* 764; Reinach 1889). Equally, La Blanchère had previously observed the frequency of such articles of clothing in the mosaics at Tabarka, especially combined with a *colobium* (1897: 17), whereas Downs has noted their absence in such an ensemble, instead arguing for its combination with the dalmatic tunic (2007). One source of confusion stems from the inaccurate use of terminology in both modern and ancient contexts. It is possible that an *orarium*, as a long fringed article worn around the neck, reflected particular religious distinctions and broadly equates to the modern concept of a stole. Ferrandus, writing in the early sixth century AD (Leyser 2007: 178), for instance, applauds Fulgentius of Ruspe for never



Figure 5.19: Attendant dressed in an orarium, Banquet Mosaic, Sidi-bou-Said, Carthage. Late second century AD. Bardo Museum.

wearing the *orarium* ‘like other bishops’, but instead using a leather belt ‘like a monk’ (*Vita Fulg. Rusp.* 15).

If interpreted in this way, it is surprising that on the caisson of Dardanius at Tabarka there is no epigraphic reference to his clerical position (Fig. 5.7). With such a prominent and elaborate tomb cover, a position of religious authority seems a logical interpretation. However, another identity designation is more likely: Dardanius was a new convert. By depicting white garments on his caisson, Dardanius emphasised the moment of his conversion and thus re-iterated his initiated Christian status. This tomb therefore disproves the hypothesis that a stole, the scarf-like textile worn around the neck, was the insignia of clergy in North Africa. Such a conclusion becomes especially apparent when considering the dress imagery used to memorialise the youth Abundantia who also wears a stole (Fig. 5.9). Certainly, the decision to depict the deceased with such an article is purposeful, but the exact implications of this sartorial symbolism, while uncertain, did not indicate clerical status at this time.

The most logical explanation for the imprecision and unexclusive use of *orarium* is that it did not necessarily correspond with one particular clothing item in contemporary parlance. Januarilla’s cited dowry, one of the Albertini Tablets, lists an *orarium*. A Christian identity for this bride is neither confirmed nor denied by the

analysis of her dowry items – her clothing, of course, would not necessarily signal a Christian identity – so it is more likely that the entry for *orarium* should be read akin to a kerchief, as in Conant (2012: 281). Thus, during the fourth and fifth centuries AD the term *orarium* possessed a degree of ambiguity. It was said that the emperor Aurelian distributed ‘*oraria* (handkerchiefs) to the Roman people to be waved in showing approval’ (SHA, *Aurel.* 48). This reference acts as a precursor to the association of this garment with religious activity. At this time, the *orarium* was associated with public events. Incidentally, this might also account for its depiction in mosaic iconography as noted by La Blanchère above. Conventionally, Fulgentius’ *orarium* is associated with a *pallium* – as in Eno’s translation (1997: 33 n.41) – highlighting the medieval iteration of these garments, used as a liturgical vestment and a marker of a bishop’s office (Schoenig 2016: 3-4). While the fourth-century Council of Laodicea forbade chanters, readers and sub-deacons from wearing the *orarium* (Syn. Laodic. Can. 22-23; Daniel-Hughes 2017: 82), as a measure against its usurpation by lower clergy, such restrictions were apparently not enforced in North Africa – if they even had existed. As we have seen in Tertullian’s rhetoric, the *pallium* as a mantle, could be marshalled in third-century North Africa to signify a religious identity, but by the time of Caesarius of Arles, in the mid sixth century AD, the *pallium* was a woollen stole (1.42). It is clear, therefore, that during the period where mosaic commemoration was popular at Tabarka, the fourth century AD, the garment conventionally termed an *orarium* had multiple associations leading to ambiguous use.

This then questions whether particular items of clothing were sartorial signals of Christian clerical roles in North Africa. If this is the case, it is interesting that in a cemetery church in Henchir Sokrine, near Leptiminus – where figurative mosaics are, as seen, a tradition – the grave marker of the presbyters Pascasius and Ianuarius are aniconic. For such an elaborately decorated tomb mosaic, it is surprising that depictions of the deceased are not included. In this instance, inscriptions were sufficient to convey the clerical identity of the men, in place of the visualisation of specific garments (AE 1992 1789; Bejaoui 1992: 335)⁶. The same may be true for the tomb commemoration of Crescentius the Deacon (Fig. 5.20) from Tabarka (*Inv. Tun.* 1024). Although exhibiting

⁶ *Pascasius pre(sbyter) vixit in pace annis LX // Ianuarius pre(s)b(yster) vixit in pace an(n)is LXXXV.*

a complex compositional format, with an extended epitaph and intriguing paradisial iconography, Crescentius is not shown in an orant pose. This lack of figurative portraiture anonymises his personal identity and subsumes his entire identity into his religious designation. Such behaviour mirrors the epigraphic representations of Bishops Alexander and Cresconius mentioned above, where the standardisation of vocabulary constructs a sense of communal identity.

Sartorial rhetoric espoused by African Church authorities posited clothing practices as an extension and signifier of morality. Dressing practices for monks were equally uncoded, seen in symbolic terms and eliciting spiritual resonance in clergy and layperson alike. With the ongoing debate and negotiation of the authority and power of bishops and other clergy during the fifth century AD (e.g. Brown 2002), Augustine's deployment of clothing metaphors is representative of his attitude to sartorial



Figure 5.20: Mosaic cover for Crescentius the Deacon, Chapel of the Martyrs, Tabarka, Tunisia. Second quarter of the fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

behaviours more generally. Rather than adopt a formal uniform, monks were to embody early Christian ideals and make these notions manifest through their sartorial actions: 'let not your clothing attract attention, nor seek to please by your garments but by your behaviours' (*Reg.* 3.4.1). Of course, by this Augustine did not advocate a complete disregard for dress, but rather put clothing secondary, as the embodiment of his vision of living. Augustine recognised the role of the monastic community as a mirror for Christian conduct, explicitly drawing on James 1:23-25 (*Reg.* 3.8.2; Martin 2005: 170) and such terminology encouraged introspection and external judgement (Hofer 2012: 270). Clothing regulations for monastic clergy – as proposed by Augustine – also served as a mechanism to counteract the growing alienation of monastic persons from the whole Christian community (Leyser 2000: 7). In fact, the Augustinian brand of Christianity de-centred the clergy in its construction of the religious community as a *corpus permixtum*, mixed body (e.g. *In. psalm.* 99.13; Lawless 2000: 143 n.42).

Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 132 encapsulates the close association constructed, in his opinion, between monastic life and dress rhetoric. Using the cultural knowledge of clothing care and preparation, Augustine re-iterates Eph. 5: 27: by figuring the Church as a sacerdotal garment, Augustine placed monks at the neck 'where the collar opens', with the Apostles and martyrs as the beard above them (*In. psalm.* 133.9). Employing charity and unity as the 'ointment' or 'fragrant oil' that runs down from the Head (Christ), he shows that it continues down the beard and to the edge of the 'garment'. The importance of such descriptions for my discussion lies not just in the utilisation of sartorial grammar as a vehicle for meaning, but also in the assumptions about social knowledge of textiles. Augustine uses the analogy of the fulling and cleaning of clothes, as it was a familiar framework for his audience. But his choice of this imagery has more significance: fulling suggests an external actor cleansing the cloth. In this way, the Church is a polluted garment that necessitates constant preservation, through fulling and cleansing. This exposition of Psalm 132, delivered in either Winter 411-412 (Zarb 1948) or Winter 415-416 (Le Landais 1953), demonstrates the beginnings of Augustine's formulation of his monastic ideal. His ideas about clothing exemplify his religious perspective.

Augustine's use of dress and bodily imagery was not an innovation, but a convenient means by which to communicate his theology using a familiar vocabulary:

unity through collective purpose and unity through collective action. In his attempts to re-formulate earlier desert progenitors like St. Anthony (August., *Conf.* 8.6), Augustine re-calibrated the ascetic lifestyle to suit his context, arguing for a regulated community in the style of Acts 4:32: 'Nobody called anything their own, but they had all things in common' (Kenney 2012: 285). Thus, clothing fostered a sense of belonging (Brown 2012: 176-177); the use of the garment analogy not only referenced Christ's seamless garment (John 19:23-24), but also constructed a sense of community through actual sartorial behaviours, like the use of common clothing stores as discussed above (August., *Serm.* 356). On a practical level, Augustine's *Regulae* outlines the barest logistics of dress allocation in monastic communities where, to some degree, the wardrobe in a monastic centre was to be an organised enterprise. Augustine offered guidelines to a convent at Hippo: 'Have your clothing kept under the care of one or two or as many as may be needed to shake out the garments in order to preserve them from moths' (August., *Ep.* 211). He also chastises consecrated virgins who bemoan the fact that they receive another sister's clothing:

Whenever something is offered to you to wear in accord with the season, do not be concerned, if that is possible, whether each one of you receives back what she had given up, or something else which another had worn, so long as no one is refused what she needs. If strife and murmurings arise among you from this source, when one complains that she has received something worse than she had previously worn, and thinks she is slighted in being dressed as another of her Sisters was, let this prove how far you are from that inward 'holy attire' (August., *Ep.* 211).

More secure dating of the individual components of the *Regulae* would provide better contextualisation and reading of the gender dynamics of these monastic rules and establish if Augustine was initially influenced by male or female behaviour. While his correspondence with the convent at Hippo might first appear to echo Tertullian's criticism of female frivolity and preoccupation with personal appearance, it is likely that Augustine sought to guide this particular community. In this way, gender had a lesser influence on his formulation of sartorial rules, especially when compared to earlier Christian authorities, and instead Augustine used dress as a mechanism for promoting group cohesion.

Throughout Augustine's *Regulae* and other writings (such as Sermons 355 and 356), clothing is used as an indicator of moral predilection for both men and women. Augustine uses dress to substantiate his claim that he came to the clergy poor: 'I brought nothing with me; I came to this Church with only the clothes I was wearing at the time' (August., *Serm.* 355.2); and he continues this theme in the well-known excerpt of his rejection of costly apparel in favour of that suited to his position (*Serm.* 356). This frequently cited passage brings Augustine's conceptualisation of clothing into closer focus. These statements are less about Augustine's own personal disposition and more realistically rhetorical manifestations of his conception of collective monastic behaviours. Although such occasions have the result of shaping Augustine as a distinctive individual, this was not its original intention. Thus, despite the absence of a formal clerical uniform, the formulation of monastic identity through the communal storage and distribution of clothing was a marker of participation in Augustine's particular form of social and eschatological beliefs. In short, monastic life was actualised in processes such as these clothing regulations which encoded a sense of solidarity.

5.7 Conclusion

Early Christian communities living in North Africa c. AD 200-500 had a variety of clothing mechanisms at their disposal by which to advertise and confirm their Christian identity. While the Christian *habitus* was not articulated through a dedicated 'Christian' garment, often the uses of dress – not an individual's appearance *per se* – signalled religious affiliation. The dressing behaviours upheld as indicative of Christian characterisation highlight the practices that were infused with religious significations as well as where, and how, religious difference was constructed. An apparent discrepancy in 'written-clothing' and 'image-clothing' identifies the contexts in which specific sartorial forms were asserted and the areas where they were repressed or considered unnecessary.

In many ways, the development of Christian clothing practices mirrored the evolution of North African Christianity with earlier dress performances, such as Perpetua's clothing actions, re-affirming martyrdom through the inversion of normative practice, itself a reflection of the rejection of pagan authority and belief. In later years

when Christianity became an accepted and then dominant institution, ideal clothing actions were intended to further the Christian agenda and were often conceptualised as an extension of social behaviours. Patristic authors, primarily motivated by eschatological and soteriological concerns, sought to advise on correct sartorial behaviours. By investigating North African dress habits, we uncover the dynamics of Christian groups in relation to non-Christian communities as well as intra-group subtleties. This is especially pertinent during times of religious schism or controversy, as witnessed in the Vandal confrontation of 'Catholic' and 'Arian' groups, where the expression of differing conceptions of orthodoxy were manifested in certain clothing actions which re-iterated power structures. As a communicative tool, clothing behaviours fashioned identity with relation to an audience and the representational modes seen to express a Christian identity provided advantageous cultural strategies. How these changed during times of significant religious transformation also does much to reveal the negotiation of Christian *praxis*.

Clearly, the performance of Christian identity was not limited to a personal level and Christian dress behaviours frequently re-iterated collective identity. Key to Christian rhetoric was the idea of *pudicitia*, or chastity, expressed both in inward characterisation and in clothing terms. While this functioned to benefit the individual, their actions also interacted with a wider Christian rhetoric that increasingly pronounced communal significance: the individual was often subsumed in the broader milieu of Christian action. One constant throughout the third to fifth centuries AD –white baptismal robes – demonstrates the symbolism inscribed into particular dressing actions that, while temporary, re-affirmed the significations of the conversion to Christian belief. Derived from cultural constructs, not Biblical prescriptions, such clothes were thus products of the contemporary interpretation of Scripture and imply the social necessity for such garments to exist. The uniformity of this garb, when situated in the Christian context that seemingly advocated for sartorial austerity, also confirms that clothing differentiation was not apparently a primary concern for church authorities.

However, surviving evidence for Christian dress in North Africa suggests the potential disparity between sartorial rhetoric and actual practice. Christian discourse espoused a sense of religious solidarity, of shared attitudes towards clothing the body

and the use of clothing as a caritative commodity. Acts of almsgiving, including clothing-gifts or the production of textiles to donate to the poor, promoted moderated sartorial actions; narratives of complete ascetic transformation encouraged more substantial self-dispossession, made visible through the clothed body. In such actions, the materiality of clothing was emphasised, and the resultant 'real-clothing' especially relevant. At the same time, however, the visual diversity of tomb commemorations at sites like Tabarka showcases the potential for personal memorialisation of individuals using dress. While funerary location and form imparted a sense of group identity, the individualisation of figurative tomb commemorations suggests a dress grammar that communicated identity. Nuanced elements of this grammar are largely inaccessible due to its incomplete corpus of evidence, but such clothing details once signified a range of social identities and statuses. The adoption of certain clothing ensembles – such as the tunic and *paenula* worn by men – attests to the interaction of artistic and religious conventions and the juxtaposition between pastoral agendas and the actual North Africa experience.

From the third to the fifth centuries AD, Christian dress rhetoric blossomed in Africa. Over time, the visibility and authority of Christianity communities increased as this was mirrored by an intensification of clothing rhetoric in many different forms. Although there was no obvious 'Christian' wardrobe, Christian identity could be projected using certain mechanisms and the analysis of these strategies appreciates the dynamic relationship between religious identity and clothing. While the vocal commentary provided by Church authorities often professes criticism of clothing practices, how far such issues were shared social anxieties, rather than a mechanism of maintaining social authority, is a significant idea. Christians in late Roman North Africa were exposed to a spectrum of sartorial behaviours in visual, textual and physical media. Dress-codes functioned to regulate society; the most vocal echoes of this dress therefore isolate areas where clothing activities were contested and negotiated as well as the form such debates could take.

Chapter 6: Social Distinction

This chapter examines the construction and expression of social difference through sartorial behaviours, focusing on the elite milieu. It was not only physical garments that were utilised to maintain social boundaries, although such processes were no doubt important, but also practices such as mosaic decoration and clothing-gifts. The majority of my discussion focuses on North African mosaics – a highly informative category of material for exploring dress rhetoric in North Africa.

My analysis starts by looking at how Diocletian's Price Edict organised and articulated clothing differences and I link these conceptualisations to mechanisms in mosaic iconography, which fashioned social distinction through clothing depictions and the genre of the image employed. Next, I establish how, from the mid-second century AD, North African mosaic iconography evolved as well as how the corpus of Four Seasons mosaics demonstrates a shift in attitudes towards presenting personifications, eventually culminating in the popularity of genre depictions, which necessitated the use of genre scenes. I then contextualise this analysis in the wider discussion of North African *domus* and patron identity, first, through the choreography of elite practice where their elite lifestyles were represented in their domestic decoration and, secondly, by examining hunting mosaics. Hunt imagery is a very characteristic feature of North African mosaic designs and how clothing is visualised in these pavements is highly instructive. I look at the sartorial grammar deployed in the Departure for the Hunt mosaic from Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia, which, when misinterpreted, can misrepresent the social economies embedded in the iconography. I then turn the lens to what the wider body of hunt imagery from North Africa can tell us about conceptions of dress rhetoric and elite identity; mosaic designs dating from Vandal-era Africa offer evidence for the continued use of hunting motifs as a modes of aristocratic visual, and literary, representation. I also compare the North African imagery with eastern examples that include naming inscriptions to demonstrate the underlying nature of *paideia* and the cultural dynamics of the elite landscape in North Africa. Clothing-gifts provide the final thread of study. I scrutinise an interesting ARS *lanx* and its iconography to extrapolate

notions of how social distinction was re-affirmed through dress, in both garments and modes of commemoration.

My discussion shows that North African elites employed a range of practices to maintain and express their social distinction including, most prominently, domestic spaces and their decoration, which were important foci for identity projection. The sartorial grammar enacted in these activities highlights mechanisms for displaying and performing social distinction in North Africa and the fact that such processes occur throughout the third to sixth centuries demonstrates that, despite changing political groups, dress rhetoric still functioned as an important socio-cultural tool.

6.1 Constructing Social Difference through Clothing

Since dress was thought to reflect a person's inner character, North Africans, as part of their *habitus*, often broadcast their position and status through their appearance. Differences in clothing quality maintained social difference and dressing styles aided social boundaries while also highlighting social diversity, distinguishing rich from poor. A labourer engaged in manual work would dress in a short tunic (Larsson Lovén 2017: 147), not only to aid his or her movements, but also as a visual confirmation of their social status. Artemidorus, writing in the late second century AD, even divined that the wearing of a short tunic predicted loss (*Oneir.* 2.3). Slaves, lacking in legal personhood, do not feature prominently as actors in these practices and processes of marginalisation excluded them from such active modes of display. In fact, slave clothing was often a mechanism to communicate the master's status, thereby re-iterating servile status (George 2002: 43-44). The eschewing of a slave uniform was by senatorial decision: it denied slaves participation in and knowledge of their own social identity, perhaps even discouraging slave uprisings as it concealed the high percentage of slaves in Roman society (Sen., *Clem.* 1.24.1; Bradley 1988: 477). This was an effective mechanism of social control, but it obscured visible signs of status, blurring the lines between free and slave (George 2002: 44). However, usurpation of clothing was a popular *topos* in Roman literature, signalling contemporary Roman decadence (e.g. App., *B Civ.* 2.120) and

continued to be exploited as a literary device in the third century AD, as was previously seen in Tertullian's derision of social climbers who appropriate the dress of higher status groups (*De pall.* 4.8.3).

In theory, hierarchies of clothing quality reflected social differentiation and expressed social gradations. For instance, quality plays a large role in the division of garments in Diocletian's Price Edict, promulgated in AD 301 to fix maximum prices for a range of commodities. Services in the Edict thus give a degree of credence to literary references to locales with particular textile reputations: Tertullian mentions areas famed for their wool (*De pall.* 3.6.1). The majority of clothing articles in the Edict have first and second quality options, although wool weavers are noted as working on wool of third-quality (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 21.4), and linen also has a third-quality (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 26), but itself is sub-divided into that which is inferior to the 'aforesaid third quality' (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 26.7). The Edict also mentions coarser linen yarn that is 'for the use of common people and slaves', which again is sub-divided into three qualities (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 26.10). How obvious such qualitative distinctions were to merchant or consumer is uncertain, but literary sources suggest that the Roman viewer was adept at noticing such distinctions, even if such understandings were subjective. After all, what good is using clothing to express social difference if it is not easily recognisable? A reference in an early-fifth century letter from Synesius of Cyrene to his brother in Ptolemais confirms this as Synesius instructs his brother to summon a travelling Attic merchant before he 'sells all these goods, or at least the finest of them' (*Syn., Ep.* 52.2). Textile garments were integrated commodities in the Roman economy and elements of status were expressed by a perceived economic value.

Yet, for dress to be an effective tool of identity communication, the 'wearer' must consider their audience. Individuals can dress themselves for their own benefit, but contact with others also re-iterates social position, transforming conceptions of sartorial distinction into physical forms of identity articulation. The translation of such ideals into the physical realm demonstrates how these differences were expressed in everyday social interactions where differences in costume claimed different social statuses. The cited late fourth- or early fifth-century Matron at her Toilette mosaic (Fig. 6.1) from the bathing complex at Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia, is one such example. This imagery



Figure 6.1: *Matron at her Toilette Mosaic, Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia. Late fourth or early fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.*

is frequently employed in modern investigations of late antique society, as it is part of a series of artefacts showing various iterations of the Venus adornment scene (see Chapter 4.1.3); the sartorial mechanisms for creating particular social identities are, however, largely ignored.

Discussions of the *Matron at her Toilette* imagery rarely fully isolate and examine the social dynamics at play. Most recognise the asymmetrical power relations, identifying the central figure, the matron, as a higher status figure compared to her two attendants. Rose notes their poses, indicating deference to the central figure, and their more limited jewellery to support their identification as lower status (2008: 43). Yet, Rose frequently uses the terminology 'slave' (Rose 2008: 43), which, while conveying a sense of social differentiation, misrepresents the iconography. The figure on the right is shown wearing a necklace and bracelet. A similar bracelet adorns the right arm of the figure on the left. This is a display of conspicuous wealth through the varying of ornaments (Rose 2006: 101). As such, the two figures represent attendants, not slaves. Métraux mistakenly confuses the gaping sleeves of the dalmatic tunics with a 'scarf-like piece of embroidered cloth' draped over the elbows. In an attempt to recover a sense

of intimacy of the ‘female interior scene’, he suggests, therefore, that these head-scarves were accessories, necessary only when outdoors and thus, set inside, the two women do not require a head-covering since they are relatives of the *domina* (Métraux 2008: 278). Arguably, such an opinion reads too much into this iconography to establish the matron’s historical situation, although it does acknowledge how clothing can be mobilised as a status communicator: whatever the actual status of the attendants their costume is not the focus of the imagery, but serves to enhance the status of the *domina*. The mosaic gives an impression of layers of textiles for the matron’s *colobium* and, overall, her costume visually conveys notions of wealth and propriety. The rich and multi-coloured textiles set alongside the wider cultural associations of the Venus iconography confirm her participation in elite behaviours. Differentiations in costume distinguish the statuses of the attendants from their mistress and re-iterates the range of clothing options available to the female group; this imagery is a visual representation and not a literal snapshot of historical reality. Still, pertinent social dynamics are evident. In contrast to their mistress, the female attendants wear full-length dalmatic tunics with wide flowing sleeves, tucked into belts. This establishes their position as attendants and visually signals their need to move freely – there is no evidence to suggest that dalmatic tunics were considered to belong to a lower social status than sleeveless or long-sleeved counterparts, as the *tabula dotis* of Geminia Januarilla attests (see Chapter 4.1.3). The identical sartorial depiction of the attendants further anonymises their identities to emphasise the individuality of the matron.

A similar strategy is employed in the Dominus Julius Mosaic (Fig. 6.2), where the *domina* is shown in two distinct outfits while her attendant wears the same clothing in both episodes. The clothing depictions in this mosaic ascribe social difference to the women and their appearance manifests their social roles. This allows Dunbabin to comment that the *domina*’s elegant dress is ‘undoubtedly of silk’ (1999: 322). Such clothing serves to emphasise the *domina*’s wealth, rejecting the prominence of the *luxuria* trope as found in literary discourse. Depicted already bedecked in a necklace, this additional garland emphasises her wealth and her jewelled ornamentation. This episode’s composition also calls to mind Venus motifs (Merlin 1921: 109 n.4), but the mosaic’s physical context and narrative places such practice in the mortal realm. The



Figure 6.2: *Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. Late fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.*

variety of the garments not only displays the wealth of the proprietors in real-life but, more importantly, suggests an accompanying significance and recognition of this variation within the contemporary audience. Time and energy have been expended to portray different forms of clothing in the mosaic medium.

As a communicative architectural feature, mosaic iconography was mobilised to enforce social ideals and normative social behaviours. As Brown notes, ‘we are dealing with art *by* the rich that was devoted with particular zest to the theme of *being* rich’ (2012: 194). Mosaic designs might also re-iterate dynamics of social status, not only in sartorial differentiation, but also in the wider connotations of the iconography. A curious mosaic fragment (Fig. 6.3) from a vestibule of a house in Kélibia, given a fourth-century date, is such an example that suggests that some North African elites exploited enslaved workforces to garner income. This mosaic depicts a shoemaker or tailor who appears in ankle chains (Slim 2001: 477-480; Lavagne 2003: 42). The individual’s exact occupation is ambiguous as the inscription refers to *sartor*, but includes *instrumentum sutorium*, or shoe-related paraphernalia, suspended above the figure’s head. The term

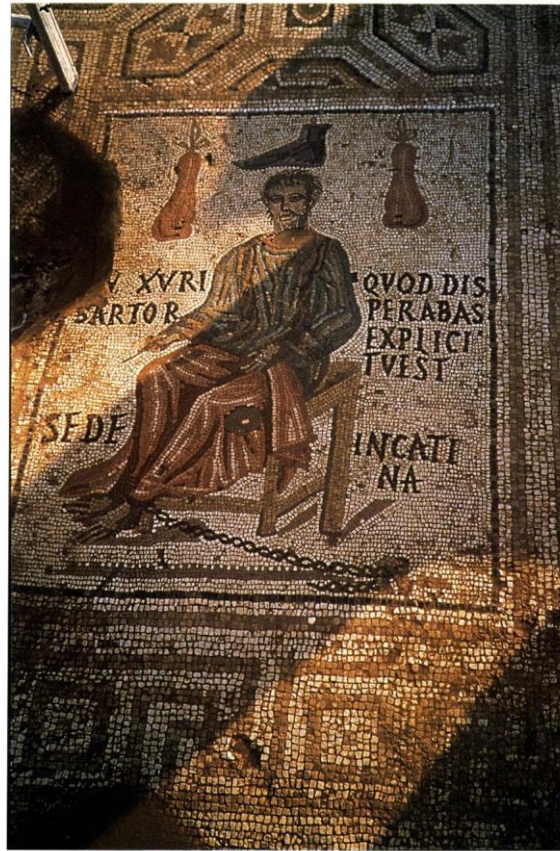


Figure 6.3: Sartor Mosaic, Kélibia, Tunisia. Fourth century AD.

sartor can be read as ‘tailor’, as in the sense deployed in Diocletian’s Price Edict of AD 301 referring to a sewing needle (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 16.12a), but Lavagne (2003: 50) recognises that other African inscriptions show a preference for *vestifex* or *vestiarius* instead – although the term is used at Cirta: *Sartor arenarius magister* (CIL 8.7158). The contradiction between image and inscription is puzzling and highlights methodological issues of simplistically extracting practice from visual imagery. More significant, however, is the iconography’s domestic context, which implies that the patron felt such imagery expressed pertinent identity associations. Certainly, other higher status individuals also appear to be involved with textile production, including Alfius Caecilianus, a former *duumvir* of Abthungi in AD 303, whom Optatus notes ‘had gone to Zama to procure linen with Saturninus’ (Optat., *App.* 2.4). Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what operation Caecilianus was running: Barnes suspects an omission

of a noun in the text, identifying precisely what form this linen took (2010: 134); Jones read this reference as linen yarn, suggesting that a later reference to ‘workmen’ did not distinguish between free or enslaved (1966: 284; *Optat.*, *App.* 2.8). Whether Caecilianus’ workers were free or not, it is interesting to note his own involvement with processes of textile production and this correlates with the Sartor Mosaic at Kélibia, which purports to identify the patron as involved with textile manufacture.

6.2 Dress Iconography in Mosaics

6.2.1 *Development of Mosaic Iconography in North Africa: the Four Seasons*

The North African region is now well-known for its vibrant mosaics which, from the third century AD onwards, often depict scenes of everyday life (Dunbabin 1978: 24; Ghalia 2006). Transformations in mosaic iconography, beginning in the mid-second century AD, show an increasing desire on the part of some patrons for a sense of realism, conveyed through a shift in the representation of personifications. In this regard, an exploration of the Four Seasons imagery – a genre type especially prominent in the North African mosaic corpus – shows how the visual *koine* increasingly depicted the bodies of these Seasons. This was eventually superseded by highly complex compositions showing patrons actively participating in their own elite genre scenes, such as hunting (see below). These elites no longer wished to display their elite status through personifications or Season depictions, but rather by direct allusions to their immediate environments.

Seasonal imagery takes many forms in African mosaic iconography (Slim 1995: 4), but overall the Four Seasons corpus, which dates from the mid-second century AD to the late fourth century AD, illustrates a shift from more traditional *horae* or busts to full-figures (Parrish 1995). While Dunbabin argues that Four Seasons imagery is ‘much too standardised to offer scope for realistic features or direct observation of contemporary life’ (1978: 11), this motif actually provides a window for comparing elite mosaic practice, especially pertinent for a social group where the display of *paideia* fundamentally influenced social relations and of elite interaction and knowledge (Elsner

2013). Four Seasons iconography was popular in other artistic media (Hanfmann 1951), and this developing dress iconography in mosaics reveals more about contemporary dress rhetoric than the bust or full-length figures did. Of course, the evolution of such imagery was not a linear progression nor an automatic transition, but a progressive change as is apparent when surveying the extant corpus.

Mosaics from the urban centre of El Djem, Tunisia, best demonstrate the progression from bust imagery to full-length figures. Almost one third of the Season mosaics excavated in North Africa – Dunbabin gives a total of over 50 (1978: 110 n.8) – have been recovered from El Djem (Parrish 1984: 17), suggesting a particular resonance of this genre iconography in the area. Further, the status argued for this locale as an innovator of Four Season imagery highlights the role of its workshops in the evolution of imagery (Parrish 1984: 15, 83). Previously, David Parrish highlighted that Winter is nearly always shown wearing a hooded cloak, perhaps an act of purposeful sartorial difference constructed in opposition to the other Seasons; he identified pre-existing iconographic traditions whereby Spring, Summer and Autumn *horae* from Greek art were associated with harvests and particular types of vegetation. In contrast, Winter, as later addition and lacking associated vegetation, was depicted with reference to climate, hence the warm clothing (1984: 30). These conclusions built upon his earlier attempts (1979) to establish the existence of standardised Four Seasons clothing through the isolation of two examples of ‘atypical dress’, but such conclusions are, of course, vast generalisations. Nevertheless, Parrish’s research offers some points of interest and can be situated in the wider discussion of North Africa sartorial practice in the third to fifth centuries AD.

An early example of a Season mosaic is the Annus and the Four Seasons Mosaic (Fig. 6.4) from Room A of the House of the Dionysiac Procession (Parrish 1981). Found in the south-western quarter of the city, the mosaic dates, according to interpretation of the design, to c. AD 140-160 (Foucher 1963: 103; Bullo and Ghedini: Thysdrus 11). Based in the apparent opulence of the interior decoration and that of adjoining rooms,



Figure 6.4: Annus and the Four Seasons Mosaic, House of the Dionysiac Procession, El Djem. c. AD 140-160. Bardo Museum.

Room A likely functioned as an assembly room or *triclinium* (Carucci 2007: 143). This mosaic features Annus in a central *tondo*, flanked by diagonally-oriented images of the Four Seasons. Annus is shown as a beardless male dressed in a red *exomis* tunic. The *exomis* was a type of tunic worn on the left shoulder, leaving the right breast bare (Lee 2015: 112). Frequently conceived of as an occupational garment (Rothe 2009: 43), used



Figure 6.5: Detail of Winter, Annus and the Four Seasons Mosaic, House of the Dionysiac Procession, El Djem. c. AD 140-160. Bardo Museum.

to imply a worker of low social status (Larsson Lovén 2017: 147), it is surprising that it features on this depiction of Annus. Here, however, it has a Classicising effect. The busts of the Four Seasons are individualised: Winter is shown as a matron in a grey-green, perhaps a *palla* pulled over her head, and wearing a necklace (Fig. 6.5); Autumn is a young woman wearing a red tunic (Fig. 6.6); Spring is dressed in a green tunic (Fig. 6.7); and Summer is nude, except for a necklace (Fig. 6.8). All the seasons have hair stylised using individualised garlands or headdresses with flowers that allude to their respective



Figure 6.6: Detail of Autumn, Annus and the Four Seasons Mosaic, House of the Dionysiac Procession, El Djem. c. AD 140-160. Bardo Museum.



Figure 6.7: Detail of Spring, Annus and the Four Seasons Mosaic, House of the Dionysiac Procession, El Djem. c. AD 140-160. Bardo Museum.

season. The uniqueness of each season is further exaggerated by the uniform dress of the *Canephorae*, who all wear different versions of long *chiton* that are belted at the bust and the hips. Again, this has a Classicising effect, drawing attention to the more contemporary dress worn by the Four Seasons. That the attributes change to depict each Season is clear, but such identification occurs alongside their associated attributes, not just from the costume itself.



Figure 6.8: Detail of Summer, Annus and the Four Seasons Mosaic, House of the Dionysiac Procession, El Djem. c. AD 140-160. Bardo Museum.

A similar individualisation occurs in the contemporaneous floor from elsewhere in the complex – the Mosaic of the Seasons, Dionysiac figures and *Xenia* (Fig 6.9) – from the *Triclinium* J (Bullo and Ghedini 2003: 303). Imagery of Dionysius and the Four Seasons forms the stem of a ‘T’-shaped composition, where interlocking circles create a series of concave diamonds of which Season personifications occupy four. Oval spaces are each filled with *xenia*. These Seasons also appear in bust form. Although the image of Summer is much damaged, a crown of wheat is still visible as well as the remains of a blue *colobium* tunic knotted at the shoulders. Spring wears a similarly stylised tunic, this time of a lighter colour. In contrast, Winter is an older woman, dressed in a dark blue tunic with a red mantle over it, and she has a crown of olive twigs. Finally, Autumn wears a *nebris* which leaves her right shoulder exposed and her headdress is made from roses. Interestingly, these costumes of the Four Seasons differ from those from the Annus and the Four Seasons mosaic, which suggests that even in rooms which were decorated for the same patron, the actual form of personifications were not necessarily uniform.

A general resemblance in personification imagery, albeit in a more complex composition, is also seen in the Mosaic of Annus, the Seasons, the Sun and the Moon (Fig. 6.10), located in the House of Silenus, at El Djem, (Foucher 1961a: 25-30; Bullo and



Figure 6.9: Mosaic of the Seasons, Dionysiac figures and *Xenia*, House of the Dionysiac Procession, El Djem. c. AD 140-160. Bardo Museum.



Figure 6.10: Mosaic of Annus, the Seasons, the Sun, and the Moon, House of Silenus, El Djem. c. AD 260-280. Bardo Museum.

Ghedini: Thysdrus 8). Originally decorating the floor of Room 5, this mosaic dates to c. AD 260-280 based on iconographic stylisations (Foucher 1961a: 25-26). This mosaic comprises six tangential circles creating a concave central hexagonal panel. Like the earlier example, Annus again is shown wearing a red mantle over his left shoulder, although here he is bearded and shown as an older male. Apollo, the Sun, is shown as a clean-shaven young man, wearing a red tunic with a radiant green nimbus. Artemis, the



Figure 6.11: Detail of Spring, Mosaic of Annus, the Seasons, the Sun, and the Moon, House of Silenus, El Djem. c. AD 260-280. Bardo Museum.



Figure 6.12: Detail of Summer, Mosaic of Annus, the Seasons, the Sun, and the Moon, House of Silenus, El Djem. c. AD 260-280. Bardo Museum.

Moon, is imagined as a young woman in a green sleeveless tunic, perhaps with knotted shoulders. Her hair is parted in the middle and piled in a bun atop her head. Again, the Four Seasons are all individualised and their similarity to earlier iconography from this location can be noted. As such, Spring (Fig. 6.11) is a young girl with big eyes, wearing a dark green tunic, a necklace and adorned with a crown of roses. Summer (Fig. 6.12) is an older woman with a red tunic fixed around her right shoulder with a *fibula* and a crown of corn or wheat. Autumn (6. 13) wears a *nebris* over her left shoulder, which leaves her right breast bare. Her long curly hair is contained in a headband made of

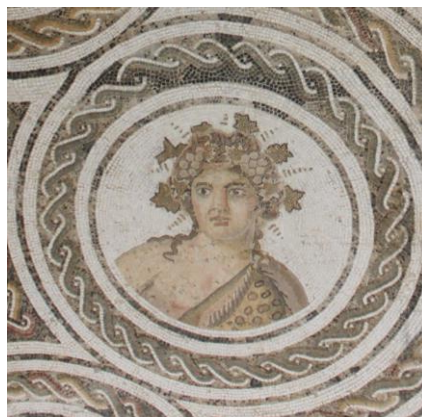


Figure 6.13: Detail of Autumn, Mosaic of Annus, the Seasons, the Sun, and the Moon, House of Silenus, El Djem. c. AD 260-280. Bardo Museum.



Figure 6.14: Detail of Winter, Mosaic of Annus, the Seasons, the Sun, and the Moon, House of Silenus, El Djem. c. AD 260-280. Bardo Museum.

grapes and vine leaves. Finally, Winter (Fig. 6.14) is portrayed as a woman more aged than others. She is wrapped in a dark hooded cloak over a tunic and a headband of olive twigs and roses sits on top of the hood.

A gradual move away from busts indicates a changing attitude towards representations of the personified form. An early example of this fuller-length season type can be found in the Ganymede and the Seasons Mosaic (Fig. 6.15) in *Cubiculum* XXX at the Sollertiana House, again in the south-western quarter of El Djem (Foucher 1961b; Bullo and Ghedini: Thysdrus 15). Unlike most of the other mosaics in the Sollertiana complex, which are late second-century examples, the iconography suggests a date of AD 220-235 (Alexander *et al.* 1996: 8). Its field contains a central medallion featuring Ganymede and Zeus, the latter in the form of an eagle. Flanking this personification are representations of the Four Seasons. In the upper left, Autumn is depicted nude with a long green mantle flowing behind her; she wears a crown of vines and carries a bunch of grapes in her right hand. To her left is Summer, who is also nude with a fluttering mantle in red; her crown is made of wheat and she raises stalks of wheat in her left arm. Next is Spring who wears a long tunic, fastened on the right shoulder which leaves her legs and left side exposed. Her flowers are roses, which make up her garland, and she carries a basket of roses. Winter is the most heavily garbed. She

is dressed in long red tunic with a blue mantle over it with the hood covering her head. This composition also contains images of theatrical masks as well as panels depicting various erotic scenes from Classical myth. This is perhaps the most complex example of full-figured personifications of the Four Seasons. Yet, the focus of the iconography remains the association between Ganymede and the Seasons.

The final phase of iconographic developments to the Four Seasons motifs was the abandonment of personifications – whether in bust or full-length form – in favour of genre depictions set in genre scenes. Such imagery still referred to the seasons and cyclical time, and thus maintained the importance of these ideas for the North African



Figure 6.15: *Ganymede and the Seasons Mosaic, Sollertiana House, El Djem. AD 220-235. Bardo Museum.*

elite, but introduced new elements of realism. This move from the symbolic *emblemata* designs to *horae*, and finally to scenes mimicking actual practices suggests a wider change in artistic discourse where patrons sought to invoke realistic activities in their artistic decoration. The Dominus Julius mosaic from Carthage (Fig. 6.16), c. AD 380-400, arguably represents the outcome of this artistic development. Like the examples from El Djem, it too comes from a urban context (Nevett 2010: 121), supporting the idea that at this time depictions of wealthy estates were popular forms of domestic decoration.

The season activities depicted in the upper and lower register of this mosaic show labourers – each representing a Season – offering seasonal produce to the *dominus* and the *domina*. In the upper register, a figure dressed in a short orange *tunica strictoria* with a blue *sagum* fastened with a circular *fibula* is used to portray Winter activities (Fig. 6.17); his legs are covered in leggings to convey his representation, as are the two labourers next to him who harvest olives. In contrast, the costuming of Summer activities in the upper register does not serve to identify the season. The notion of



Figure 6.16: Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.



Figure 6.17: Detail of Winter, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

Summer is instead achieved through reference to the lamb, carried by a figure wearing a blue ankle-length tunic with red *clavi* (Fig. 6.18). Likewise, in the lower register, the seasonal attributes lead to the identification of the Season, not the dress of the labourers. As such, Spring activities (Fig. 6.19) are undertaken by a figure wearing a brown long-sleeved tunic with black *clavi*, although due to damage its length cannot be ascertained; he offers a basket of flowers to signal his seasonal representation. Finally, Autumn is a figure who carries a basket of grapes (Fig. 6.20). His clothing is a brown, short, long-sleeved tunic decorated with *clavi* from shoulder to waist, with a stripe



Figure 6.18: Detail of Summer, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.



Figure 6.19: Detail of Autumn, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

across the waist and at the cuffs. *Orbiculi* also decorate the shoulders and the lower hem of the tunic. Thus, although this iconography offers each labourer an individualised appearance, there is not always a direct association between the costume and the activity represented, instead the mosaic demonstrates the sheer diversity of costume. Developments in the Four Seasons motif reached their culmination in the Dominus Julius mosaic, the Four Seasons no longer needed to be represented by personifications, but could instead be signalled solely using depictions. Maybe the patron considered such iconography more representative of his personal situation.



Figure 6.20: Detail of Spring, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

Of course, developments in mosaic imagery did not constitute a simple linear progression. Artistic innovation and mosaicist experimentation were always possible and a mixture of personification and genre illustrations are found in the North Africa provinces (Parrish 1984). This is demonstrated by the Neptune and the Seasons mosaic from La Chebba (Fig. 6. 21) which dates c. AD 130-150, much earlier than the Dominus Julius mosaic (*Inv. Tun* 86; Foucher 1963: 83; Levi 1941: 278). While technically outside the limits of my study period, this pavement highlights the complexity of mosaic design and the construction of relative chronologies, not absolute evolutions. Dunbabin, following Levi (1941: 278), states that the mosaic must date from the middle second century AD (1978: 110) and consensus now posits that the same workshop produced this mosaic from La Chebba and those from the House of the Dionysiac Procession at El Djem (Dunbabin 1978: 11). If this was the case, this highlights that some patrons did choose to use more innovative stylisations of the Four Seasons in their mosaic floors, well before the fourth-century proliferation of genre imagery. There are some clues to this happening in the El Djem examples: Season personifications are habitually more passive, often display some element of nudity, and can be associated with a Season through their objects (Parrish 1984: 19); by contrast, genre illustrations are occupational and have active qualities, thereby using a clothed figure to allude a Season.

The mosaic from La Chebba shows the Triumph of Neptune, situated within four diagonal personifications and sprays of seasonal foliage. These full-length figures are accompanied on each side by Seasons genre scenes comprised of symbolic pastoral episodes and appropriate animals respectively. Autumn is shown in the top left corner. She wears only a golden mantle draped over her left arm as well as a necklace, armlets and bracelets. To her left, a labourer wearing a short, sleeveless brown tunic that is belted at the waist and decorated from shoulder to hem, and a knee-length brown cape carries two baskets of grapes. To her right, there is a leopard. Autumn's costume, therefore, does not use the *nebris*, as previously, but is instead associated with this garment through reference to the animal, a conventional attribute. Summer is shown



Figure 6.21: Neptune and the Seasons Mosaic, La Chebba, Tunisia. c. AD 130-150. Bardo Museum.

as fully nude, except for a necklace, armlets and bracelets. She, however, carries a purple mantle over her left arm in which she also carries stalks of wheat. Summer's animal is the lion and her associated labourer, dressed in a short, white, wide *colobium tunica* decorated with *clavi*, gathers wheat into a basket. In the lower right, Spring is also nude, but has a rose mantle draped over both elbows. The image to her right shows a dog, while to her left a labourer wearing another white *colobium* tunic, also belted

and decorated with *clavi*, carries a basket of roses. Finally, Winter contrasts to the nudity of the other personifications: Winter wears a brown tunic of undeterminable sleeve length, under a hooded mantle of the same colour. Nevertheless, her associated labourer, who gathers olives, is only dressed in a tunic of a similar design to the labourers in the Summer and Spring design. To her left is a boar. Rather than view these Season genre depictions as ‘adjuncts’ to the Season personifications (e.g. Dunbabin 1978: 110), it is perhaps more beneficial to see this mosaic as arguably anticipating later mosaic fashions, epitomising the careful depiction of both full-length personifications and genre characters. Clearly, dress acted as a visual aid.

6.2.2 Mosaic Floors and their Patrons

Patrons are to be viewed as important actors in mosaic design. By commissioning mosaic floors, elites identified themselves with and through their architectural contexts. Although it is uncertain exactly how patron involvement operated, by installing mosaics in their domestic spaces patrons laid claim to the cultural ideals and values professed in imagery. Some patrons may have only outlined the parameters for mosaicists (Blanchard-Lemée 1996: 12), but the incentives behind this artistic form of self-advertisement – and its visibility – surely encouraged active involvement (Poulsen 2012: 184). The growing popularity of hunt imagery in the early third century AD supports this conclusion (Dunbabin 1978: 52), as does the increasing presence of genre scenes, particularly those replacing traditional personifications and allegories. Scott draws a similar conclusion from the Romano-British corpus (2000: 54, 76).

Roman social practices were choreographed in ways that perpetuated social stratification. The dialogue between the individual and their audience was especially emphasised in patron-client relationships where visitors and clients experienced the patron’s domain, his *domus*, during the *salutatio* or through business activities. As Scott notes, domestic architecture provided a ‘ceremonial and formal context’ for interaction with external parties (1997: 54). Clothing no doubt played an important role in the enacting of the elite *habitus*, both in actual social encounters and in the decorated

domestic space where such interactions occurred. For instance, in the late fourth-century Dominus Julius Mosaic, the *domina* and *dominus* are clearly distinguished through their dress; their long and elegant clothing contrasts with the male figures who wear short tunics, and the plainer, more utilitarian tunics, worn by the female attendants. Clients visiting the Julius estate mimicked the actions of approaching their patron as portrayed in the mosaic iconography and such occasions reinforced the behaviours depicted (Nevett 2010: 126). Using domestic decoration as a means of affecting the social dynamics of the *salutatio* was a common elite strategy (Trimble 2002: 243-244). While in earlier centuries such interactions occurred in the *atrium*, this reception room, adorned with the Dominus Julius Mosaic, was perhaps the new location of such activities.

Of course, North Africa was not unique in this regard, but the sheer social capital invested in mosaic decoration attests to its vibrancy here. Thébert's study framed African domestic space as a 'social product' where this space is 'intrinsically unified' (1987: 320-321); as the manifestation of *habitus*, an African *domus* represented and embodied aspects of society and 'social realities' (Carucci 2007: 1). The decorative programmes employed in such spaces were no less important for conveying social status than the pains taken to clothe elite bodies appropriately; mosaics capitalised on a receptive and knowledgeable audience. Equally, too, household furnishings and architectural decoration could be deployed to showcase and reinforce social boundaries. Textiles in domestic settings could alter room form and function (Stephenson 2014: 6); the decoration and division of architectural space using textile hangings was a symbol of wealth (Thomas 2016: 21-22) and the more hangings, the higher the rank of the individual (August., *Serm.* 51). There is evidence of cuttings in peristyle columns for curtain rods from a few North African houses demonstrating how such ideas were put into practice (Stephenson 2014: 18; Gozlan 1971-2). This articulation of physical space shaped identity.

The patron managed this social system through occupying and decorating domestic space. As Ghedini and Bullo show in their examination of late antique *domus* in *Africa Proconsularis*, multiple reception rooms were common, comprising a large proportion of available domestic space (2007: 342-343): of the analysed houses, 43%

had apses, compared to 1% from earlier periods, indicating a broader change in cultural forms, predominantly in the form of dining practices since *domus* designs had consistently been styled around a central peristyle since Punic times (Rossiter 2007: 370-371). Apsidal rooms, as reception areas, were obvious areas for self-advertisement and self-display so their decoration gives valuable insight into processes of identity construction and projection. The importance of these rooms, and the activities taking place in them, were reinforced in other media such as silver plate, which often shows the conspicuous practice of banqueting (Leader-Newby 2004: 7). Although the actual behaviours carried out in these spaces could have been dynamic and multi-functional (Dunbabin 2003: 171-172), the stylistic programme was relatively static and durable. In fact, mosaics represent 'the most complete document in existence regarding the economic and social situation of Africa under the later Roman Empire' (Berndt 2007).

Theoretically, self-display through artistic means was not just the purview of the late antique elite. Non-elites in the Roman world commonly commissioned art that carefully constructed and projected particular messages to the viewer (Clarke 2003: 246-268). Artistic representations were a dialogue between patron choice and artistic ability: ultimately, designs relied on the patron's own self-perception as well as methods deemed appropriate for self-display (Clarke 2003: 273). To use mosaics in domestic decoration was to make claims, or aspirations, to a particular social identity (Scott 1997: 64). Similarly, clothing was marshalled as a strategy for maintaining social boundaries, as Tertullian's remark about the improper appropriation of clothing exemplified (*De pall.* 4.8.3). It is logical that dress as shown in mosaic imagery acted as a mechanism against which visitors judged their clothing, and thus their own social status.

There is, however, doubt as to whether 'middle-class' domestic spaces contained mosaics and, if so, whether such mosaics were comparable to the elite depictions. Simon Ellis' (2006) investigation of middle-class dwellings in the 'Archive Building' at Caesarea, the House of the Bronzes at Sardis (see Hanfmann 1960) and a house at Halicarnassus used *Lot 11* from Utica, Tunisia (see Alexander *et al.* 1973: 95-100), and the *House of the Ass* at Djemila, *Numidia* (see Blanchard-Lemée 1975: 23-106) as an initial departure point for hypothesising 'typical' middle-class housing features. Interestingly, his North African examples lack mosaic decoration, while his Eastern

comparanda do evidence mosaics (Ellis 2006: 429). This suggests that, in a North African context, mosaic decoration was a feature of elite identity exclusively. Clothing details encoded in North African mosaic designs therefore offer commentary on the upper echelons of society and the use of mosaics implicitly fashioned a degree of social distinction for the patron. Rich landowners were the very people able to demonstrate their difference through clothing and appearance. Representing a characteristic feature of the North African visual tradition, these mosaics span conventional transitional periods including the Vandal occupation of Africa, thus providing one continuous mode of self-representation to track sartorial changes against.

Literary references also highlight the importance of patron initiative in architectural grandeur, as seen in Symmachus' later fourth-century letter (*Epist.* 1.12, 8.42). In contrast, in the late fifth century AD, the bishop Sidonius Apollinaris advertised his self-confessed modesty by eschewing mosaic decoration in his bath-house (*Ep.* 2.2; Visser 2014). A similar association between elites and domestic space existed in early fifth-century North Africa, as Augustine refers to such décor as well as marble when conjuring up his version of a residence aligned with immoral earthly desires (*In. psalm.* 65.7). Isolated North African mosaics do appear to identify the patron by name, such as the Magerius Mosaic (Fig. 6.22) from Smirat which, based on iconographic stylisation, dates to c. AD 240-250 (Beschaouch 1966: 147). It celebrates the public generosity of Magerius, whose names appears twice in the vocative case (Fagan 2011: 128-129). Scheibelreiter-Gail (2012) notes that the use of inscriptions to identify the patron also re-affirmed the patron's status and education. Such an explanatory inscription addressed the viewer in a direct manner, ensuring the message –the commemoration of generosity – was conveyed to the audience. The necessity of a literate audience to understand such a statement and, by extension, the significance of the inclusion of writing also fostered a sense of participation within a specific social group. Mosaics and mosaic iconography implicitly placed the patron as a member of the elite. Clothing



Figure 6.22: Magerius Mosaic, Smirat, Tunisia. c. AD 240-250. Sousse Museum.

styles, although not necessarily replicating real life in minute detail, were intended to construct a ‘version’ of this reality. As such, sartorial details resonated with patrons and audiences.

There is one particular ekphrastic reference from Vandal North Africa that demonstrates the enduring desire of North African patrons to showcase their own circumstances in the wider context of elite displays of identity, even after significant cultural shifts. Essentially, the *ekphrasis* genre constructed an image that brought the subject material to ‘life’, conventionally through a focus on description and details (Webb 2009: 3-5). Luxorius’ *Epigram 18* provides some insight into the Vandal North Africa context. Composed in the late fifth or early sixth century AD, this piece of Latin poetry demonstrates the cultural continuation of aristocratic lifestyle and self-display (Merrills and Miles 2010: 98-99). In this epigram, Luxorius recalls how Fridamal – presumably his patron – commissioned an ‘*imago*’ of himself killing a boar. Within a description of Fridamal’s estate, Luxorius highlights Fridamal’s image:

But, although things that give pleasure have been enclosed in such splendour and although the beautiful rooms are resplendent with varied artistry, yet must be admired the picture of your brave deed, Fridamal, and the great and glorious feat of slaying a wild boar. Excited by love of your characteristic courage, you set your mind upon picturing your exploits in a worthy setting (Lux., *Anth* 18.11-16).

Now, this '*imago*' could be either a fresco or mosaic: Wasył is explicit in her interpretation of this as a mosaic (2019: 657), although such conclusions should be cautious. But it is not necessary to prove that Fridamal actually undertook this courageous feat; what is significant is Fridamal's apparent desire to be represented in this manner. Although this passage lacks any sophisticated notions of artistic description – remaining more allusive than informative – it does demonstrate the desire for wealthy patrons to depict themselves within their own architectural decoration. Mosaic iconography of the fifth and sixth centuries AD was the culmination of centuries of iconographic evolution and innovation. While Moerschini (2010: 268), following Dunbabin (1978: 53), in her discussion of ekphrastic description and mosaic hunting art in late antiquity, views this imagery as having a 'fantastic' style due to the increasingly 'unrealistic' compositions and animal groupings, the need to accurately represent patrons in 'realistic' activities should not be over-exaggerated; realism was relative and the confrontation between reality and fiction did not rest on historical actuality, but on its relevance to the individual's *habitus*. Unfortunately, Luxorius' epigram provides no description of Fridamal's hunting wardrobe, but a study of hunting imagery offers some insight into how Fridamal portrayed himself, even if only in an idealised manner.

6.2.3 Dressing for the Hunt in Mosaic Imagery

The most instructive genre of North African mosaics for this study of dress rhetoric is hunting mosaics. Hunting motifs are especially prevalent in North Africa during the third and fourth centuries AD, but also continue into the fifth and sixth centuries (Dunbabin 1999: 112-113), although mosaics attributed to this latter timeframe are generally categorised on stylistic grounds, as is the case of a hunt mosaic from the Maison Bir Ennahal, Kélibia (Ennaïfer 1995: 215). Alluding to a common elite pastime, such imagery

constructed an idealised rendering of actual practice and signified the potential for elite *otium*. *Otium* and rich *villa* architecture were entwined concepts in the elite mentality (Sid. Apoll., *Epist.* 2.2, 2.9, *Carm.* 22; Visser 2014). When adorning the floors of an urban *domus*, such imagery alluded to the country estate where hunting activities took place; in a rural *villa* context, they no doubt recalled actual aristocrat pursuits. The clothing depicted in such scenes referred, to some degree, to actual fashions – a necessity for situating the narrative in the contemporary realm – but should not be expected to reflect exact copies of hunting costumes. A survey of the corpus of hunting mosaics attests to the lack of a standardised costume for depicting hunting activities in North Africa. Although Rinaldi (1964-5) argues for the development of a quasi-hunting ‘costume’ of a short tunic and a *chlamys* worn over the left shoulder and fastened on the right with a *fibula* – based on iconography from the fourth-century AD Piazza Armerina, Sicily – extant mosaic evidence suggests a multiplicity of different garments associated with hunting. This does not undermine the importance of clothing in communicating and ascribing identity; rather, it highlights the sheer diversity of costume available, suggesting that dressing the body was more involved than schematic documents, like Diocletian’s Price Edict, might suggest. For North Africa, we find no specific outfit for each particular type of hunting, except for the Return from the Boar Hunt motif, which, due to the articulation of a particular ‘African’ dress form is discussed in Chapter 7.2.

Often hunting outfits and styles are mixed within the same composition. Another exception my findings identify – apart from costume used in the Return from the Boar Hunt motif – is that mounted riders are always shown wearing a tunic *strictoria*, perhaps alluding to their elevated social status, although this garment type was a common feature of the late Roman wardrobe. The *dominus* in the Dominus Julius Mosaic from Carthage exemplifies this fashion (Fig. 6.23) and I discuss the practicalities of wearing such an outfit below. Significantly, unmounted riders also wear the *tunica strictoria*, so North African convention did not simply equate only mounted riders with this tunic type. Accessories and decoration to the basic outfit differ from mosaic to mosaic: mounted riders do not always wear cloaks or long boots, nor do foot hunters always wear low sandals or *fasciae crurales*. The multiplicity of hunting garb is perhaps best



Figure 6.23: The mounted dominus wearing a tunica strictoria, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

demonstrated by the Hunting Mosaic (Fig. 6.24) from Room 13 in Edifice à Asklepeia, Althiburus, dating to AD 280-290, which measures 6.27 x 5.68m (Carucci 2007: 115; Bullo and Ghedini 2003: Althiburos 1; Ennaïfer 1975, 1976). This mosaic depicts various episodes of hunting activities spread across numerous superimposed registers. Despite a large lacuna in the centre, this artefact offers a complex glimpse into various hunting costumes. A rough narrative is discernible, with the departure for the hunt in the top left and the return of the hunting party in the bottom register (Dunbabin 1999: 113). The *dominus* has been identified as the mounted figure in the top register who holds a cane, ready to signal the beginning of the hunt (Picard 1994: 41-42). Yet, from the clothing itself, it is very difficult to distinguish between the *dominus* and other participants: both the two mounted figures in the upper and lower registers are dressed in short, long-sleeved white tunics with red decoration on the shoulders and cuffs.

The Althiburus mosaic represents an early example of innovation in mosaic design with the use of named participants (Dunbabin 1978: 50) and the naming of horses and hounds suggests a close affinity of the patron with actual possessions. Despite a somewhat unrealistic composition, with superimposed registers commonly



Figure 6.24: Althiburos Hunt Mosaic, Edifice of Asklepius, Althiburos. c. AD 280-290. Bardo Museum Stores.

cited as ‘fantastic’ by modern scholars (e.g. Ball 1984: 130), the mosaic iconography at Althiburus depicts a *version* of elite behaviour, albeit somewhat contrived. In this way, naming conventions were not the only strategy for personalising ‘generic’ mosaic imagery (*contra* Ball 1984: 131). Dress visualisations, although highly stylised, iterated socialised iconographic elements. Ball’s ‘fantastic’ accusation ignored the communicative potential of clothing, not of depicting ‘real’ garments, but of using stereotypical fashions to allude to particular social categories – although Dunbabin does note the ‘realistic detail in the dress’ (1978: 50). In the absence of the explicit identification of the mosaic patron, clothing imagery constructed and re-iterated social distinction and relationships. While the patron himself may not be distinguishable to the modern audience, his social class is. The use of figurative mosaic floors also confirms

his elite position. It is clear that care and cultural significance filters through all elements of the mosaic design, including its subject matter, iconography and architectural setting.

The North African hunting wardrobe possessed its own rhetoric with its own sartorial logic, much of which is difficult for the modern scholar to access since it was never extensively discussed or considered. Unfortunately, this sometimes leads to inaccurate assumptions regarding mosaic iconography. My study emphasises how dress strategies resonated with audiences and were a significant mode of iconographic communication: mosaic dress was undertaken with the audience and their responses in mind. A pertinent example is the corresponding panel (Fig. 6.25) to the well-known Matron at her Toilette mosaic, from the baths at Sidi Ghrib. Identified as a 'Departure to the Hunt' scene in its first publication (Ennabli 1986: 44-45), in this mosaic the *dominus*, his associate and a servant depart for the hunt on foot. The servant on the left is dressed in a short tunic *strictoria*, girded at the hips and laced boots and *fasciae crurales* in a matching blue; he may also be wearing a necklace. He carries the relevant paraphernalia for bird hunting, a bundle of *harundines*, or limed rods, and a glue pot.

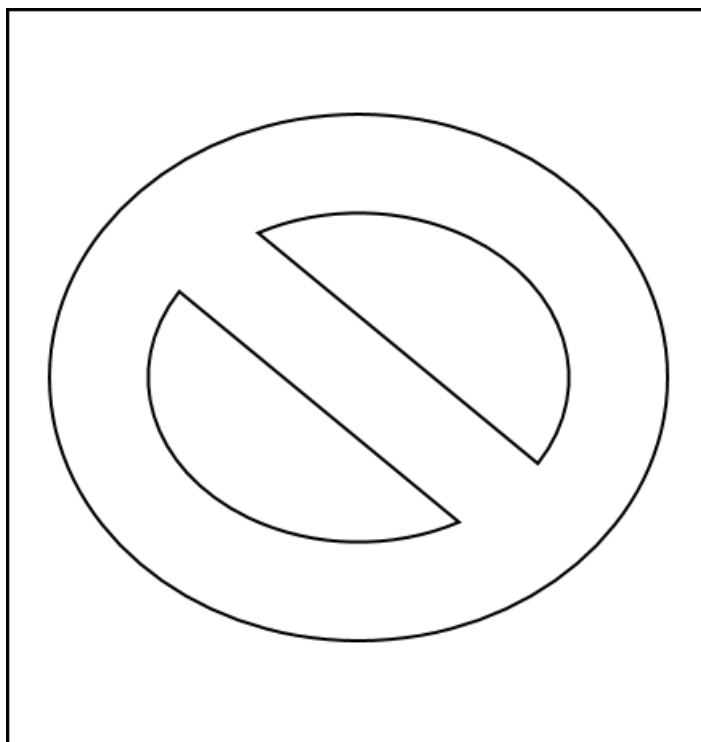


Figure 6.25: Departure for the Hunt Mosaic, Sidi Ghrib, Tunisia. Late fourth or early fifth century AD. Bardo Museum Stores.

The central figure – identified as the *dominus* (Ennabli 1986: 44) – wears a long light-coloured tunic, of a similar style to his associate on the right, which is adorned with *orbiculi* on the shoulder and the hem. There is a short red *sagum* around his shoulders and he wears low shoes. To the right is a man wearing a long sleeved and full-length blue tunic with dark rectangular *segmenta* from neck to hem and square patches on the shoulders. He also wears a simple necklace and holds a cane. Although both figures wear long tunics, we can identify the *dominus* through the relative placement of the figures: he occupies the central position to mirror the composition of the *domina* in the Lady at her Toilette mosaic. Perhaps anticipating future disagreement, Abdelmagid Ennabli was decisive in his interpretation: ‘Incontestablement, il s'agit d'un départ à la chasse du seigneur du domaine’ (1986: 45), referring to episodes in other mosaics for support, , noting that bird hunting was not a particularly dangerous sport, but required great agility. To explain the clothing of the two elites, Ennabli argues that, as an autumnal activity, the use of long clothing is functional (1986: 45).

Architectural context also directs viewer interpretation. Originally located in matching vestibules in the bathing complex (Fig. 6.26), the message of aristocratic leisure – differentiated as appropriate for each gender – was part of the cultural poetics. Divorcing these two mosaics from their original architectural contexts sadly conceals their proximal association and correspondence, and thus the iconographic narrative becomes less clear. Such confusion would not have occurred to the ancient visitor to Sidi Ghrib. Yet, less than a year after Ennabli identified the mosaic as a cynegetic scene, Picard contested this interpretation, noting that the clothing of the two well-dressed figures was too ceremonial and not convincing for hunting pursuits (1989: 47). However, the identification of the hunter holding the limed rods and glue was not refuted. Dunbabin likewise contests the hunt interpretation, arguing instead that this scene depicts the arrival at the baths since the clothing of the *dominus* and his associate would be too cumbersome for hunting activities (1999: 322). While the interpretation of disrobing or dressing the body would suit its location in a bathing complex, Dunbabin’s opinion ignores the inherent gender rhetoric at play in the mosaic design and the separation of gender roles (see Chapter 4.1.3). Depicting bird hunting – a leisurely

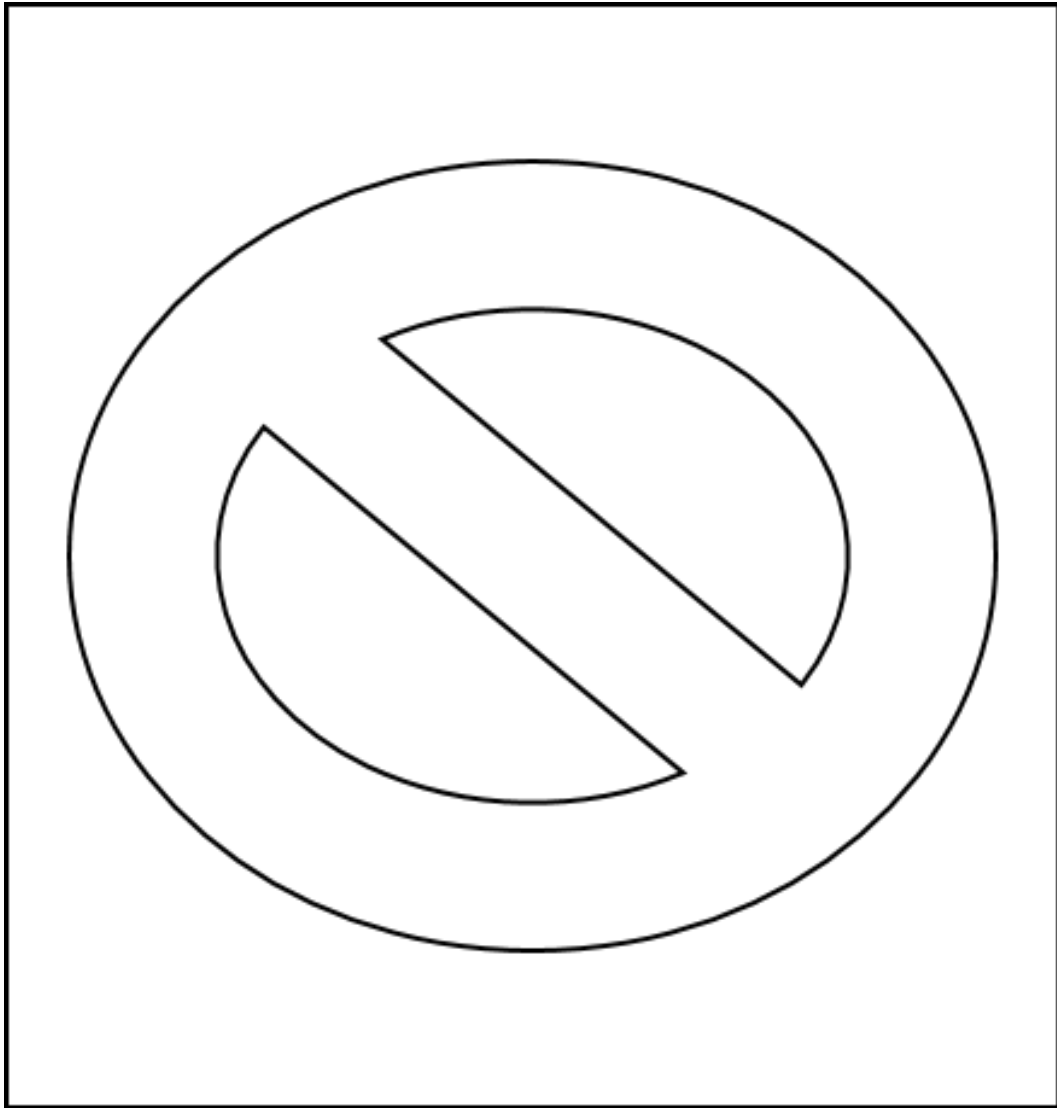


Figure 6.26: Plan of Sidi Ghrib Bath Complex, Tunisia, with Matron at her Toilette Mosaic (Red) and Departure for the Hunt Mosaic (Blue).

version of this elite pastime – this panel almost mimics the leisured actions of the matron, but in a context suitable for the aristocratic male.

Recently, Roger Wilson has perpetuated this misinformed interpretation. He reiterates the *dominus'* unsuitable clothing and instead notes that this scene is a conspicuous statement about the family's high social status (2018: 285 n.131). This is true, but a bathing interpretation is unlikely as it ignores the elite status already claimed by the corresponding female dress panel. Reference to another elite pursuit, hunting, attributed further social capital to the patron. Set in a vestibule of the vast Sidi Ghrib bathing complex, the mosaic was part of a single phase of construction, c. AD 400

(Wilson 2018: 284). This *villa urbana* was substantial, with the villa and the bath-block each measuring c. 25m x 35m (Ennabli and Neuru 1994). Admittedly, this Departure for the Hunt scene contains elements of idealisation, but the costuming of the *dominus* emphasises his higher social status in comparison to his colleagues. As such, this scene should be understood as providing an artistic snapshot, a representation of practice, where the ascription of social status through clothing and behaviours trumps the need for visual realism. A similar accusation of inaccurate rendering could be levelled at any mosaic imagery composed of superimposed registers. Mosaic imagery speaks to relevant cultural ideas of practice, it does not accurately re-create lived reality.

Further comparison to other North African mosaics supports the interpretation that the Sidi Ghrib mosaic depicts the *dominus* departing for hunting activities. The contemporaneous Dominus Julius Mosaic, from nearby Carthage, likewise depicts the *dominus* wearing similar garb of a long, white *tunica strictoria*, decorated with *orbiculi* at the hem, atop a horse. This register is unproblematically interpreted as a departure for a leisure hunt (Ben Abed 2006: 41). Further, the long-sleeved tunic costume from Sidi Ghrib recalls an example shown on a Hunting Mosaic (Fig. 6.27) from the House of the Two Hunts, from Room 4 at Kélibia (Bullo and Ghendi: Clipea 1), dated to the fifth century AD (Ennaïfer 2003: 229). This mosaic details multiple different methods of hunting spread across three registers, including a figure on the right in the central register (Fig. 6.28), who carries the same paraphernalia as the servant from the Sidi Ghrib, the limed rods and container of glue. He wears a long, red tunic *strictoria* with single *clavi* and his feet look to be encased in long leg wraps. Other hunters in this Kélibia panel are depicted in long-sleeved, shorter tunics of various colours and decoration, suggesting that the mosaicist made a specific decision to dress the bird-hunter this way. While there is an absence of specific uniforms for different modes of hunting, this latter example supports the interpretation of the Sidi Ghrib mosaic as a 'Departure for the Hunt' scene. Thus, this mosaic panel is a statement of the *dominus*' participation in the traditional pursuit of hunting for leisure. Such a means of self-representation was a purposeful statement of the potential to participate in elite culture and should not be read as a literal snapshot of practice.



Figure 6.27: Hunt Mosaic, Kélibia. Fifth century AD. Bardo Museum Stores.

Mosaic pavements from Vandal Africa confirm the continued relevance of hunt iconography – as an extension of respectable elite pursuits – to elite self-perception and self-presentation. It is clear from extant examples, ostensibly dating to the mid-fifth century AD onwards, that cynegetic imagery still reinforced social status and was a means of professing participation in appropriate elite behaviours. By far the most well-known North African mosaic from this period is the so-called Bordj-Djedid ‘Vandal’ Hunting Mosaic (Fig. 6.29) from a suburb in Carthage; termed thus because of the identification of figures dressed in ‘Vandal’ clothing. Modern discussions of this floor pavement exemplify the difficulty of dating visual media in isolation from archaeological diagnostics. The so-called ‘Vandal’ Hunting Mosaic fragments from Bordj-Djedid, now on display at the British Museum, originally occupied a room of 12.2 x 8.5m and seven fragments were removed. In the upper left, a residence is depicted and interspersed in the mosaic background are various animals, such as gazelles and boars, and their three hunters. This mosaic is obviously an artefact that expressed elite identity. The dating of such images is contested, primarily since interpretation often derives from the dress



Figure 6.28: Bird hunter wearing the same costume as hunter at Sidi Ghrib, Bird Hunt Mosaic, Kélibia. Fifth century AD. Bardo Museum Stores.

depicted. Consensus now dates the pavement as late-fifth century (Levin 1963: 240-241; see also Ben Abed 1995: 308-315 and Dunbabin 1980). Such issues are especially exacerbated in the case of the ‘Vandal’ Hunting Mosaic, precisely because it is frequently upheld as *the exemplum* for Vandal cultural practice and the presence of trousers have been appropriated to perpetuate the ideal of ‘barbarian clothing’ (see Chapter 7.5). Certainly, the iconography resembles compositions and motifs popular from the late fourth century onwards, therefore disproving an earlier date (*contra* Lander 2017: 168).

The depiction of the villa building, in particular, places the mosaic’s production after the late fourth- or early fifth-century apse mosaics found at Tabarka (Levin 1963: 239-240; Dunbabin 1978: 122). At Bordj-Djedid, the building is not the primary focus of the imagery, unlike at Tabarka (Fig. 6.30), suggesting the evolution of such displays of *otium* to now include hunt episodes. Writing in the sixth century AD, Procopius characterised the Vandal aristocrats as engaged in such leisure pursuits, although his formulation is not entirely positive (BV 2.6.8). Further support for a Vandal date is posited by Clover who notes the similarities between Luxorius’ epigram for Fridamal and the combination of hunt imagery and architecture at Bordj-Djedid (1982: 14-15). Duval,



Figure 6.29: 'Vandal' Hunting Mosaic, Bordj-Djedid, Carthage. Late fifth century AD. British Museum.

too, identifies parallels between the iconographic structure and Luxorius' use of *turris* (2002).

From this perspective, the clothing depicted at Bordj-Djedid is only problematic if it is the sole mechanism for dating, and if interpretations are subsumed in a discourse that equates 'barbarian' clothing with the Vandal incomers (Hinks 1933: 148). Sartorial imagery in mosaics aided narrative interpretation and in this Vandal-era mosaic, clothing acted as a means of re-iterating status and therefore continued to enact elite discourse in the same ways it had previously. Such late antique images therefore provided us with a 'version' of aristocratic dress, deemed suitable for its historical and architectural context. How exactly to integrate such images into the broader narrative of late antique clothing rhetoric, however, is constrained by issues of modern interpretations.



Figure 6.30: Pars Urbana Panel, *Rural Scenes Mosaic*, Tabarka. Tunisia. Late fourth century AD. Bardo Museum.

Sartorial details in mosaic imagery played on familiar social associations. As portrayals of stereotypical elite pastimes, these mosaic episodes were meaningful cultural products. Although highly stylised, clothing differentiation mimicked, to some degree, actual textile variation seen in society. The importance of representing contemporary fashions is also apparent through the study of the dress of mythological figures, where the rendering of the clothed body guides viewer interpretation: the use of dress contributes to how the audience interprets and contextualises the image. For instance, an emblematic episode from a mosaic (Fig. 6. 31) dating to the late third or early fourth century AD found in the Villa del Nilo at Lepcis Magna depicts the mythological figures of Meleager and Atlanta slaying the Calydonian Boar (Poinsot 1940). The mosaic frames a vignette from a hunting scene and although not divided into registers using groundlines it is possible to divide the scene into smaller groups with the action moving from left to right. The lower of the two characters, Meleager, spears the Calydonian Boar, while the character of Atlanta above is mounted on a horse and fights another animal. In the background two other figures are on foot. It is the clothing depictions that signal the identification of the mythological pairing. Meleager, for instance, is shown in the heroic nude; his short red and orange *sagum* covers his left shoulder and leaves his right arm bare, while his torso is covered by a bronze coloured

cuirass. Due to damage, it is only speculative as to how this is fastened, but, as this is a mythological illusion it is possible that the dress is an impression, not an accurate portrayal. Similarly, details of Atlanta's costume, especially the trunk of her body, are open to reconstruction, but some details are visible. She wears low sandals and her legs are bare. Her synonymous wind-swept cape is blue and green in colour and matches her tunic, which is short enough to leave part of her thigh bare. Her hair is coiffured to leave her face and neck visible. The combination of the cloak and the short tunic signals to the audience that this is a mythological character, not human, as otherwise the length of this tunic in real life would have been considered indecent, and particularly unsuited for female human use. The two accompanying figures, generic servants, are each shown dressed in white, short-sleeved tunics with *chlamys*, and the figure on the left has a black *clavi* and decoration around the sleeve hem. The viewer immediately understands these as contemporary garments. Distinction in the clothing shown therefore guides how the viewer identifies the characters depicted. Another mosaic (Fig. 6.32) from the



Figure 6.31: Meleager and Atlanta Hunt Mosaic, Lepcis Magna. Late third or early fourth century AD. Tripoli National Museum.



Figure 6.32: Hunt Mosaic, Lepcis Magna. Late third or early fourth century AD. Tripoli National Museum.

same complex confirms this distinction. Here, the subjects are contemporary hunters, as indicated by their belted tunic *strictoria* and *chlamys*. Mosaic designs communicate narrative identities through the costuming of the figures. Clothing clearly plays an integral role in this iconographic deciphering.

So how does this brief survey of the Meleager and Atlanta depictions augment the study of North African dress rhetoric? As demonstrated, North African mosaics evoke mythological characters through the deliberate representation of their costume. This occurred alongside the employment of contemporary clothing to allude to contemporary practice. In contrast, other mosaics from elsewhere in the Mediterranean world identify mythological characters in a different way: the use of naming inscriptions. A useful comparison is the 'Meleager' and 'Atlanta' figures from a fourth-century mosaic from the House of Charidemus at Halicarnassus. Originally one complete panel, two fragments are now on display in the British Museum. Both these characters wear contemporary hunting outfits: Atlanta (Fig. 6.33) on the left sits upon a horse and wears

a brown tunic, a red cloak outlined in black and red ankle boots. Her wind-swept cape and a naming inscription identify her as 'Atalanta'. Meleager (Fig. 6.34) is dressed in a grey tunic decorated with black *clavi* and *orbiculi*, a grey cloak outlined in black, and grey ankle boots. He is also named as 'Meleager' (Hinks 1933: 129). A similar depiction is seen on a mosaic (Fig. 6.35) from the late fifth-century AD in the Upper level of the Yakto Complex, from Daphne near Antioch. This large mosaic (8.2 x 7.3m) is composed of a central panel containing the personification of Megalopsychia, surrounded by various hunting scenes that are divided into quadrants using trees. A topographical border surrounds the entire composition, and is itself a detailed piece of iconography. In total, six hunters are depicted and named in the central area of the mosaic. The portrayal of five hunters of 'Hippolytos', 'Acteon', 'Teiresias', 'Narcissus', and 'Adonis' (Levi 1971: 337-338) alongside 'Meleager' offer interesting insight into the simultaneous depiction of a catalogue of mythical hunters and the ways in which they were re-imagined and represented in fifth-century Antioch. All these hunters are individually stylised, wearing a combination of differently coloured tunics and mantles, with various forms of decoration, although they all wear the same type of laced boot. Attention given towards the individual stylisations of these characters attests that their costuming is meaningful.



Figure 6.33: Detail of Atlanta, Hunt Mosaic, House of Charidemus, Halicarnassus. Fourth century AD. British Museum.

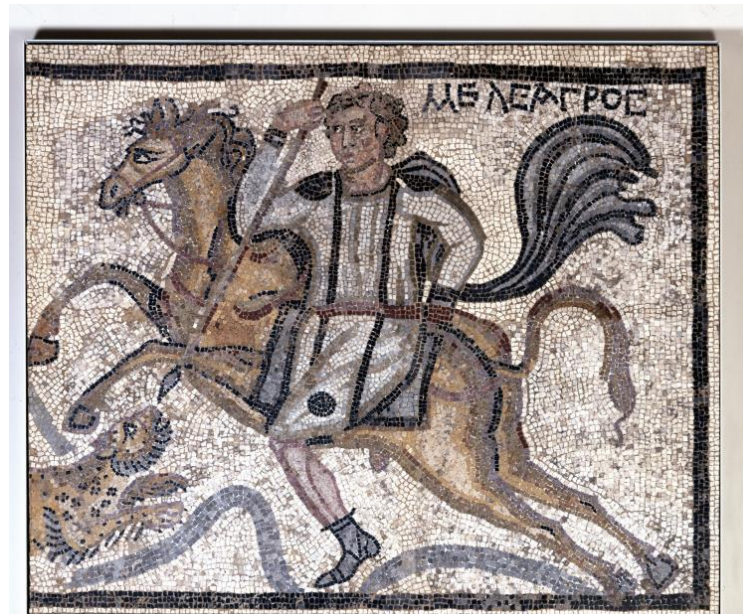


Figure 6.34: Detail of Meleager, Hunt Mosaic, House of Charidemus, Halicarnassus. Fourth century AD. British Museum.

Lavin suggests Eastern artists preferred to give human hunting figures mythological identities and characteristics (1963: 278), thus the Meleager image from Halicarnassus is seen as a depiction of a contemporary individual stylised as Meleager, rather than depicting the mythological Meleager himself. Dunbabin argues that these exemplary figures characterised elite ideal virtues (2014: 244). For the *Megalopsychia* mosaic, the subject matter of 'Great-Spiritedness' is as an abstract personification, related specifically to the representation of a concept in human form. Hence, the accompanying group of hunters are representations of human characteristics associated with traditional mythological hunters. Such ideas were framed and imagined in line with traditional forms of *paideia*, but were a transformation in the replication of traditional cultural knowledge. Leader-Newby (2005: 235) refutes Wolf Raeck's (1992) earlier interpretation of the Eastern mosaic convention for naming figures as evidence of decreasing familiarity with Classical subject matter and the need for labels to provide overt identification. Naming inscriptions are therefore necessary to associate these depicted figures with Classical characters, where their traditional accoutrements and dress are absent – in the mosaic from Halicarnassus, the traditional boar is replaced with a leopard (Dunbabin 2014: 242). In such examples, the inscription provides the primary evidence for the identification of the imagery, since the hunting costumes depicted



Figure 6.35: Megalopsychia Mosaic, Yakto Complex, Daphne. Late fifth century AD. Hatay Archaeological Museum.

come from contemporary repertoire (Gazda 1991: 126). Unlike the North African examples, in Eastern mosaics the depiction of clothing is not sufficiently specific enough to allow for identification; these are figures imbued with heroic characteristics through the inscription, not their costume. Examples from the North African corpus do not evidence these naming conventions precisely because the use of heroic nudity, or anachronistic costuming, signals to the audience that these are the Classical characters, not mere characterisations. North Africa, then, had a particularly prominent dress rhetoric in its visual repertoire, which attuned viewers to the importance of such iconographic details. Mosaicists and patrons logically assumed a degree of familiarity with the importance of clothing in their audiences: their viewers could be expected to correctly interpret iconographic motifs through the examination of the dress depicted. Accordingly, it is clear that there was a particular 'North African' identity for such mosaic material.

6.3 Clothing as Gifts

Another significant context in which dress served to re-iterate social status was gift-giving. Clothing gifts constituted a significant form of social reciprocity, not charity, and maintained relationships in the late antique world (Rollason 2016). As both a social and financial investment, the gifting of clothing was a form of social positioning. It thus acted as an implicit strategy of re-iterating power dynamics and difference, unlike the Christian almsgiving discussed earlier where the motivation serves the soteriological interests of the giver – see Chapter 5.4. Of course, not all gift-giving activities were perfunctory; the Projecta Casket is often interpreted in terms of a wedding gift, perhaps not presented on the wedding day itself (Elsner 2007: 204), but likely recalling this occasion (Stoner 2019: 29). In *Epistola* 263, dated to AD 425-430, Augustine informs ‘the eminently religious’ Sapida, that he will wear her gift of a tunic, that once belonged to her brother, a deacon in Carthage. Sapida had made the garment herself, although her brother had never actually worn it. Augustine’s actions were contrary to his normative practice of moderate living, but were a means of consolation (*Ep.* 263. 1). Yet, Augustine did not waste this occasion to use this correspondence to re-iterate his view on moderate grief (McWilliam 2007: 190) and, in doing so, he re-enforced his religious authority over such matters. The power dynamics inherent in such exchanges highlight the existence of social hierarchies.

In the late antique world, clothing gifts frequently performed a diplomatic function. Visual or literary commemorations of these processes no doubt perpetuated social ties. Well into the late fourth century AD, the gifting of textiles formed a part of senatorial largesse in the East, but these practices then underwent a re-consideration. Thus, a law addressed to the Senate, dated to 25th July 384, states:

No private person shall be permitted to distribute pure silk vestments at any exhibition of games. We also confirm by this constitution that, with the exception of ordinary consuls, no one else shall have the right to gift presents of gold or ivory diptychs. When public spectacles are celebrated, the presents shall be silver coins and the diptychs made of other materials (*Cod. Theod.* 15. 9. 1).

Significantly, the promulgation of this decree was itself a statement of Imperial authority, constraining elements of conspicuous consumption to prevent the usurpation of the traditional bounds of imperial munificence (Leader-Newby 2004). Such elite displays were expensive occasions and Symmachus applauds the emperor's attempts at limiting the expense and obligations of these events (Symm., *Rel.* 8; Harries 2003: 129). The expectation of gifts no doubt affected personal expenditure. It appears, however, that North African magistrates adopted a new custom to decrease the cost of giving and commemorating these occasions.

An early fifth-century fragment of an African Red Slipware (ARS) *lanx*, or a large rectangular platter, now in the Benaki museum, Athens (Salomonsen 1973), suggests the continuation of such processes of exchange in Africa memorialised through

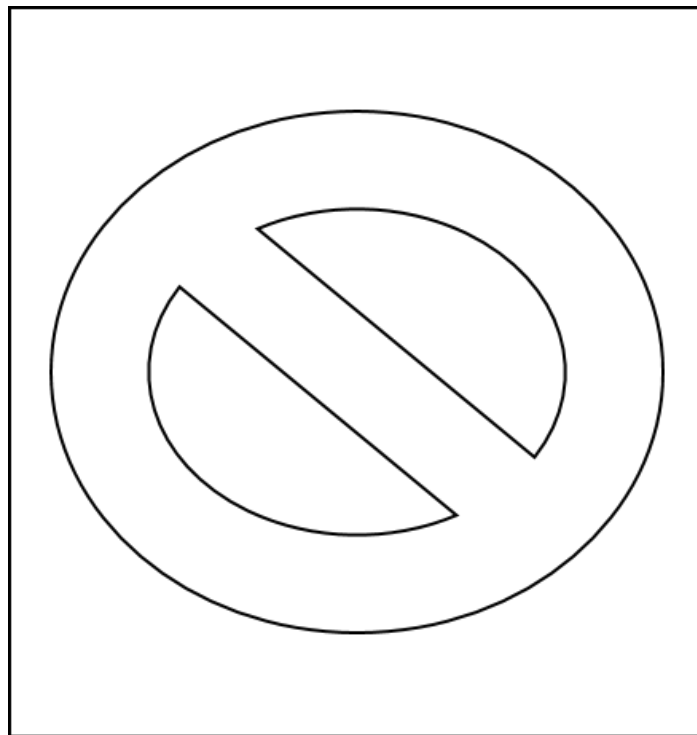


Figure 6.36: ARS Lanx fragment depicting gifting of textiles. Early fifth century AD. Benaki Museum, Athens.

traditional forms of self-representation in a different medium (Fig. 6.36). This ceramic fragment depicts the gifting of textiles seemingly by a lower official. Briefly, the iconography shows three officials seated in a circus *loge*, while hunters are shown in the lower register. To the right, a figure holds out a cloth. Salomonson originally identified this as a *mappa*, and therefore a prize awarded to one of the *venatores* by a consul (1962: 59 n.27), but a more suitable interpretation sees the offered cloth associated with a lower status magistrate. In fact, the critical analysis of clothing supports this conclusion: the central figure is not an official of consular rank, since this figure lacks the consular *trabea*. The *trabea* is a very elusive garment: although recorded in both visual media and text, it is still difficult to define. Rollason's recent discussion of the *trabea* united both types of source evidence and concluded that the *trabea* was 'an integral and fully visible part of the consular costume' (2016: 98). On ivory diptychs — artefacts produced to commemorate the inauguration of office (Cameron 2013, 2017) — such as that produced for Constantius III in AD 417, the ornamented *trabea* constructs difference between the focal figure (the consul) and the others depicted (Fig. 6.37). The Benaki ARS *lanx* lacks such distinctions: all three figures on the *loge* are dressed similarly. The central figure is therefore not of consul status.

These 'ceramic diptychs' were innovative modes of official self-display demonstrating the usurpation of consular practices by lesser officials (Cameron 2013: 185) and likely were produced by using an ivory original to produce a clay mould (Spier 2003); this method of production is known for central Tunisia at Sidi Marzouk Tounsi (Mackensen and Schneider 2002: 151, Fig. 22.8). Cameron has recently argued that these three figures on the Benaki fragment are provincial priests on account of the crowns worn by 'all the presiding officials', as well as imagery on the Venation Diptych now held at the Louvre, Paris (2013: 185). Zwirn makes the same identification of a crown on the central figure, but does not note crowns on other figures, instead linking it to this figure's greater size (1979: 93). Both Cameron and Zwirn therefore misidentify the 'crowns' worn by the three figures, and the *venators*, which are more likely a popular male hair fashion in North Africa, reproduced as best it can be in ceramic decoration.

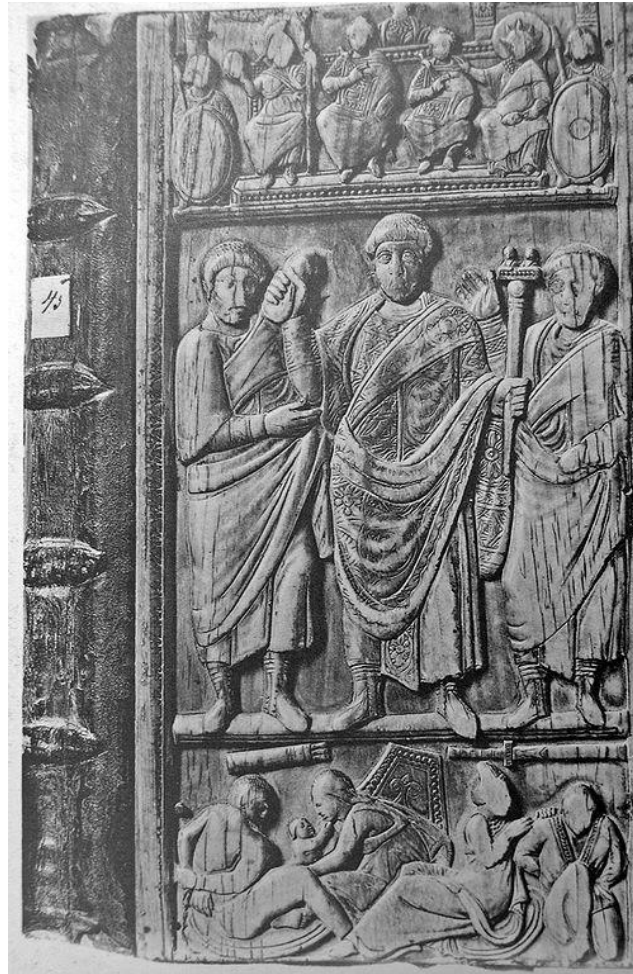


Figure 6.37: Ivory Consular Diptych of Constantius III, c. AD 417.
Halberstadt Cathedral, Halberstadt.

The iconography on the ARS *lanx* thus likely depicts the giving of games by a lesser official. By commissioning a *lanx* decorated with his image, this magistrate was confirming his place in society. Using a more cost-effective material – with the potential for wider distribution – this ARS *lanx* fragment demonstrates a significant method of asserting social status in North Africa using textiles. The depiction of the distribution of textiles during public games, itself an institution that re-iterated social status through seating, highlights how prominent these activities were in African society and its commemoration through a physical media suggests there was social capital to be gained from such behaviours.

6.4 Conclusion

Ideas of social distinction were encoded into North African dress rhetoric by the conceptualisation and performance of social difference through clothing. As the clothed body was equated with the social body, dress was an important element of social regulation and self-expression. Individuals placed themselves in the social environment by judging their own clothing and that of others within a variety of contexts.

No doubt, access to certain representational modes re-affirmed social position in North Africa. Nowhere could social hierarchies be more keenly felt than in the activities of the *domus* and its durable decoration. A large proportion of my discussion above focused on mosaics precisely because mosaics were active constituents in the construction and expression of elite identity – lower status individuals in North Africa do not appear to take an active role in such displays. Mosaics thus provide an indispensable source for investigating how contemporary North Africans viewed and interacted with their world and, most significantly, how they viewed their place in society: while they may not always depict their patrons, mosaic iconography interacts with and expresses pertinent elements of the proprietor's personal interests and circumstances. In short, these mosaic designs document the elite *habitus*. The popularity of figurative scenes in this region makes them prime subjects in the exploration of clothing and its visual representation. The fact that patrons proclaim their identity in relation to their servants or attendants highlights how they perceived their social relationships. It is clear from the evolution of mosaic iconography that, over the course of the late Roman period, the human figure became a more popular form of representation. Coupled with the use of polychromatic visualisations, these mosaics show a vibrant sartorial world in both real and visual form.

Most prominently, clothing acted as a form of conspicuous consumption: dress was worn to be seen. The role of an audience was crucial in re-iterating power structures and thus, while clothing was a means of self-identification, it was also a mechanism for claiming and articulating group identity. In public contexts, the style and fashion of clothing announced aspects of social difference, as seen in the *trabea*. The aristocratic fashion for legitimising their cultural authority through specific dress habits occurred

not in just the physical garments, but gifts of clothing also served to reinforce prominent elite actors and social stratification. Certain North African poetics, most notably the absence of naming inscriptions accompanying Classical figures in mosaic iconography, affirm that the North African viewer was adept at reading the use of archaic or contemporary costume to ascertain the identity of the depicted character. Further, how other groups interacted with these expressions of elite *habitus*, as part of the wider choreography of social interactions, re-asserted notions of social status.

There is, however, a palpable bias in extant source evidence; written and visual material culture pertaining to elite groups is assuredly more visible to the modern scholar. This in itself is indicative that assertions of elite identity included the capacity of conscious, deliberate self-representation – not to mention the resources to produce such self-aggrandising statements. Evidently, the themes that elites exploited to characterise themselves, such as the Four Seasons iconography and hunting motifs, are suggestive of the context thought appropriate for displaying an elite identity. The prominence of hunt imagery from the third century AD onwards confirms a particular North African affinity with this aristocratic pursuit, and the fact that such leisure activities are referenced in material – in texts and imagery – from Vandal North Africa, suggests that such behaviours were enduring characterisations.

My findings suggest that the maintenance of social hierarchies was a crucial concern for elites who sought to project and represent social hierarchies in their domestic décor. While it is plain that mosaics do not replicate the minutiae of elite life, there are artefacts of the elite landscape: to some degree, they echo relevant social dynamics. They offer the viewer a microcosm of elite practice, where actual social relationships were embedded into the iconography.

Chapter 7: Cultural Designation

This chapter explores cultural identity in late Roman and late antique North Africa, surveying a range of visual and literary material to examine how dress was utilised to express aspects of an African cultural identity.

I begin by interrogating references to ‘African’ garments in written sources from a variety of literary genres and locate these finding in the wider North African textile environment, focusing particularly on regional reputations and distinctions apparent in the textual evidence. My discussion then moves to the Return of the Boar motif, a peculiar North African rendering of mosaic design, which identifies distinctive sartorial habits; North African iterations are contrasted to those from Piazza Armerina, Sicily, to support this conclusion. Next, I explore notions of African cultural identity through positive expressions of African heritage as documented in literary evidence as well as how such an identity might be manifested in visual form. From these instances of self-fashioning, I turn to personifications of Carthage, such as the story of the *peplos* used to adorn a statue of Tanit at Carthage. I view these as cultural manifestations of an African identity that are, however, very difficult to distinguish from broader claims of African identity: my discussion of renderings of ‘Carthage’ in visual media – including the Byrsa mosaic and illustrations in the *Notitia Dignitatum* – exemplifies this difficulty. My final point of analysis concentrates on clothing activities in Vandal Africa. This explores not only Victor of Vita’s frequently-cited claim of ‘*de habitu barbaros*’, but also other instances of dress rhetoric deployed in the *Historia persecutionis* and how close scrutiny of these references can ameliorate our understanding of clothing conventions in North Africa from the mid-fifth century AD onwards, as interpreted through mosaic imagery. By appreciating the use of leggings as constitutive of aristocratic fashion and hunting activities and not – as is usually asserted – ‘barbarian’ dress, I situate sartorial practices in Vandal occupied Africa in a framework of continuity, not cultural disruption.

My discussion illustrates that the projection of an ‘African’ cultural identity was an important concern for many North Africans who articulated a group identity through their clothing activities. Their efforts to establish such fashions are paralleled in the differentiation of styles of clothing to produce ‘African’ garments, a notion also

documented in literary material. That the Vandal *habitus* had elements recognisable from pre-existing practice confirms that rather than signify the rupturing of cultural affinities, the Vandal sartorial discourse highlights how enduring some cultural connotations were.

7.1 The 'African' Clothing Context

It is clear that North African dress rhetoric had a particular 'African' character, both in the formation of sartorial discourse and in the actual manifestation of clothing practices on the African social body. Various authors proudly acknowledged their North African identity: in his correspondence to Maximus of Madaura, a town in *Numidia*, Augustine reminds his recipient that he is 'an African writing for Africans' and speaks favourably of the native Punic language (*Ep.* 17.2). He also boasts of Apuleius' African origins, noting that his work will no doubt be more familiar to his African audience (August., *De civ. D.* 8.12; *Ep.* 138. 19; Lancel 2002: 6). This increasing confidence in African heritage is paralleled by more vocal recognition of African sartorial styles, both idealised and real; Tertullian appealed to the *pallium's* African heritage in his rhetoric, and also frames his polemic against his unveiled Carthaginian virgins in terms of rejecting external precedents (*De pall.* 1.3; *De virg. vel.* 3; Wilhite 2007: 143, 137).

'African' clothing was also recognised further afield: thus a passing reference in the *Historia Augusta*, recalling the gifting of clothing by a certain Junius Messalla to actors, mentions '*birri Africani*', or African hooded cloaks (SHA, *Car.* 20.6). This comment, situated in the wider moralising narrative discussing the spectacles put on by the late third-century emperors Carus, Numerian and Carinus, implies a general cultural familiarity with textile differences – this type of hooded cloak is named alongside that from Canusia and cloaks from the Atrebates. Ideas of distinguishing African garments are also found in Diocletian's Price Edict from AD 301, which include the *byrrus Afer*, or hooded African cloak, *fibulatorium Afrum*, or African cloak with a clasp, and *sagum Afrum*, or African cloak (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 19.24, 42, 56, 61). The Edict makes a distinction between African and Numidian clothing, with former being notably the cheapest of the versions of garments and, therefore, presumably of lower quality. To place the above

reference from the *Historia Augusta* into context – admittedly not without methodological issues – the African *byrrus* is only a quarter of the price of the Canusian version. Perhaps the discussion of two relatively cheap *byrrus* forms – the Canusian being valued at 4000 *denarii* and the African hooded cloak at 1,500 *denarii* (*Edict. imp. Diocl.* 19.38, 42) – exaggerated the purpose of the Junius Messalla narrative, which intended to dissuade wealthy patrons from disinheriting their heirs of their patrimony in preference to actors or charlatans (SHA, *Car.* 21.1). In another occasion in the *Historia Augusta*, the emperor Gallienus mocks the ‘loss’ of Atrebatian cloaks as a consequence of the loss of Gaul, implying that Atrebatian cloaks were not highly thought of (SHA, *Gall.* 6.6).

What made these garments so distinctively ‘African’ is difficult to ascertain; ‘African’ could either refer to the geographic origin of the garment or its particular style. Epigraphic evidence is less than clear in its meaning. This is especially true in the case of the Zarai tariff (*CIL* 8.4508), a document which appears to reflect the division of garments with the binary qualifiers of ‘African’ and ‘foreign’. Found in a frontier zone in *Numidia*, this stone inscription dates to AD 202 (Trousset 2002: 368) and one tariff clause – the *lex uestes peregrinae* – is of particular importance for understanding African clothing, as it frames textile activities using the contrasting adjectives ‘*afer*’, or African, and ‘*peregrinae*’, or foreign (Guédon 2017: 260). Interestingly, these are the only goods described in such a manner (Guédon 2014). What did these descriptors refer to? Since the textile list only includes items of everyday use – the *abolla*, *tunica*, *lodix*, and *sagum* – it is likely that these were not luxury products, but suitably good-quality not produced in this local frontier region (Guédon 2017: 263, 265). Guédon proposes that these adjectives acted as an index of the origins of the merchants who travelled through the region, not the goods themselves (2017). This conclusion is logical, as the *lex portus* at Zarai was ideally located to facilitate exchange beyond the *limes*. The customs list acted as a localised document for use in daily trading activities. The vocabulary it employs suggests one reality of intra-provincial trade and situates relevant African clothing behaviours – as part of trade activities – in the broader context of the movement of African textiles. In this way, the references to *afer* and *peregrinus* garments constitute just one of many potential elements describing textiles. No extended explanation of

these two descriptors was necessary since those using the customs list on a frequent basis knew the implications of the stated terms.

Textile products mentioned in the *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* also suggest the categorisation of clothing based on provenance, again in terms of garment origin. Diocletian's Price Edict from AD 301 had documented distinction between African and Numidian clothing – and this contrasts to the *Expositio*, which mentions clothing from Numidia and Mauretania only. This later fourth-century commercial geography makes an explicit distinction between Mauretania trading in textiles and the province of Numidia having trade products (*Expos. mundi* 60)⁷. Accepting that the *Expositio* was composed by a Syrian textile merchant (Grüll 2014), such a linguistic distinction points to an intentional depiction of textile behaviours, with the assertion of *Numidia* as an area of clothing production and Mauretania as not. As a translation from a Greek original, linguistic features suggest that Latin was the author's second language (Rougé 1966). However, this does not weaken the intentional nature of the Latin vocabulary employed (Galdi 2012: 15).

The view of Numidia as a prosperous textile region is confirmed by Andrew Wilson's suggestion that Timgad had a thriving textile economy (2000, 2002, 2004). Elizabeth Fentress' study of the region of Diana Veteranorum, *Numidia*, as a node of interaction between pastoralists and artisans (2013), also finds resonance with the *Expositio*, which refers to '*animalia optima*', or best animals, as opposed to '*iumentis*', beasts of burden (Rougé 1966). Reading this as a continuation of the statement that Numidia has varied textiles and animals to trade (*Expos. mundi* 60), confirms an active Numidian wool economy, perhaps using small ateliers in urban centres or on a small-scale in domestic settings (Fentress 2013: 326). More importantly, the lack of clothing trade or production from *Africa Proconsularis* suggests a discrepancy between source material and popular discourse, as Diocletian's Price Edict frequently uses '*afer*' to qualify clothing. Perhaps the author of the *Expositio* saw a greater cultural association

⁷ *Deinde girantem ad austri terram inuenies terram Mauretaniam. Homines <qui inhabitant> barbarorum uitam et mores <habent>, tamen Romanis subditi. Quae provincia vestem et mancipia negotiatur, frumentum abundant, et habet civitatum Caesaream. Deinde post Mauretaniam Numidia provincia fructibus abundans et sibi sufficiens, et negotia habet: vestem variam et animalia optima'* (*Expos. mundi* 60).

with other economic activities; the Carthaginian region is noted for its urban qualities, food, animals and oil (*Expos. mundi* 61).

7.2 'African' Hunting Garb: the Return of the Boar Hunt Motif

The identification of innate, cultural familiarity with specific clothing styles is visible when investigating hunting costumes in North African mosaics, specifically the Return of the Boar Hunt motif. While the lack of standardised hunting costumes was noted earlier in Chapter 6.2.3, the Return of the Boar Hunt motif establishes the presence of one certain 'North African' fashion. In short, the Return of the Boar Hunt motif comprises two hunters carrying a trussed-up boar on a pole between them and most iterations incorporate a hunting hound under the boar carcass. Forming a small episode on larger mosaic hunting compositions, this motif documented one aspect of the hunting process. An early example, a semi-circular apsidal mosaic (Fig. 7.1) c. AD 210-230 from a residence on the Hill of Juno, Carthage (Bullo and Ghedini: *Karthago* 22;



Figure 7.1: Boar Hunt Mosaic, Hill of Juno, Carthage. c. AD 210-230. Bardo Museum.

Poinssot 1940: 226-227), depicts two returning hunters in the upper register each wearing the *sagum*. The figure on the left wears a short, long-sleeved, belted green tunic, decorated with *orbiculi* on the shoulders and *segmenta* on the lower hem; his legs are covered with *fasciae crurales* that create alternating light and dark chevrons; he is shown wearing a long red *sagum*. The costume of the figure to the right is more difficult to discern due to damage, but he too wears *fasciae crurales* with a *sagum* over his short tunic. These hunting outfits can be compared to those shown in a later Hunt Mosaic (Fig. 7.2) from Dermech, Carthage, dated to the early fourth century AD (Mahjoubi 1967; Ben Abed and Soren). This mosaic was part of a floor that covered a room about 8.50 x 7m in size and depicted a variety of hunting episodes. The motif of the Return from the Boar Hunt is repeated in the upper portion of the mosaic. The dress is very similar to that of the Boar Hunt mosaic: the figure on the left is dressed in a short, long-sleeved, belted red tunic, decorated with dark *orbiculi* on the shoulders, stripes on the hem and *clavi* from neck to hem. A yellow *sagum* is fastened to his chest. His companion is dressed similarly: a short, long-sleeved light brown tunic, likewise decorated, with a red cloak attached to his chest. His legs are also covered by *fasciae crurales*. These two



Figure 7.2: Return of the Boar Hunt motif, Dermech Hunting Mosaic, Carthage. Early fourth century AD.

mosaics suggest that there were particular mosaic conventions associated with portraying the clothing of these types of hunter. Given the popularity of boar episodes in mosaic pavements, there were likely many more iterations of this motif decorating African houses. Whether this was a direct reflection of actual practice is debatable, but clearly this was the conventional way to depict returning boar hunters in North Africa.

In contrast to this African trend in iconography, the Return of the Boar motif in mosaics from Piazza Armerina, Sicily, also dated to the earlier fourth century AD, depicts figures without cloaks. The villa complex at Piazza Armerina was a lavish residence and consensus now accepts that the villa and bath complex was constructed c. AD 320 (Wilson 2018: 202). The villa site is extensive, comprising over 1.5 hectares, and includes over 3500m² of mosaic floors alone (Wilson 1983: 49). There is no doubt that this building, and its decoration, was a form of patron self-advertisement and aggrandisement. These mosaic floors were probably laid by North African mosaicists (Wilson 1983) and, demonstrating the same treatment of the landscape and hunting episodes (Mahjoubi 1967: 267), allows direct comparisons in iconography to be made. One point of sartorial difference is evident from the Small Hunt Mosaic (Fig. 7.3). Located in a large room on the northern side of the peristyle, this mosaic covered an area of 7.3 x 5.9m (Carandini *et al.* 1982: 175). Imagery here shows the hunters in belted tunics, stylised similarly to those in the North African examples: short, long-sleeved tunics with decoration on the cuffs, *orbiculi* on the shoulders, and *clavi* from neck to hem on one figure and *clavi* from neck to waist on the other. Both men wear low shoes and *fasciae crurales*. Imagery on the Great Hunt perpetuated a similar boar hunt costume (Fig. 7.4). This floor decorated a biapsidal *ambulacrum* and various scenes of animal hunting decorate the pavement that is over 60m in length (Carandini *et al.* 1982: 197). In this rendering of the motif, the left figure wears a belted *tunica strictoria* in white and red, decorated at the cuffs and with *segmenta* on the lower hem and *clavi* from neck to waist. His associate wears a belted *tunica strictoria*, decorated in the same places. Both are also shown wearing low shoes and *fasciae crurales*. The differences



Figure 7.3: Return of Boar Hunt motif, Small Hunt Mosaic, Villa Romana del Casale. c. AD 320. Piazza Armerina, Sicily.

between the clothing choice of these hunters from Piazza Armerina and the Carthaginian examples is striking, especially considering their production by craftsmen from the same workshops (Wilson 1982: 413). Variations in iconography are therefore



Figure 7.4: Return of Boar Hunt motif, Great Hunt Mosaic, Villa Romana del Casale. c. AD 320. Piazza Armerina, Sicily.

not a case of imprecise replication, but purposeful personalisation of imagery to suit the patron's own geographical context.

The existence of common motifs across the Mediterranean world has important implications for the study of clothing: variations in costume from North African patterns – however small – suggest a particular, selective approach to the representation of hunting costumes. As noted, the boar hunters from Piazza Armerina lack *saga* while their North African contemporary counterparts are visualised with them. North African mosaic schools were familiar with the traditional rendering of this motif, so the choice not to dress figures in cloaks at Piazza Armerina would seem purposeful and perhaps indicative of actual dress practice. The depiction of *saga* in North African iterations fits into the framework of North African clothing stereotypes which included African cloaks; the reference in the *Historia Augusta* to *byrri* might be a generic label for a hooded garment (SHA, *Car.* 20.10), as the iconographic *saga* present in the Return of the Boar Hunt attests to a peculiar resonance of the *sagum* cloak in visual representations of North African hunt activities. The possibility that such imagery reflects actual sartorial practice should not be ignored. While the *Historia Augusta* is not a factual or objective history, the cultural ideas and ideals encoded in these imperial biographies do reflect, to some degree, pertinent cultural themes. Thus, the mention of African cloaks interacted with common characterisations of clothing from this region, as corroborated by imagery produced in the African context.

7.3 Clothing African Personifications: 'Africa'

While my examination of hunting costume demonstrates the minutiae of African clothing stylisations, a larger collective 'African' identity was fostered through more general reference to African clothing, fashioning dress behaviours as required. Thus Apuleius, in the mid-second century AD, characterises Carthage as 'the divine Muse of Africa, Carthage is the Latin Muse of all who wear the toga' (Apul., *Flor.* 20.10). Tertullian proclaimed a similar view as he played on the strong association between the North African populace and their attire in his *De pallio*. Yet, Tertullian frames contemporary

events – only a couple decades after Apuleius – in terms of a misjudged acculturation in the adoption of the toga (*De pall.* 1) and the decline of the *pallium* in fact signalled the loss of African inheritance. Apuleius and Tertullian could evoke different characterisations of Africa precisely because the visualisation and depiction of clothed populations relied on prominent cultural ideals. Both works are attuned to their local cultural context – Apuleius’ *Florida* has been called ‘Carthaginian Orations’ (Lee 2005: 14), while Tertullian makes known his intended audience are ‘*virī Carthaginenses*’ (*De pall.* 1.1) – and each version of African society, clothed in either the toga or *pallium*, constructed symbolic associations for their North African audiences. It is significant that such texts deploy clothing imagery for rhetorical effect. It is no coincidence that Apuleius and Tertullian place their rhetoric in the contemporary environment by referring to contemporary garments. Indeed, the close parallels between Tertullian’s opening to *De pallio* (1.1) and *Florida* (16.1) make a case for imitation (Hunink 2001: 155). The familiarity of clothing allowed such sartorial imagery to be cultural shorthand, shaped to suit each context. No doubt, those listening to these orations would immediately judge their own costume in comparison to that described in the text, whether positively or negatively.

The characterisation of North Africans in terms of their vestments relied on such designations being familiar cultural concepts and the re-iteration of identities through these fashions perpetuated these relationships. A similar process is identifiable in personifications of the African province, itself another mode of cultural self-identification. As artistic realisations of an abstract entity, images of ‘Africa’ isolated particular qualities thought to signify this region. The most illuminating example of the personification of ‘Africa’ comes from the second-century AD Mosaic of the Allegories of Rome and her Provinces (Fig. 7.5) from *Cubiculum* 27 in the House of Africa at El Djem (Carucci 2007: 142). The mosaic is composed of six tessellated hexagons, showing alternating busts and standing figures, flanking a central hexagon containing the personification of ‘Rome’. These figures represent Spain, Asia, an unknown province,



Figure 7.5: Mosaic of the Allegories of Rome and her Provinces, House of Africa, El Djem. Second century AD. El Djem Archaeological Museum.

Egypt, Sicily and Africa. The bust of 'Africa' is immediately recognisable by her elephant-hide headdress, including tusks, which sits over her parted hair (Fig. 7.6). She is wearing an orange sleeveless tunic, reminiscent of the Greek *peplos*, knotted at the shoulders, which leaves her shoulders and neck bare. Here, this iconographic rendering is conveyed through clothing accessories, not garments and it is clear that the elephant-hide headdress, is an imported Roman view of Africa. Images of the personified Africa, visualised as such, do not appear until the minting of coinage by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio in the mid-first century AD (Rives 1995: 69; Maritz 2001). As such, they are a Roman artistic invention, not an indigenous conception. On these occasions, it is clear that the imagery refers to a general African personification. Placing such a depiction in the House of Africa – one of the largest domestic buildings in the North African provinces (Carucci 2007: 142) – is significant, clearly implying that the patron felt this imagery was appropriate for his residence. The choice not to show Africa wearing more contemporary garb is striking, but in any case it would be impossible to correlate such image with that from the aforementioned written-clothing since Apuleius' and



Figure 7.6: Personification of Africa, Mosaic of the Allegories of Rome and her Provinces, House of Africa, El Djem. Second century AD. El Djem Archaeological Museum.

Tertullian's visualisations of the North African population are male; as a personification of the female form, Africa cannot wear the toga or *pallium*.

Another mosaic (Fig. 7.7), from *Triclinium* 28 in the same complex, nuances our understanding of North Africa clothing rhetoric, most notably, the distinction between 'Africa' and 'Mauretania'. Although conventionally considered to be another depiction of the personified 'Africa', albeit lacking tusks on her headdress, on closer inspection this mosaic actually personifies Mauretania, as Wilson convincingly argues (2016: 106). Certainly, her 'corkscrew' hairstyle is markedly different from the assured depiction of 'Africa', and Wilson cites other instances where this 'cornrow' hairstyle is employed for the personified Mauretania, including one African red slipware dish where the image of Mauretania is labelled and contrasted to a depiction of Africa (2016: 104). Although this vessel post-dates the mosaic imagery, it supports the claim of the continued dissemination of this iconography.



Figure 7.7: Personification of Mauretania, House of Africa, El Djem. Second century AD. El Djem Archaeological Museum.

The personifications of Africa and Mauretania using bust imagery does not allow an examination of garments to be conducted, although both appear to wear the *peplos*. That this visual imagery occurs using a traditional formula of African personifications is enlightening and fits into the general cultural context of second-century North Africa. The literary output of African authors at this time – especially Marcus Cornelius Fronto and Apuleius – reflects an awareness of the various designations of African heritage and the evolution of African self-fashioning; whereas Fronto presents himself as ‘the African at Rome’, stressing his civic identity Romanised Cirta, *Numidia*, through reference to the Carthaginian defeat in the Punic wars (*De bello Parthico* 8), Apuleius fashions himself as the ‘African in Africa’ (Keulen 2014: 143) and expresses a mixed heritage of half Numidian and half Gaetolian (Apul., *Apol.* 24; Wilhite 2007: 4). Such instances demonstrate a growing confidence in African identities and an audience receptive to such notions. This filtered into the innovative mosaic iconography produced in the region as well as the way in which clothing rhetoric was mobilised as a marker of a specific, African identity, particularly in relation to debates about contemporary dressing styles.

Such concepts were, however, malleable and subject to reinforcement or change. As a literary trope, representing an external characterisation of the area, the personification of Africa in Claudian's *De Bello Gildonico*, written at the turn of the fifth century AD, is less flattering. Here, Africa wears a broken ivory comb that loosens her hair, as well as a crown of corn (15.1.135-137), the ivory ornament replacing her elephant headdress, an attribute more fitting for weakened Africa at the hands of the tyrant Gildo (Ware 2012: 155). Such a characterisation recalls similar, noted images of the persecuted Perpetua, whose clothing reflects her circumstances. Fluid constructions of an African sartorial identity highlight relevant qualities as identified by internal and external individuals. Over time, the self-projection of a specifically African identity came to expressive positive ideals, actively referring to this region as a cultural entity in itself.

7.4 Clothing African Personifications: Carthage

The image of 'Carthage' as a personified entity highlights particular attributes that were associated with this city. As the first city of Africa, Carthage provided infrastructure and socio-religious institutions that permeated throughout the rest of Africa and this metropolis was an important physical marker of contemporary African identity; its built environment reflecting developing religious doctrines and its intellectual character showcasing a multitude of religio-philosophical debates. Writing in the mid-fourth century AD, Ausonius characterised the city as vying against Constantinople for second place in the ranking of Roman cities, but, despite an established history, she ultimately concedes defeat (Auson., *Ordo nob. Urb* 2, 3). When the Vandals entered Carthage on the 19th October AD 439, Christian communities were too engrossed in their entertainment activities to comprehend the enormity of incoming changes. Thus, Salvian of Marseilles critically characterises the Christian population who were too preoccupied with their circuses and theatre (*Gub.* 6.12). Quodvultdeus frames events in a similar way (Quod., *Temp. barb.* 1.1). Although imbued with Christian censure and moral rebuke, such excerpts clearly reflect a strong external sense of African participation in urban activities.

There was a long-standing cultural significance imbued in clothing and Carthage personified. Aristotle records a story of a *peplos* originally adorning the statue of Juno at Lacinium, Italy, that was admired by all. Alcisthenes of Sybaris – motivated by avarice and seeing Juno’s dress – commissioned an expensive garment for himself which, when displayed during Hera’s festival, was admired more than anything else (*Mir. ausc.* 96). Purple in colour and fifteen cubits in size, it was decorated with two sets of woven bands. Eventually, this *peplos* ended up in the hands of the tyrant Dionysius the Elder, who sold it to the Carthaginians for 120 *talents*, after which it is presumed to adorn the statue of the old Punic deity Tanit in Carthage. Alcisthenes’ *peplos* appears to be widely known even becoming the subject of a now lost work by Polemon titled *On the Robes in Carthage* (Ἐν Καρχηδόνι Πέπλων), as recorded by Athenaeus in the third century AD (*Ath., Deip.* 12.541b). Around the same time, a reference by Tertullian to pagans ‘who court their idols by dressing them, and by adorning them in their sanctuary’ (*Tert. lein.* 16) may refer explicitly to the original *peplos* (Benko 1993: 101). By then, Carthage had syncretised Tanit with Caelestis.

The *Historia Augusta* too records that a groups of Africans used this *peplos* as a symbol of authority (Benko 1993: 101) when dressing Celsus, a certain pretender to the Imperial office in the robes of Caelestis ‘*peplo deae Caelestis ornatum*’ (*SHA, Tyranni Triginta* 29). Even if such accounts conflate two garments, the attestation of the adorning of the tutelary goddess of Carthage signified its important religious function. Regardless of the veracity of these events, such accounts showcase how authority was embedded in such garments and indicates why the personifications of Africa and Mauretania might wear the *peplos*. Cultural significance and heritage could be woven into the stories of such artefacts until they became part of and were promoted as the very social fabric. Changes in religious custom, however, overcame this cultural significance with Quodvultdeus noting that, by the time of the Vandal invasion, the extensive temple to Caelestis at Carthage had long been abandoned (*Quod., Prom.* 3.38.44). He makes no mention of the fate of the statue’s dress.

Clearly, visualisations of Carthage were intentional constructions, informed by contemporary and historical cultural poetics. An illuminating example from late Roman North Africa is the Carpet Mosaic from Carthage, also called the Byrsa mosaic, which

was found in 1844 in an elite town house in the south-eastern end of Carthage's urban centre. It originally measured 8 x 5m (Clover 1986: 3). The overall design of the mosaic (Fig. 7.8) divided the space into six rows of five columns of figural medallions with the interstices of the medallions decorated with a selection of scenes, predominantly hunting scenes. Comparing the imagery with other fifth-century iconography, especially in terms of clothing and dress accessories, confirms a contemporaneous date (Freed 2011: 88; Parrish 1984: 23). Another fragment from the same floor contributes towards a likely date of composition: situated within the third row of interstices, the depiction of a rider and a horse bears parallels to the Bordj-Djedid 'Vandal' Hunting mosaic. Conventionally dated to the fifth century AD, similarities in stylisation of clothing,

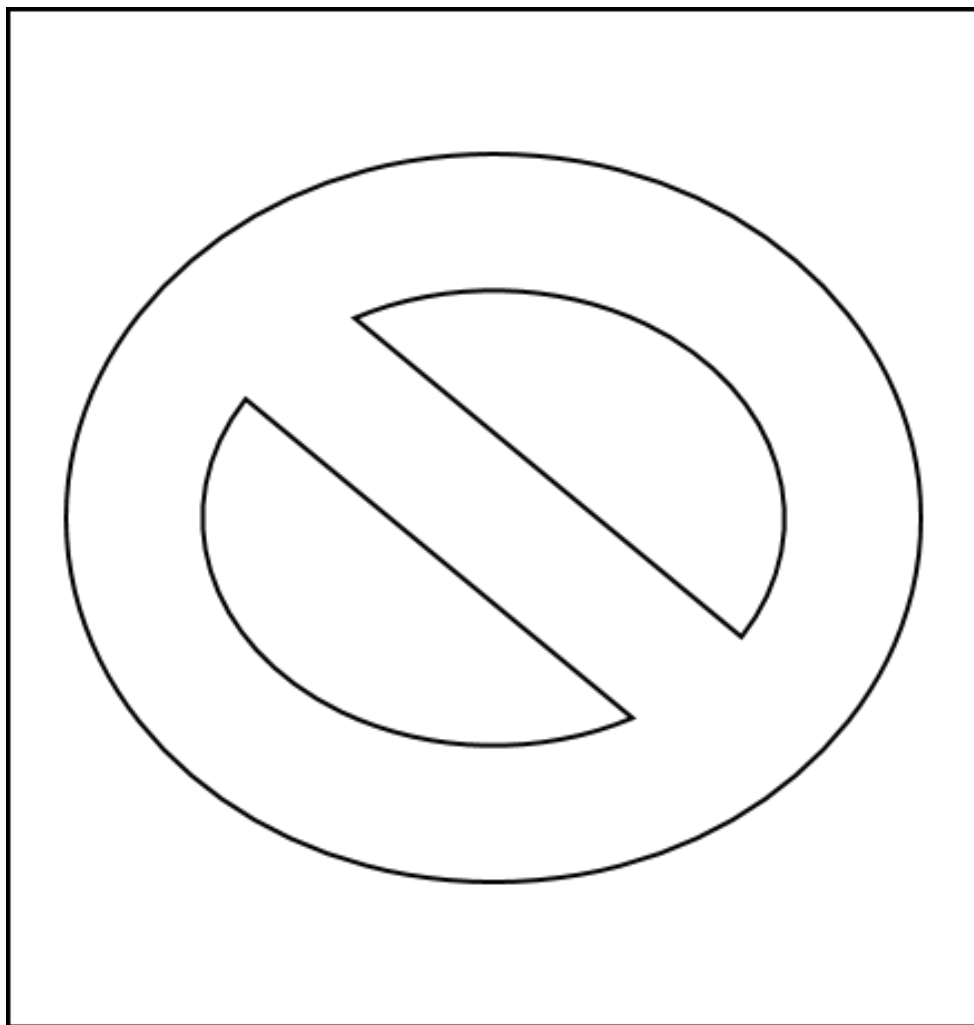


Figure 7.8: Drawing of Carpet Mosaic, Byrsa Hill, Carthage, 1844.

gesture and iconography support a composition date at around the end of the fifth-century AD (Freed 2011: 88; Parrish 1984: 23), although not, as previously discussed in Chapter 6.2.3, due to the identification of 'Vandal' – and thus 'barbarian' – dress, but other iconographic elements. The long draped garment and the frontal pose also resemble personifications of Carthage found on Vandal coinage (Clover 1986: 3; Freed 2011: 89). On the Carpet Mosaic, Carthage is dressed in short-sleeved long green tunic over which her *palla* is draped (Bühl 1995, Figs. 141 and 142). Her mantle appears to extend over her right arm, perhaps a particular stylisation on the part of the mosaicist. Two bracelets on her left arm attest to the use of a short-sleeved or else sleeveless tunic. The other medallions in this register appear to depict four other females, most likely the Four Seasons due to their continued popularity in North African mosaic iconography (Freed 2011: 88).

Although found relatively complete, only three fragments from this mosaic survive; they are now located at the Musée du Louvre, Paris (Freed 2011: 89). A lack of methodical recording makes it very hard to substantiate the mosaic's original location: Falbe believed it to be the site of the Temple of Apollo mentioned by Appian, while Dureau de la Malle preferred the baths of Gargilius (Franks 1860: 223). Although the mosaic iconography is devoid of objective architectural contextualisation, there is no doubt that, originating from an urban domestic context, the room originally functioned as a reception room, possibly an *oecus* or *triclinium* (Clover 1986: 3; Bockmann 2013: 51). The interpretation of the mosaic's iconography as a whole relies on a drawing by Alphonse Rousseau from 1850 published in *Revue archéologique* (260-261; Fig. 7.8), as retouching to the extant mosaic has altered its original imagery and imposed later presuppositions of what it 'should' have looked like. When comparing Rousseau's drawing with the mosaic's current design, it is clear that the image of 'Carthage', the central medallion from the top row was 'restored' to include a radiate nimbus instead of a mural crown, prompting some scholars to identity the individual as an *orans* (Parrish 1984: 128-131). These modern alterations misjudge the original iconography. Indeed, the Carpet Mosaic at Byrsa represents the culmination of developments in African mosaic iconography, featuring a civic personification, the Four Seasons and hunting imagery intertwined in a complex composition.

It is possible that early modern attempts to restore the Byrsa mosaic were influenced by copies of the western part of the *Notitia Dignitatum* (the *Notitia Occidentis*), which shows a figure – identified as the personification of Carthage – encircled by a nimbus (Clover 1986: 2-3). This conventional interpretation identifies a correspondence with the Carpet Mosaic fragment and an image (Fig. 7.9) associated with the proconsul of Africa, depicting ‘Carthage’ (*ND Occ.* 18 in MS. Canon. Misc. 378, fol. 147r), with Clover stating that ‘the female figure, therefore, was the personification of the great city’, owing to the proconsul’s residence being in this location (1986: 2). Yet,



Figure 7.9: Personification of Carthage, MS. Canon. Misc. 378, fol. 147r. Bodleian Library, Oxford.



Figure 7.10: Personifications of Dioceses Italy, Illyricum, and Africa, MS. Canon. Misc. 378, fol. 132r. Bodleian Library, Oxford.

in the accompanying illustrations (Fig. 7.10) in the same manuscript of the three dioceses under the praetorian prefect – ‘Italy, ‘Illyricum’ and ‘Africa’ (Occ. 2 in MS. Canon. Misc. 378, fol. 132r) – ‘Carthage’ wears a different costume: a long pink with a green mantle. Is this still Carthage or the personification of Africa?

According to Alexander (1976: 14), the most iconographically sympathetic copy of the *Notitia* illustrations is that from Munich (Occ. 18 in Clm. 10291, fol. 423r), where the figure wears a tunic and small wrapped mantle in the matching colour; importantly she also lacks the radiate in her nimbus. However, Alexander argues that this version is not the most faithful realisation of the clothing of the original, but rather the copy from

the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, retains the closest sartorial features (1976: 14; Ms. 86. 72). Fortunately, one leaf of the manuscript preserves the miniature of the Proconsul of Africa (Ms. 86. 72 f. 4; Alexander 1976, Pl 8): the female personification wears a floor-length tunic *strictoria* with a mantle draped over her left shoulder. Alexander's argument bears merit, even considering that the full-frontal pose in the Cambridge copy differs from the figure on the Munich example.

Establishing the utility of these book illuminations for this discussion of late Roman clothing is difficult, except for a reference to Count Palatine Ottheinrich's judgement on the illustrations for his copy, produced in AD 1550 using oil-drenched paper to achieve a form of tracing (Maier 1969: 1025). These images were copied from the *Codex Spirensis*, a now-lost Carolingian copy of the original late Roman manuscript. Apparently discontent with the first copy of the illustrations he received (*M*¹), Ottheinrich requested new images *M*² (Alexander 1976: 11). Maier is critical of the faithfulness of copying, noting that the traced version could not have been retraced themselves. Instead, the illustrations for *M*² were produced 'free-hand' and, in his opinion, these second versions only 'preserve the style' of the archetype and are not accurate representations of the illustrations (Maier 1969: 1028-1029). Details of the dress, however, confirm some correspondence with the original fifth-century illustrations. The tunic style bears some resemblance to late antique fashions, although the tuck in the garment at knee height is an unusual feature. Ears of corn in the figure's hands also imply an authentic depiction, as other versions only show ambiguous types of foliage, while the rejected illustration of Africa from *M*¹ even shows Carthage holding two birds by the neck (Alexander 1979, Fig. 34). In any case, the variation in clothing shown for illustrations associated with the praetorian prefect and the proconsul of Africa suggest that there was no exclusive costume for personifications of 'Africa', or indeed Carthage.

A number of inconsistencies in the text of the *Notitia* prevent the confirmation of a single unitary date (Kulikowski 2000: 361 n.8). This has obvious ramifications in how we engage with the *Notitia* in terms of its clothing visualisations. Notably, was this a working document? An audience obviously affects reception of the imagery. The depiction of 'Carthage' sits alongside other personifications, but, importantly,

accompanies the text. Are they incidental or visual proxies for their content? In all likelihood, such caricatures, while recognisable enough to claim allusion to their signifiers, were composed in an artistic tradition open to interpretation and schematic depiction. As a document iterating political and military office hierarchy, the images in the *Notitia* are secondary to the representation of offices. My discussion does suggest, however, that in all likelihood the original image did not include a radiate nimbus, supporting Parrish's claim of incorrect restoration (1984: 128-131). Finally, the evidence from the *Notitia Dignitatum* suggests one important conclusion: namely, the continued relevance of elements of Africa – or Carthage – personified. Pre-dating the iconography on the Byrsa mosaic, the personification of Carthage in the *Notitia* was at least to some degree fit for purpose. Its iconography was relevant and meaningful. Of course, the female personification on the Byrsa mosaic also wears a costume that is not out of place in late antique Africa: she is wrapped in a large mantle and her tunic extends to the floor.

Without definitive evidence for the identity of the mosaic's patron and their archaeological context, it is difficult to establish the exact implications behind the re-use of imagery. Due to its proposed date, potentially into the Vandal-era, two hypotheses for the significance of the Byrsa mosaic iconography are possible. The first sees the patron as an African native, who re-affirms Carthage's African heritage and cultural identity through the inclusion of this personification and, in light of changing political dynamics, suggests a desire to re-iterate patron identity as part of the traditional Romano-African elite. On the other hand, if the patron was a newcomer to Carthage, it is possible that the use of an established iconographic motif was a mechanism of asserting participation in traditional visual forms of self-presentation. As discussed below, the Vandal occupation of Africa did not eradicate all existing connections to cultural signifiers. In fact, this period of uncertainty and negotiation saw intensified expressions of cultural continuation by the incoming group. Such a caricature is present in Florentius' panegyric celebrating the regnal anniversary of the Vandal king Thrasamund where Carthage is the 'picture of a flourishing capital as centre of education, culture, and royal benevolence' (AL R376; Bockmann 2013: 40).

7.5 'Vandal' Clothing

As the previous section demonstrates, 'African' clothing habits characterised the region and its inhabitants in a variety of different, often contradictory, ways. Clothing systems reflect power dynamics and hierarchies as clothing signifiers were a significant cultural commodity. It is in this context that Victor of Vita, in his *Historia Persecutionis*, frames Geiseric's decree dispossessing the Carthaginian elites of their personal property, itself given as a continuation of his 'wild and frenzied acts of wickedness' (Vict. Vit. 1.12). Of course, Victor's narrative is coloured by his view of events, especially doctrinal differences between the Catholics, who he presents as orthodox – being a Nicene priest himself – and the Arians, who he portrays as heretics (Whelan 2018: 9). Yet, as the only contemporary account of events in early Vandal Africa, his presentation merits investigation, not only in what he recounts, but also in what he expects his audience to connect with. Victor laments:

He [Geiseric] thereupon published a decree that each person was to bring forward whatever gold, silver, gems and items of costly clothing he had, and so in a short time the greedy man was able, by means of this device, to carry away property which had been handed down from father and grandfathers (1.12).

Thus, his narrative intensifies the financial aspect to the Vandals' cruel actions and, while it is difficult to ascertain whether Victor imagined clothing as being part of this loss of heritage, its incorporation suggests it might have been. This instance also parallels the story of Junius Messalla as described above, where the improper division of patrimony disrupted normative institutions (SHA, *Car.* 20). Of course, Victor characterises the Vandals as inflicting far worse punishments on the North African Nicene population than the removal of personal objects (Vict. Vit. 1.3), though these actions clearly fulfilled Victor's agenda. His work exhibits a certain emphasis on 'social martyrdom' recalling how the Vandals humiliated Nicene bishops through the subversion of their identity markers (Merrills 2011). Dress provided an immediate snapshot of the wearer's identity; thus, the confiscation of personal items of apparel – both clothing and jewellery – represented the denial of normative forms of self-identification.

Clothing maintained its cultural function as a marker of identity during the Vandal occupation of North Africa, but became increasingly politically-charged. One of the best-known instances of clothing discourse from the period is another from Victor. Here, he notes that ‘a huge number of our Catholics who served in the royal household used to go in [to Nicene churches] dressed like Vandals’ (Vict. Vit. 2.8). This notion of ‘*de habitu barbaros*’ has conventionally been treated by historians as evidence of a distinctive Vandal wardrobe, linked to Vandal ethnicity (Conant 2012: 61). Subsequent interpretations are becoming more nuanced: as Merrills and Miles have stressed, this excerpt implies a close and recognisable association between the Hasding court and the articles of dress these individuals had affected (2010: 103). These individuals wearing ‘barbarian’ clothes were courtiers who donned such garments as part of wider Romano-African aristocratic fashion (von Rummel 2007: 183-191, 2008). To some extent, this form of dress must have been different from that worn by other Nicene worshippers, but the details remain unknown (Conant 2012: 61). Such ‘barbarian’ dress does not grant barbarian ethnicity onto its wearer, instead it acts as a cultural signifier. Huneric’s persecution targeted royal courtiers wearing the clothing of this particular elite social status, whose aristocratic clothing denoted participation in the Vandal court (von Rummel 2002: 132-133). The transgressive element in this narrative is not the clothing itself, but the fact that it was worn in a setting deemed ‘inappropriate’. Indeed, it is telling that Huneric targets Nicene Christians as they enter Nicene churches; how else could the distinction between Arian and Nicene be made? As ever in the history of North Africa, religious orthodoxy was instrumental in the construction and expression of identities. The ultimate objective of Huneric’s orders is anti-heretical – the dissuasion from his courtiers’ participation in Nicene Church practice. As this episode demonstrates, clothing was still seen as an extension of power and social hierarchies.

Of course, Victor’s characterisation of these dress deviants was carefully crafted; if he presented these Nicene individuals as Vandal or Barbarian he risked destabilising his narrative that opposed Nicene and Arian, and thus ‘Roman’ and ‘Vandal’ (Whelan 2018: 182-183). To this end, Victor presents the transgressive Nicene worshippers as merely affecting the dress of the military elite with the ultimate aim to censure Catholics who fraternise with the persecutors. Such cultural collusion, therefore, might render

itself visible in the outward appearance of Nicene North Africans. For Victor, 'Vandal' dress was not an essentialist ethnic marker, but a signifier of co-operation and integration. Anti-Arian discourse colours Victor's work and we must be aware of his purpose in recording such events. By presenting Vandal actions in the structure of 'persecution' by an external group, Victor placed himself in the pre-existing framework of the battle between orthodoxy and heresy (Fournier 2017: 688). While religious conflict was a key component of the Vandal period, cultural change was an equally significant motivator.

Victor's lack of explicit description of what barbarian clothing actually constituted hinders efforts to establish the precise manifestations of sartorial distinction in Vandal Africa. Yet, despite this absence, we can compare how clothing rhetoric was deployed and establish whether clothing maintained a similar cultural function under Vandal rule as it had previously held. Although very little evidence remains for garments worn during the Vandal period, the intrinsic relationship between dress and cultural identity allows some deductions. First, we know from references by Victor that forced nakedness was a Vandal strategy of social humiliation (Vict. Vit. 3.21), implying that Vandal behaviour interacted with earlier attitudes towards dress and undress. Whether Vandal groups themselves held similar moral judgements is not the point, but rather that Victor could deploy such despicable actions in his characterisation of his Vandal persecution. For his audience, the denial of dress was a humiliating manifestation of weakness and an indicator of the dire acts of these Vandal heretics. While often associated with martyred or exiled individuals, enforced nudity is especially pronounced in acts against those of noble birth (Vict. Vit. 1.14-15, 3.21; Merrills and Miles 2010: 104-105). To visibly strip elites of their elevated status through the removal of the very clothing that pronounced such identity was a highly symbolic act. Of course, not all sartorial action in the Vandal world was so negatively contrived, but the extant source evidence is coloured by motivations to either praise or deride these new Vandal overlords.

The aforementioned persecution of Nicene worshippers in Victor's work illustrates that access to power or allegiance to those with a monopoly on power could be signified through appearance. Such aristocratic fashion obviously was not restricted

to those of Vandal origin and this costume acted as a litmus test of the cultural mixing of Vandal and Romano-African communities: Victor notes the conversion of two wealthy but anonymous Vandals to the Catholic faith (Vict. Vit. 3.38). Importantly, such people did not lose their 'Vandal' designation. Thus, religious identity, while being a prominent social identity, was not the sole defining characteristic of an individual. Such frameworks followed in the fashion of earlier socio-cultural dynamics where social hierarchies were fluid.

Since Victor of Vita does not elucidate what form such 'barbarian clothing' took, establishing 'Vandal' sartorial practice has long plagued scholars who either wished to identify moments of change or continuities. Most prominently, the argument for a particular Vandal ethnic or national costume has been disproved through the excavation of Vandal period graves in North Africa, and there is actually very little archaeological evidence that confirms or points to any distinctive 'Vandal' identity professed during death. Only eight graves in fact so far attest to a potential 'Germanic' origin (Koenig 1981; Merrills 2004: 12). For North African groups, so-called Vandal sartorial styles were not ethnic signifiers, but instead proclaimed a particular social status (Kleeman 2002; von Rummel 2002). This notion is confirmed in the *Historia Persecutionis* where Victor's silence is instructive and damning. Victor's constructed group identities, employed in his persecution narrative, highlight an external division of North African communities and the creation of artificial barriers and boundaries as manifested through dress. The same can be seen in Procopius' simplistic portrayal that at the Justinianic re-conquest the African population comprised African inhabitants who were 'Roman' and the 'Vandal' tyrant and his army (BV 1.19-20; Rodolfi 2008: 237). Both late antique authors have propagandistic motivations for positing Vandal identity as distinct and encroaching on the African population, as they do not want to highlight the co-operation between North African groups which surely did exist (Vict. Vit. 3.62; Wood 2011: 434). Unfortunately, what such writings do not offer us is a perspective of what those living

in the Vandal Kingdom thought about their identities. How did people understand and construct their identities and demonstrate group affiliations?

To answer this, the lens can be turned to a distinctive North African mosaic, the Bordj-Djedid 'Vandal' Hunting Mosaic, likely produced during the Vandal period (see Chapter 6.2.3). Fortunately, Joann Freed discovered a coloured drawing (Fig. 7.11) dating to 1859 of the mosaic when it was still *in situ* which contextualises the extant individual pieces (2011: 184). The drawing shows the mosaic as being composed of three registers, each featuring a mounted rider. At the time of its discovery, Davis' nostalgic interpretation was that 'the costume of the riders are certainly not Roman but the mosaic itself is of Roman date' (Davis 1861: 540). His conclusion therefore sought to reproduce the traditional belief that had become accepted fact. Yet, conceptualising such iconography using the framework of 'barbarian', and therefore inherently 'non-Roman', identity is misinformed. While it is impossible to say if the clothing depicted is an example of 'barbarian' dress evoked by Victor or another sartorial style popular in

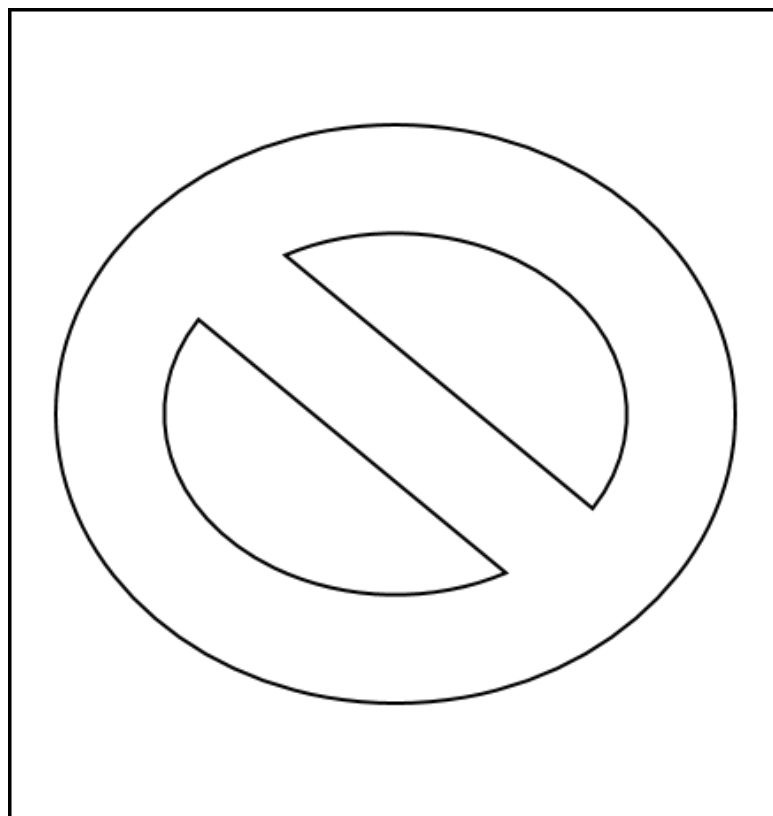


Figure 7.11: Davis' Drawing of the 'Vandal' Hunting Mosaic, Bord-Dejdid, Carthage. 1861.



Figure 7.12: Upper rider, 'Vandal' Hunting Mosaic fragment, Bordj-Djedid, Carthage. Late fifth century AD. British Museum.

aristocratic circles, this mosaic does highlight fashions deemed appropriate in artistic self-expression during Vandal rule. The figure in the upper register (Fig. 7.12) wears a blue, short, belted *strictoria* tunic that is decorated around the cuffs. He also wears white shorts and calf-high riding boots that leave his lower legs bare, revealing his dark-coloured skin. Behind him, a green *sagum* flutters in the wind. The male in the middle register (Fig. 7.13) is dressed in a red short, belted *strictoria* tunic decorated with *clavi*



Figure 7.13: Lower rider, 'Vandal' Hunting Mosaic, Bordj-Djedid, Carthage. Late fifth century AD. British Museum.

and matching decoration on the sleeves and cuffs. His legs are covered in dark trousers and red ankle wraps, and he wears low boots. The final figure (Fig. 7.14), who is lassoing a stag, wears a similar outfit: a short, yellow belted *strictoria* tunic, dark trousers, coloured ankle wraps and low boots. All three men are shown with long hair. As said, the wearing of trousers does not necessarily showcase a particular ethnic identity and fits into the framework described above; elsewhere in North African mosaics, other hunters are dressed in trousers or leggings. Indeed, the personification of Winter from the Dominus Julius Mosaic wears leggings (Fig. 7.15). The decorative patterning on his clothing is also similar to that of the middle hunter at Bordj-Djedid. Yet, no ‘Vandal’ interpretation is levied at the Dominus Julius Mosaic.

In this regard, previous interpretations of the Bull Mosaic found in a small reception room in Silin are illuminating (Fig. 7.16). In the centre, a giant white bull charges at a victim who is held in place by a man wearing an animal skin and fringed shirt, while a figure dressed in a white, long, long-sleeved tunic with black *clavi* points towards two victims who appear to be in the air. All three ‘victims’ wear long-sleeved



Figure 7.14: Middle hunter, ‘Vandal’ Hunting Mosaic, Bordj-Djedid, Carthage. Late fifth century AD. British Museum.



Figure 7.15: Personification of Winter dressed in leggings, Dominus Julius Mosaic, Carthage. c. AD 380-400. Bardo Museum.

white tunics over long white leggings. The dating for this mosaic is debated: Picard, for instance, argued that it is a third-century artefact (1985: 236) based upon the idea that these victims were captured in Caracalla's eastern campaign in AD 216. Dunbabin, finding this very speculative, attributes it to the mid- to second half of the second century AD (1999: 124). Thus, the presence of leggings or trousered figures should not always be read as an attempt to portray 'foreign' or 'barbarian' clothing. Interpretations of trousered figures as 'foreign' or non-Roman misunderstands the broader mosaic iconography – aristocratic hunting – an activity that, as Fridamal exemplified, was prominent in Vandal Africa. As argued above, military and hunting attire could be described as having 'barbarian' characteristics, but this does not point towards a particular 'Vandalic' form of clothing as equating to barbarian. Duval has also questioned the categorisation of 'Germanic' clothing in these mosaic fragments (2002). Instead, tight-fitting clothing, such as trousers, was extremely practical for hunting activities as they protected the legs (Ville 1968).

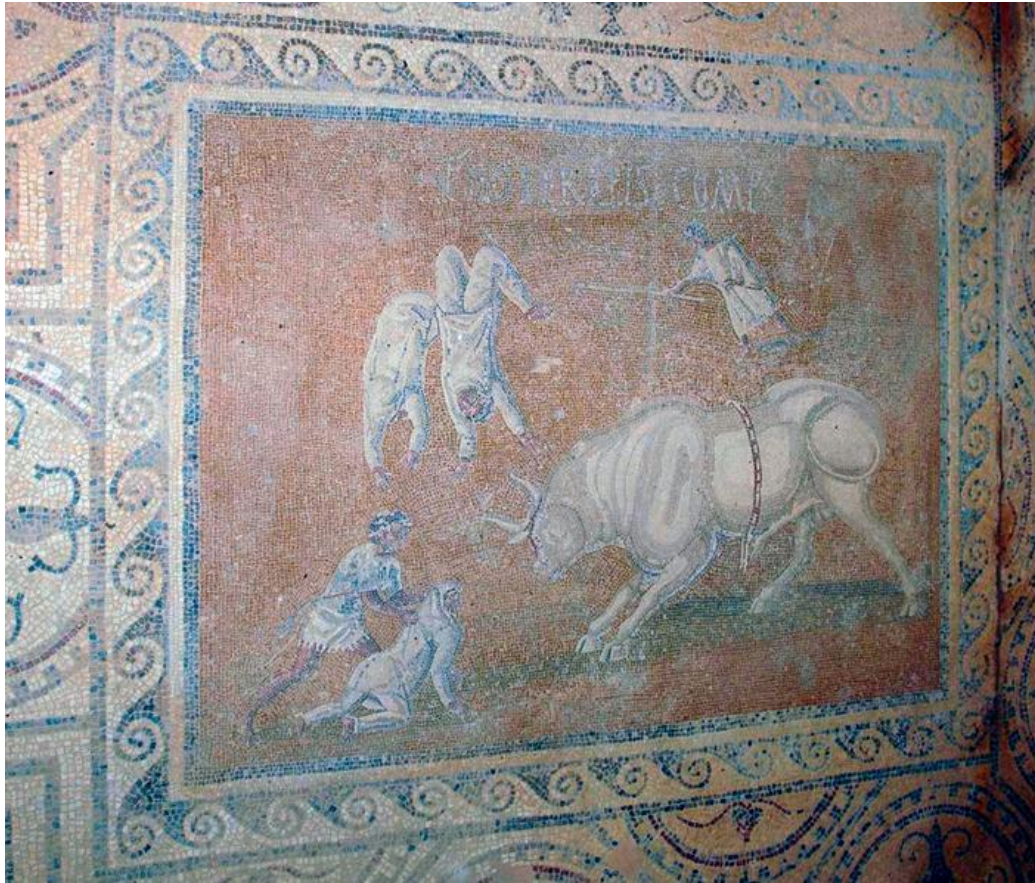


Figure 7.16: Figures wearing leggings, Silin Mosaic. Mid second century or third century AD.

Another late antique floor mosaic, the Offering of the Crane Mosaic (Fig. 7.17), from Khéreddine in Carthage (*Inv. Tun.* 607), can be used to substantiate such claims. This *oecus* pavement (7.3 x 5.25m) dates to the fifth century AD, to judge the clothing depictions, and is arranged over five registers. This mosaic pays particular attention to the dressing of the hunters, some of whom wear tunics with *fasciae crurales*, while others are dressed in tunics and leggings. The figures in episodes of hunting are distinguished from those in the register who surround the sacrifice of the crane to Diana and Apollo: here, the hunters are dressed in tight-fitting, long, long-sleeved tunics, decorated with *clavi* and *orbiculi*. The stylisation is very similar to the *domina* from the Dominus Julius mosaic, with a combination of light and dark tesserae. Though



Figure 7.17: Offering of the Crane Mosaic, Khéreddine, Carthage. Late fifth century AD. Bardo Museum.

potentially produced generations after the Dominus Julius mosaic, the Offering of the Crane Mosaic clearly demonstrates the continuation of traditional aristocratic pursuits, commemorated through imagery that evoked an idealised past – pagan sacrifice. The inclusion of trousered figures marks part of the narrative detail that sets the iconography within the ambiguous space where past and present interact. The wearing

of leggings in no ways signalled a particular ethnicity, but rather marked clothing practices as an extension of cultural behaviours.

To this end, the 'barbarian' clothing evoked by Victor of Vita was not unrecognisable to the Romano-African aristocracy based in North Africa. As a form of military dress, and resembling the costume appropriate for hunting activities, such courtly clothing was an evolution of sartorial practice and elite expression. Representing a significant strategy of self-identification, these clothing fashions served as ongoing mechanisms and should not be relegated to essentialist indicators of ethnic identity. To be sure, the Vandal newcomers employed clothing styles that were familiar to the native Romano-African aristocracy and being adopted by African courtiers. Not only did such acts legitimise such costumes, they also served as an indicator of eventual Vandal acculturation to normative African life.

In fact, Roman cultural behaviours and stereotypes continued to play an important role as an indicator of cultural authority. Procopius' characterisation of the Vandals, composed in the middle of the sixth century AD, uses cultural practices – including dress – to compare the Vandals with the Moorish barbarians. He thus aligns the Vandals with familiar Roman notion of dressing decadence:

For of all the nations which we know that of the Vandals is the most luxurious, and that of the Moors the most hardy. For the Vandals, since the time when they gained possession of Libya, used to indulge in baths, all of them, every day, and enjoyed a table abounding in all things, the sweetest and best that the earth and sea produce. And they wore gold very generally, and clothed themselves in the Medic garments, which now they call 'seric' and passed their time, thus dressed, in theatres and hippodromes and in other pleasurable pursuits, and above all else in hunting' (Procopius, *BV* 2. 6. 6-8).

As Merrills and Miles remark, the 'Vandals of 535 would have looked very different from the group of barbarians who invaded in 429, and much of this change would have been inspired by the African setting in which they lived' (2010: 91). Procopius' account is less about the Vandals themselves and more a strategy of defining broader cultural *mores* in late antique North Africa (Merrills and Miles 2010: 5-6). That luxurious dress was mobilised as an indicator of social decline and decay highlights that, despite changing

power dynamics, extreme sartorial behaviour was still posited as a direct reflection of wider socio-cultural ideals.

In rejecting essentialist notions of ethnic Vandal identity, in place of constructivist understandings of group identification, new cultural concordance between the established population and the incomers is found. Interestingly, the exploration of clothing confirms the multi-directional flow of cultural acclimatisation that occurred during the Vandal occupation (Hen 2007: 73-74). The flourishing literary output often utilising classical *doctrina*, provided a mechanism of social and cultural cohesion for elites (Miles 2017: 400) and frequently united 'Vandal' patron with African author. The previous example of Fridamal and his self-portrait '*imago*' (Chapter 6.2.2) demonstrates how traditional forms of self-aggrandisement and self-advertisement endured, adopted by those of non-African origin. In fact, Fridamal's actions, while being those of a 'foreign' individual – and potentially being read as non-Roman – actually typify Roman artistic activities of the previous centuries. Both the form and content of his epigram epitomise traditional Roman forms of elite identity performance, specifically the embodying of manliness, and suggest that Vandal groups actively sought to assimilate themselves into the pre-existing social fabric. In response, North African elites too sought to integrate themselves within this new power structure, visually showcasing such concordance through their clothed bodies.

7.6 Conclusion

Dress practices in late Roman North Africa frequently used elements of dress rhetoric to profess an African cultural identity. Marshalling clothing rhetoric as a performance of cultural identity was not limited to the North African context, of course, but vocal attestations of identities through cultural dress markers were especially pronounced in this region. Evident in both clothing fashions and attitudes towards dressing the body, my findings highlight the intentional construction of African identity traits in many different contexts and in both 'written-clothing and 'image-clothing'. These appear to reflect textile differences in the 'real-clothing'.

The source material surveyed here supports the notion that North Africa had elements of a distinctive sartorial identity, articulated in physical, textual and literary contexts. The precise logistics of how clothing fashions could be attributed an 'African' cultural identity are unclear, but the designation of dress as such in documentary sources attests that this was a form of identity expression, or, at the very least, a convenient way of categorising different textiles. Even during the Vandal occupation of North Africa, dressing styles had similar forms to previous years: the costumes worn by the Vandal newcomers were not so distinct from those worn by native groups. Indeed, a survey of hunting costumes as visualised in mosaic iconography highlights a great degree of sartorial continuity with the Vandal elite re-affirming their power and status through familiar representational modes. The use of leggings was not evidence of 'barbarian' dress, but more realistically a common-sense attribute of the hunting ensemble. The most significant difference during the mid-fifth century AD, opposed to previous decades, was that the group that wielded cultural authority was this incoming aristocracy: these were the people with the ability to enforce relevant dress-codes.

'African' clothing styles in North African visual media, such as mosaics, confirm that this means of self-definition was sometimes directed to a local audience. Variations in the African and Sicilian rendering of The Return of the Boar Hunt motif support this view, especially given that mosaicists from Carthaginian workshops – and thus presumably the same cultural backgrounds – laid the floors in both these locations. Clearly, sartorial imagery was manipulated according to the viewer or audience. Further, representations of 'Carthage' and 'Africa' highlight stereotypical attributes linked with these personifications, while the nuanced realisations of personifications – which depended on the context of production and consumption – is itself indicative of the clothing characterisations thought to encapsulate and broadcast the necessary associations. Dressing fashions were incredibly important forms of communications. Thus, Victor of Vita's misrepresentative narration of the Vandal persecution of North African communities exploited the inherent link between appearance of personal identity to frame Vandal actions in North Africa as shocking and humiliating, although the eventual assimilation of Vandal dressing behaviours to the African clothing context demonstrates that such cultural barriers were not, in fact, insurmountable. Individuals

performing certain 'African' sartorial behaviours used these convenient mechanisms for situating themselves in the cultural milieu; their clothing actions were often cultural shorthand for wider cultural connotations.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: Weaving the Threads Together

8.1 The Function of Dress and Sartorial Rhetoric in Late Roman and Late Antique North Africa

In late Roman and late antique North Africa, many social anxieties and cultural concerns were vocalised through dress rhetoric as the transformation of social, religious and political institutions forced communities to re-evaluate how they expressed their social affinities. As a familiar cultural touchstone – one particularly associated with constructing and projecting personal identities – dress was a familiar medium by which to negotiate and resolve tensions. This becomes immediately apparent when surveying ideas of gender and dress in North Africa. The suitability of certain garments for each gender enforced gender distinctions, designating and enacting a gender identity for the wearer. Further, the intensification of clothing rhetoric debating and discussing female dress behaviours reinforced the association between female attire and clothing regulations. Whilst this is most prominently found in Christian discourse – no doubt due to the propensity of source material produced to perpetuate such ideas – this association was also disseminated in secular contexts, as evident in domestic mosaics. Despite there being no explicit Christian uniform, Patristic authors propagated particular dress behaviours as indicative of Christian lifestyles: chastity as exemplified through modest dress or voluntary renunciation as showcased through ascetic garb. To be sure, dress rhetoric was mobilised as an influential motivator in North African Christianity. Of course, such dressing practices focused largely on elite individuals, especially women, and thus the link between elite Christian women and demonstrative clothing acts was further intensified.

Constructing and expressing these social identities through dress maintained identity boundaries and created modes of inclusion and exclusion. The visibility of many of these processes of identity projection, such as mosaic floors in reception areas, the Christian sartorial rhetoric delivered in homilies as well as the very clothed bodies on the streets of Carthage, made such interactions public performances. This served as an important mechanism for designating who were and who were not members of social groupings. Further, the ability to decide what exactly constituted suitable dress re-

affirmed who the prominent social actors were and thus where sartorial authority lay; in essence, the power to debate, delineate or change clothing practices was a form of social control. Of course, established dress-codes – both real and rhetorical – produced normative bounds of appropriate behaviour. This does not mean that individuals or groups did not deviate from these clothing systems, but they did so in the knowledge that their actions might incite ridicule or censure.

As my findings demonstrate, innovative dressing styles are evident in the historical record, but not just anyone could adapt or create new dressing fashions, as shown by the outrageous actions of the un-veiled Carthaginian virgins documented by Tertullian in his *De virginibus velandis*. That these women had the audacity to display their heads in public, not to mention construct their own interpretations of the Scripture and Apostolic tradition, demonstrated how precarious male control was over clothing habits and female behaviour more generally. Ultimately, though, criticism of female dress practice won out, and this vocal male rhetoric concealed the presence of female agency and the tentative nature of gender hierarchies. The late antique world witnessed many disruptions to normative power dynamics and hierarchies. Traditional familial structures were muddled as a consequence of Christianity, gender inversion became a strategy for demonstrating religious commitment and was even frequently celebrated and, finally, ‘Roman’ control in the North African area was confronted by the incoming Vandal ruling elite. As nodes of cultural tension, many such issues of gender, religion, status and cultural identity were voiced and explored using dressing practices.

8.2 Expressing Gender, Religious, Elite and Cultural Identity in Late Roman and Late Antique North Africa

As previously asserted in Chapter 1.3, the thematic divisions employed in my thesis construct arbitrary boundaries in the interpretation of the extant source material. There were many areas of extensive overlap, especially ideas of gender and debates of religious dress and the display of cultural identity by elite groups, and it is obvious that late Roman and late antique North African individuals did not neatly separate social identities and their resultant clothing habits into discrete categories. Instead, their lives

– and social identities – involved the elaborate interweaving of situationally pertinent identity expressions, activated in certain contexts. Clothing was a crucial mechanism for advertising identity designations as it allowed the wearer to broadcast their desired identity traits while obscuring any element that would not be advantageous. The boundaries I have employed are necessary for understanding the complex clothing rhetoric disseminated throughout late Roman and late antique North Africa. Dress discourse appears as significant in all aspects of North African life; by turning the interpretative lens onto sartorial behaviours, we uncover a more nuanced appreciation of cultural dynamics in late Roman and late antique North Africa.

One of the most prominent areas of dress rhetoric discussed is in moralising discourse. Although such ideas are not unique to late Roman North Africa, the didactic function of dress was keenly felt here, and accounts for a good proportion of textual material – in turn, this has contributed to the scholarly characterisation of late Roman and late antique North Africa. Moralising discourse encouraged those targeted groups to assume appropriate clothing. The close association between conforming dress and moral integrity often assured widespread acquiescence and normative sartorial behaviours were reinforced by criticising transgressive clothing practices. A lack of moral integrity – an extension of sartorial inadequacy – was a dangerous accusation. Such issues were especially brought to the fore when debating female dress, although its use was not solely for this gender. The Christian moralising discourse of correct (modest) female dress used two routes of attack: first, it exploited pre-existing ideas of gender and morality, capitalising on male anxieties as to what inappropriate female dress represented; namely uncontrolled women. The female body had always been a site for the negotiation of social *mores* and sexual integrity was demonstrated through the correct display and deportment of the body; thus, the extrapolation of such ideas in a Christian context was not a big leap. Second, the religious component of such rhetoric now placed eschatological responsibility into the feminine sphere. While the maintenance of female sartorial integrity had always been an indicator for broader social stability (or decline), Christian rhetoric re-fashioned female dress as a means of salvation for both genders and, in doing so, promoted female attire as a significant social commodity.

Such moralising discourse was underscored with the positive association of the female gender and clothing. Gender distinctions were important factors of social customs in both Classical and early Christian contexts. Tertullian's worry of the female virgins unveiling in churches stemmed from their perceived usurpation of male celebration (and the male gaze). His moral treatises are founded on the notion that care for the body's presentation, beyond the expected processes of cleanliness and sanitation, was a female concern. Thus, arguably, the Lady at her Toilette mosaic and the Dominus Julius mosaic both celebrate the female world of beautification. A world of female adornment is also visible in Patristic discourse that decried male care for dress as unnatural and effeminate. A charge of effeminacy, therefore, reinforced the correlation of dress and female behaviours. This is not to suggest that men had no care for their appearance or disregarded sartorial meanings, but rather that source material, and society as a whole, characterised dressing norms as a feminine pastime.

My nuanced analysis of dress rhetoric from North Africa also recognises that the function of clothing is often a cultural constant. The constant nature of clothing was not only due to its ubiquity, but also in the way in which clothing practices were constructed, appropriated and used. The Christian mosaic covers excavated from Tabarka reveal that, despite vocal rhetoric, which encouraged collective actions, individual commemoration, achieved through personal funerary portraits, was prolific in some locations. How far such actions translated into actual practice is uncertain, but it is certainly significant that Christian groups wished to be represented as such in funerary contexts.

Regardless of who the dominant political group was, it is clear that African clothing habits controlled and influenced society in the same ways as it had with previous political organisations. This was certainly the case with how strategies of nakedness were mobilised in North African practice. In the early third century AD, according to the Christian *Passio*, Roman authorities had humiliated Perpetua and even shocked their pagan audience by sending Perpetua and her companion Felicity into the arena in costume which revealed their bodies. Centuries later, the Vandal heretics sought to humiliate Nicene individuals by stripping them of their clothing – their very signs of personal identity. Clothing's power to protect and cover the body remained important throughout the third to fifth centuries AD.

Ideas of dress permeated through all aspects of late Roman and late antique North African life. Dress rhetoric constructed identity boundaries, mediated cultural interactions and offered a way for individuals to negotiate socio-political changes. Clothing provided a constant canvas onto which North Africans could paint their identity allegiances. As my diachronic study has shown, dress held the same socio-cultural functions regardless of the dominant political or religious narratives. Conventional research into North Africa during this time has tended to dissect social reality into two categories – Christian and non-Christian. As such, discussions not only presume a strict transformation from Classical to Christian behaviours, but also that material culture and textual discourse is representative of one of these two designations. The construction of a dichotomy of pre-Christian and Christian periods has especially been prevalent, as if North Africa changed overnight, rather than seeing the various forms of North African Christianity as products of their respective social and cultural conditions. In terms of sartorial investigation, many studies employ clothing as a simplistic denotation of a singular identity: the discussion of Christian clothing is only intended to interact with debates about religious dress. In this way, Tertullian's moralising rhetoric is seen as merely indicative of a general misogynist approach of early Christianity, rather than the complex combination of concern for broader moral conditions, gender hierarchies and the maintenance of normative social practice. 'Christian' dress rhetoric was extremely indebted to its pre-Christian inheritance.

My examination proves that the historical reality was much more complex and discussions of dressing practices were not limited to one social aspect. For instance, while Tertullian's *De pallio* might purport to be a tract dedicated to endorsing the *pallium* as Christian garb and thus rejecting the *toga*, this text is more accurately a discussion of the nature of sartorial customs and evolution while also deploying ideas of gendered dress to support the argument. Similarly, there is a tendency in scholarship to see the Vandal interregnum as an immediate point of cultural shift, where the Romano-African population was fundamentally in opposition to the newcomers and elite customs were irrevocably disrupted. While there was no doubt some initial religious tension, as I have argued, accommodation between these two groups was a historical reality and, in fact, the aristocracy in Vandal Africa employed a number of

sartorial strategies that were recognisable to Romano-African inhabitants. A general disregard for issues of dress, or indeed a prosaic characterisation when clothing is considered, necessitates a new mode of study for understating clothing in the later Roman world.

8.3 Methods and Interpretative Approach: A Tripartite Body of Evidence

The imprecision of dress rhetoric is a constant frustration to the dress scholar. As a quotidian commodity, much source material, regardless of its type, assumes a level of sartorial knowledge. Consequently, many sources lack explicit explanation of basic notions: the logistics of trade, how clothing quality was established – and who decided this, how frequent deviant dress habits were – and how shocking such transgressive behaviour actually was, and even how some garments were worn. However, drawing together the various strands of dress rhetoric uncovers a greater understanding of how clothing practices interact with social and political events. Clothing's ubiquity is itself represented in the diverse contexts of reference. Its deployment in instances far removed from actual clothing practices attests to its many cultural roles.

Many of the themes examined in this study have been the subject of previous academic investigation. Yet, the lack of theoretically rigorous analysis of dress combined with the isolation of dress behaviours from other clothing actions and related social activities has led to an oversimplification of dress as a major influential artefact. Clothing could and *did* play an active role in identity processes. My thesis bridges this scholastic gap, while simultaneously promoting the dynamic study of dress in its own right. A more comprehensive examination of the cultural echoes of dress provides a more nuanced, vivid understanding of the importance of dress rhetoric in processes of identity performance, revealing how the process of dressing of the body – in real-clothing, image-clothing and written-clothing – was laden with meanings and associations.

A sharper, more well-defined focus on dress has many advantages. It is the product of a receptive academic environment open to inter-disciplinary research. Dress studies are indelibly linked to textual, archaeological and visual methodologies and

these fields chime with the vestiges of surviving late Roman and late antique North African dress rhetoric: 'written-clothing', 'real-clothing' and 'image-clothing'. Unburdened by conventional histories, dress also offers a constant primary investigative medium by which to explore socio-cultural phenomena. As this study has shown, dress is a powerful cultural force regardless of political structures, religious debates, or other social transformations. Equally, too, dressing fashions were influenced by such forces and changes can be evidenced in the various traces of dress rhetoric.

While the lack of archaeological textiles from North Africa itself signifies a loss of a significant body of material, the importance of clothing and the materiality of late Roman and late antique North Africa is encoded in the remnants of dress rhetoric. Rather than look to the 'exemplar' of Roman Egypt with its Coptic textiles, my thesis instead has re-contextualised the various instances of 'dress' often ignored by other scholars. The absence of textile remains is not reflective of the incredible importance of clothing to North African communities. It is testament to the malleability of dress rhetoric that its cultural echoes appear in diverse contexts. This is also a result of the multiple versions of 'dress' that can be constructed. On a basic level, North African communities required clothing to clothe and protect the body. Elite groups, however, had both the social and economic capital by which to exploit dressing habits and the dress rhetoric discussed in my study predominantly derives from this context. While this ultimately focuses discussion on a particular group within North African society, to some degree this reflects the historical reality where it was the moneyed classes who could fashion their identity expressions using visual means such as mosaics. Textual material, too, being artefacts produced by elite authors or those with elite patrons, often alludes to elite behaviour and frequently demonstrates that the authority to debate and criticise dressing habits was maintained in elite circles or, in the case of early Christian communities, those who wielded superior authority. Importantly, textiles provided a canvas to showcase cultural allegiances and social affiliations. Not all dress references allude to actual articles of clothing or real dress behaviours. Instead, dress' cultural function included a means of social control. As an extension of an individual's moral compass, dress could be employed as a vehicle to initiate, mediate and resolve social anxieties and concerns.

8.4 Further Research

There is, of course, no definitive method for dealing with conflicting evidence except to recognise that types of evidence were often defined by their own conventions or cultural trajectories. Although some artefacts of dress behaviours may seem to contradict known practices or customs, the very existence of this evidence is reflective of underlying socio-cultural ideas or ideals. The same is true for other types of source material and the interpretive framework adapted and used in my thesis, from Barthes' concept of the 'fashion system' and the communicative 'language of dress', offers a sophisticated and appreciative approach to studying such material. Rather than relegating isolated references to dress as contradictory or uninformed, such echoes can instead be re-mapped in a framework that appreciates the many forms (literal and figurative) dress could take.

In summary, my thesis demonstrates that clothing was a significant form of communication in late Roman and late antique North Africa. As Augustine expounds in his conception of 'two cities' – that is Christians or non-Christians – 'many nations that live throughout the world with different religious and moral practices and are distinguished by a rich variety of languages, arms, and dress' (August. *De civ. D.* 14.1). Dress was but one means of categorising communities, but its vibrant nature made it an effective mechanism for expressing ideas and ideals. My discussion has touched upon the various identities professed using clothing and the social systems and structures reinforced through sartorial regulation. There is scope for undertaking corresponding studies in other historical contexts, and my thesis hopefully acts as a developed case study for the enriched understandings such research brings. With regard to the material I have explored, there is also the potential for further investigation into certain aspects, expanding on subjects like Augustine's use of dress metaphors, Tertullian's incorporation of clothing symbolism in his broader theological rhetoric or exploring other forms of imagery to situate textual discourse in the visual reality. Such research would no doubt build upon my conclusions of the use, adaption and manipulation of sartorial behaviours in text, image and artefact in the late Roman and late antique North African world.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

There is no single narrative for clothing behaviours of North African communities across the third to fifth centuries AD. What is apparent, however, is the gradual evolution of aspects of North African sartorial identity that increasingly demonstrated specific 'African' attitudes towards the clothed body, as well as the growing desire to showcase knowledge of and participation in 'African' fashions. As shown, transformations in dress fashions were the result of parallel and competing cultural forces. Dress constitutes a paradox. It is at once a marker for shared values and a method of expressing difference. These two states, however, are not diametrically opposed, but merely two sides of the same coin; largely, it is a matter of perspective.

On the one hand, dress is to be seen as an integral mechanism for group cohesion. It allows individuals to advertise publically their participation in particular group allegiances. Access to these group identities were often confirmed through eligibility of certain sartorial elements. For individuals in North Africa, shared clothing customs can be seen in both secular and religious contexts. Elites reinforced their social position when using domestic mosaics as a form of identity performance. The clothing iconography embedded in these images reflects a version of reality. Although aspects of actual practice may be distorted, this corpus of material holds a wealth of information on how elites communicated their sartorial status through visual representations. To understand the nuances of these displays – including the overall mosaic motif and the implications of the use of dress – the audience must have been knowledgeable as to the implications of these actions. Further, their ability to interpret this iconography reiterates notions of shared values.

On the other hand, such imagery could only function precisely because the group identity constructs another grouping: the 'other'. Participation in group behaviours is conferred because there are those who cannot be included in such activities. Ineligibility might be due to a number of factors – wealth, status, background, gender or age. To extend the example of clothing in domestic mosaics, social distinction is constituted through economic difference. It is only the wealthy who can include such decoration in their domestic environment, which explicitly excludes a large percentage of the North

African population. That mosaic pavements have come to characterise later Roman North Africa is testament to the importance of social hierarchies. Clothing in these mosaic designs served to supplement physical textile distinctions experienced in real interactions.

The same paradox exists in the evolution of clothing fashions. Throughout the period under study, decoration on clothing became more ornate. The use of *clavi*, *orbiculi*, *segmenta* and the like was more frequently employed from the third centuries AD onward in comparison to earlier centuries where fashions did not employ such elements. Brightly coloured fabrics and decoration in visual representations suggests a more colourful textile reality across the range of classes, although the emphasis remains on elite groups. Although not all images showcase such a multi-coloured nature, even in cases where clothing was not supremely colourful dress and decorative elements appears to be carefully constructed and depicted.

In contrast to the increased popularity of colourful, ornate tunics and outer garments, this period also witnessed a growth in ascetic practice. Part of this ascetic performance included the voluntary renunciation of worldly comforts and desires, including elaborate dress. Yet, this ascetic discourse was also founded upon ideas of distinction for it was those wealthy individuals who could ultimately afford to devote their lives to the ascetic lifestyle. Further, the self-denial of a high status individual was regarded and remarked upon with more vocal praise than that of a poorer ascetic – precisely because their transformation showcased a greater degree of sacrifice and potential for worldly distribution of their goods or wealth. Thus, it is the names of aristocratic ascetics, like Demetrias and Melania the Younger, that are in the works of well-known Patristic authors. Their actions, although motivated by the desire to conform to ascetic practice, serve to enhance their exceptionalism, making them stand out from their compatriots.

Dress rhetoric in North Africa across the third to fifth centuries AD adapted to suit the changing socio-cultural landscape and was not simply re-dressed to cater to the needs of later Roman groups, but expanded and renegotiated in the changing circumstances. While some elements of normative dress-codes were familiar and drawn from earlier practice, a pertinent example being the function of female dress as

embodiments of societal morality, late Roman fashions deployed new attire or ensembles that reveal transforming cultural emphasises. The rise of Christianity did much to alter attitudes to bodily appearance and the motivations behind such actions clearly gained religious meaning. Further, the prominence of new ensembles such as the tunic-*chlamys* or the tunic-*sagum* costumes identify new representational forms by which individuals advertised character traits and visualised their elite lifestyle through their domestic décor. This culmination of clothing styles is seen in North African fashions from the Vandal era, which interacted with the same cultural ideals – the display of status and belonging – as in previous generations. What did remain consistent, however, was that the performing of social distinction through sartorial display naturally tended towards elite circles, the moneyed classes – the very groups with resources to showcase their social position.

It is testament to the vibrancy of North African culture that my thesis can draw upon so many diverse and exciting echoes of dress rhetoric. Rich histories of visual representation and textual behaviours from the third century AD onwards record numerous references to contemporary dress practices manifesting a landscape where sartorial concerns mattered. While scholars not explicitly studying clothing might be forgiven for only making fleeting mentions of the importance of dress as a cultural force, more explicit exploration of clothing's influence in identity processes can only lead to more considered incorporations of dress into North African research, and the study of the Roman world more broadly. While the North African clothed body exhibited contemporary modes of dress, the study of such clothing also reveals so much more. Since dressing systems were constituted by and constitutive of pertinent cultural ideas and norms, many areas of cultural tension were manifested in debates over clothing habits. Dress enforces power structures, not only displaying who is in control but also how far their authority extends. My discussion has contextualised processes of social distinction in a sartorial framework, highlighting its mechanics for constructing and expressing social difference. Dressing behaviours are one such area where the recognition of 'African' qualities improves the understanding of clothing's cultural role.

My thesis has sustained that dress is a dynamic, malleable medium. Moulded to suit its respective context, clothing systems in North Africa were directly constructed by

and influential to social structures and norms relevant to North Africa. Thus, the North African evidence showcases particular elements that distinguish certain actions or clothing styles as particularly 'African' in flavour. More regionally-specific components of elite status, gender, and religious identity reflect cultural identities and the increasing importance of 'African' identity. Civic pride in small-scale locales and wider expressions of African belonging demonstrate the widespread conceptualisation and frequent recognition of African cultural identities. In sum, to be 'African' meant something.

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