Making Space: Social Access, Civic Participation, and Community Networks through Female Benefaction Across Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor

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Abstract

Based on the descriptions of women by ancient authors, we would have to imagine that they were confined to the *domus* and did little other than weave and provide for their families. Thankfully, work in the last several decades has challenged this view and unveiled more realistic depictions of these ancient women, and their contributions to their cities through the practice of euergetism, or public benefaction. While authors debate whether or not women were acting in their own rights, this thesis seeks to evaluate their donations holistically while minimising interpretive bias, through utilising a mixed-methods approach to understand regional inscriptions, portrayals, and historical descriptions.

Focusing on key themes which can be identified from ancient inscriptions such as chronology, benefaction type, religious affiliation, public roles, and family relationships, this research employs a comprehensive approach in comparing the regions of Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor. By incorporating regions across the Roman Empire alongside each other, new conclusions emerge which prompt considerations of the impact of cultural differences in a rapidly growing empire.

Through the compilation of nearly 250 women, where all of their known characteristics are captured, this research has employed thorough data filtering to analyse their behaviours and account for variability in inscriptions. Conclusions address the importance for certain women to identify a public role, the unique dress choices which suggest a continued attachment to native characteristics, and the emphasis of certain family relationships across regions. With this approach and its findings, this topic benefits from a fresh perspective and insights which will inspire future exploration.

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Author’s Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Dataset Storage

The data supporting this research is openly available from the Research Data York repository at the University of York. This means it is available to any future scholars requiring access.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Classical Text

AE	*L'Année epigraphique.*
App., Bell. Civ.	Appian, *Bellum Civile*
Aug. *RG*	Augustus, *Res Gestae*
Cassiod. *Var.*	Cassiodorus' *Variae*
Cic. *De Am.*	Cicero's *De Amicitia*
Cic. *De Off.*	Cicero's *De Officiis*
Cic. *Har. Resp*	Cicero*, De Haruspicum. Responsis.* (Loeb ed.) transl. N.H Watts, London, 1979.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.*
CLE	F. Bücheler and E. Lommatzsch (eds.), *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* (1895–1926)
Cons. Marc	Seneca's *De Consolatio ad Marciam*
DFH	M. Khanoussi, L. Maurin, *Dougga, fragments d'histoire,* Bordeaux, Tunis, 2000.
Dig.	*Digest*
Dio	Cassius Dio
Diod. Sic., *Bib. hist.*	Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica*
Dion. Hal.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus
G. Inst. 1.193	Gaius's *Institutes I*
Hor. *Sat.*	Horace's *Satirae*
IDidyma	Rehm, A. 1914. *Die Inschriften.*
IEphesos	*Die Inschriften von Ephesos*
IK Perge	Şahin, Sencer. *Die Inschriften von Perge.*
ILA	*Inscriptions latine d'Afrique*, edited by R. Cagnat, A. Merlin and L. Chatelin (Paris 1923).
ILAfr	*Inscriptions latines d'Afrique (Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Maroc)*. R. Cagnat, A. Merlin, L. Chatelain, eds. Paris, 1923.
ILP	*Le Iscrizioni Latine di Paestum* (Naples 1968-1969)
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae.* ed. Dessau, H. Berlin 1962.
I. Selge	*Die Inschriften Von Selge*
InscrAqu 3	*Inscriptiones Aquileiae, Volume III*
Inst. Iust.	*Institutiones Iustiniani*
I. Pergamon	*Die Inschriften von Pergamon*
Juv. *Sat.*	Juvenal, *Satire*
Livy	Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*
Macrob.	Macrobius

MAMA	*Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiquae (1928–)*
Ov. *Fast.*	Ovid's *Fasti*
Plin. *Ep.*	Pliny the Younger's *Epistulae*
Plin. *NH*	Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*
Plut. *Mor.*	Plutarch's *Moralia*
Plut. *Publ.*	Plutarch's *Life of Publicola*
Plut. *Vit. Ant.*	Plutarch's *Vitae Parallelae Antonius*
Plut. *Vit. Them.*	Plutarch's *Vitae Parallelae Themistocles*
Prop.	Propertius
Sen. *Ben.*	Seneca the Younger's *De Beneficiis*
Sen. *Helv.*	Seneca the Younger's *Ad Helviam*
SIG	*Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*
Suet. *Aug.*	Suetonius' *Divus Augustus*
Tert. *Apol.*	Tertullian's *Apologeticus*
Ulp. *Dig*	Ulpian's *Digest*
Val. Max.	Valerius Maximus
Verg. *Aen.*	Virgil's *Aeneid*
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In recent years, researchers have broadened their examination of the system of Roman euergetism, or public giving, beyond a focus on male elite participation toward highlighting female benefactors and benefactors of varying social status (Gilles et al. 2024; Hemelrijk

2015; Meyers 2019; Van Bremen 1996; Woodhull 2018 to name a few). Euergetism relied on cities' occupants seeking favour from their peers, the local government, or higher authorities, and exhibiting this desire through the donation of funds for public buildings, events, festivals, scholarships, and more (Veyne 1990, 347). Early investigations into Roman benefactors relied on the narratives told by ancient authors, or on the fragmented inscriptions found on buildings or funerary monuments, without incorporating the perspectives and motivations which we are able to explore today (Sick 1999, 330; Fantham 1994, 350; Dobson 1982, 82). There also was a focus on ancient Italy and Greece, while provincial regions were less heavily excavated and researched, leading to a narrative which lacked a holistic regional base.

Over time, women, non-elite, and provincial benefactors' perspectives have been added to the record, leading to conversations around access to wealth, social mobility, family relationships, legal ramifications, visual depictions and more (Tate 2022; Hemelrijk 2015; Fejfer 2008). This area of research is continuously expanding, and this work sets out to bring a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach to understanding benefaction across three unique regions by building upon previous work and introducing new findings. This research will focus on benefactresses who were donating whole or partial buildings, as there is substantial epigraphic evidence in this space. The regions which will be compared are Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor, with some individual cities being highlighted as case studies, due to a large amount of evidence being uncovered from these locations.

It will be important to note the ethnic and cultural tensions between these regions. Although provincial women were culturally influenced by social and moral expressions of female behaviour in Rome, including their public appearance, there are examples of women who chose to represent themselves in the traditional ethnic dress of their region, rather than in the attire of the Italo-Roman matron, as was customary (eg. Carroll 2020). These occurrences lead to deeper questions about the varying expressions of Roman identity, and how women chose to represent their backgrounds. Comparing the Italic, Greek and Roman backgrounds of Italy with the Punic background of North Africa allows for isolation of women's participation in this indigenous culture while simultaneously matching similarities between women across the Roman domain. Placing the Greek and eastern Mediterranean blend of cultures in Asia Minor alongside Italy and North Africa will allow for similar comparisons.

The core aim of this research is to address the question: how did women in these varying regions similarly or uniquely experience the world of female benefaction during the first to third centuries AD? This can be explored through various lenses, touching on topics such as

women's access to social mobility, independence, and the freedom to express their ethnic identities. A sample of research questions which correspond to this core question include: 'through which structures were Roman women able to participate in benefaction?', 'what is the impact of family relationships on Roman women's social mobility?', 'how was independence represented in varying regions?', and 'how did women's networks contribute to women's access to benefaction and social mobility?' A secondary aim of this research is to decipher how women's experience of benefaction changed over time from the first to third centuries AD. This chronological lens will allow for a more complex analysis of the data captured for each century, leading to a more representative understanding of the evolving norms and expectations of women living during these centuries.

This research is made unique through a focus on a cross-regional, comparative approach to explore the actions of these benefactresses. Previous work, notably *Hidden Lives, Public Personae* by Emily Hemelrijk (2015), explored female benefaction in the Roman West in response to Riet Van Bremen's (1996) earlier work, *The Limits of Participation*, which examined the same topic in the Roman East. By isolating these regions, earlier authors have separated the evidence which allows for increased understanding of how women of the Roman Empire engaged with the changing expectations and motivations around benefaction within the expanding Roman world. This work attempts to bring those distinct but related regions back together to create new findings and understanding of the impact of the expanding Roman Empire on the phenomenon of public benefaction. The approach of this research builds upon earlier quantitative methods which aimed to remove biased interpretations of ancient women by earlier researchers or statements by ancient authors (Hemelrijk 2015; Meyers 2019; Zuiderhoek 2009). While quantitative approaches are not new to this area of research, the dataset created for this work contains an increased number of characteristics which are compared against each other to lead to new results and discussions. Qualitative analysis is similarly applied to these results, as the intention is to understand these women and their contributions as holistically as possible.

Before reviewing the literature, a fundamental introduction to the topic of female benefaction is required. It has already been mentioned that much of earlier researchers' understanding of women's roles in ancient Rome came from ancient authors who clearly stated that women's roles were contained within the *domus,* or household (Plin. *Ep*.; Ulp. *Dig*.). The evidence explored through this research indicates otherwise, as Roman women were participating in business exchanges, religious communities, and in the system of public benefaction (Hänninen 2019, 64; Sick 1999, 330). While men had been engaging with euergetism before women had financial and legal access, the turning point for women was in 35 BC when

imperial women Livia and Octavia were granted freedom from tutelage, or the ability to manage their own affairs without approval from a male guardian (Morrell 2020, 91). They began donating buildings within Rome, and inspired women to engage with their communities in similar formats (Flory 1993, 287-288). When the *ius trium liberorum* passed between 18 BC and 9 AD, women with more than three children were also able to be granted a freedom from guardianship, opening doors to public participation and social mobility which had previously been locked shut (Morrell 2020, 90).

It would seem reasonable that only elite women were able to participate in benefaction, but again, the evidence in this research and previous work indicates otherwise. Women of every social class, including freedwomen, were donating buildings or structures within their communities (Hemelrijk 2015, 166). They would act on their own or as a group to afford these contributions, but clearly saw engaging with public benefaction as a worthwhile endeavour (Cornell and Lomas 2002, 3-6). These female networks were likely created most often through religious communities, where women were able to hold powerful roles within their temples (Holland 2012, 204-213). Religious figures such as Venus and Bona Dea were heavily favoured by women because of the roles available in these communities, and due to these environments being the most open and accessible to diverse groups (Hänninen 2019, 65-71; Salathe 1997, 8-10, 26-33).

Networks were not just built within religious communities though, as family connections are a notable thread which appears throughout this research. Whether women were financially supported by male family members such as fathers and husbands, or utilised their family power and prestige from decades of relatives being active in the community is explored throughout the following chapters. There is also evidence of non-family connections joining together to co-donate structures, again contributing to conversations around female networks, access to financial power, social mobility, and community (*AE* 1975, 197).

Evidence for this research comes primarily from building inscriptions and funerary monuments, where benefactresses claimed the donations as their own or were celebrated for their contributions to the city by family or other close stakeholders. Many of the benefactresses were already identified in datasets by Hemelrijk (2015) and Van Bremen (1996), while others were found in more recent publications focused on the featured regions studied here. The inscriptionary evidence provides a clear link to the primary source, the benefactress herself, though the motivations and formulaic systems behind the inscriptions are still left to decipher.

This thesis explores benefactresses' contributions through feminist theory, evaluating women's placement within a traditionally male-oriented world, while also identifying their own desires and motivations (Gordon 1990, 230; Schüssler Fiorenza 1989, 24, 158). In exploring inscription language, visual presentation, and pressures applied by local and imperial powers, female visibility and personal agency remains a focus. Their relationships are also understood through the lens of social network theory, where interpersonal connections, influences, and pressures are examined to best understand the case studies examined (Bourdieu 1986, 241-258). While some women acted on their own terms, many other benefactresses acted in groups, co-donating and engaging with their peers in communities which need to be explored in order to understand the environment to the best of our abilities. The interactions between women in the provinces with Roman norms and identity must be understood as a negotiation rather than a broad adoption, which can be analysed through benefactresses' use of language, donation types, cultural references, and religious ties (MacDonald 1986, 30; Tate 2022, 19; Zanker 1988, 65-66). Some of the most interesting buildings and related statue donations illustrate these combined identities, demonstrating a hybrid approach rather than an assimilation.

This work is situated within recent research by Hemelrijk (2015), Tate (2022), Woodhull (2018), Van Bremen (1996), and many others who have provided an excellent basis for understanding ancient Roman women's unique characteristics and lives, though this research attempts to situate these benefactresses within the world they lived in alongside Roman men as well. While male benefactors will not be a focus within this work, their existence and contributions as a comparison will be called upon in order to ensure the benefactresses being examined are not isolated from their wider communities and settings (Cornell and Lomas 2002, 2). Through using descriptive statistical data in this research, biases which may arise during qualitative research are reduced, as the data is able to speak for itself. While researchers on the topic of benefaction have previously stated that they intend to provide Roman women a platform through which they are examined in the same ways that Roman men were, this method creates iterations of the Roman world which obscure how people of different sexes, classes, and families engaged with the motivations and pressures of public giving (Tate 2022, 2-5). This approach combined with the research aims discussed above allows for a new examination of female benefaction which will progress the field and aid in structuring future projects.

Ultimately we will be able to see how inscriptions on public buildings and funerary monuments can be used as tools to effectively place women within the expanding Roman world, and to better understand their personal engagement with their communities as well as

the larger empire. Through examining the types of structures women showed a preference for donating, the class variations by benefactresses, family relationships, and female networks as a social platform, this research will contribute new understandings of Roman benefactresses to this area of research which has grown rapidly in recent years but still contains much to be explored.

CHAPTER 2: APPROACHING THE TOPIC

2.1 Introduction

Recent research has begun to identify trends from monumental building inscriptions and funerary monuments throughout the Roman Empire, but currently there is a lack of comparative regional research. This thesis seeks to utilise the work of previous authors who researched elite female benefaction in individual regions of the empire but will adopt a much broader and comparative approach to explore Roman Italy, Asia Minor, and North Africa. This will allow for an investigation into regional and cultural differences, recognise trends and patterns of change, and, ultimately, inspire further avenues of inquiry in this area of the field.

It should be noted here that this thesis relies on the information included in the dataset found in the appendix, and that women from each region will be identified using regional tags It (Italy), NA (North Africa), and AM (Asia Minor) as well as numbers to link this text with individual benefactresses.

The portrayal of elite women in Roman life in ancient literature, written almost exclusively by Roman men, went unquestioned for much of documented history, and archaeologists and historians are now starting to examine the material remains and epigraphic monuments that counter the belief that, aside from the imperial family, women were confined to the household and did not make significant contributions to society (Sick 1999, 330-348). This image of Roman women was established by ancient authors such as Pliny and Ulpian as they recorded history in a way that focused on Roman men and the hierarchies of power within the male world (Plin. *Ep*.; Ulp. *Dig*.).

The following literature review will summarise and critique the more traditional regional research methodology while tracking the chronology of female benefaction alongside legal documentation and exploring the culture of elite female benefaction in each of the regions in comparison.

Some of the primary researchers on this topic, whose work is essential in understanding the phenomenon of female benefaction in the Roman Empire, are Emily Hemelrijk (2015), Riet Van Bremen (1996), Rachel Meyers (2019), Christian Witschel (1992), and, most recently, Karin Tate (2022). They have focused on the topic of benefactresses in various regions and timeframes, and it is on this foundation that this research has evolved and developed.

2.2 Literature Review

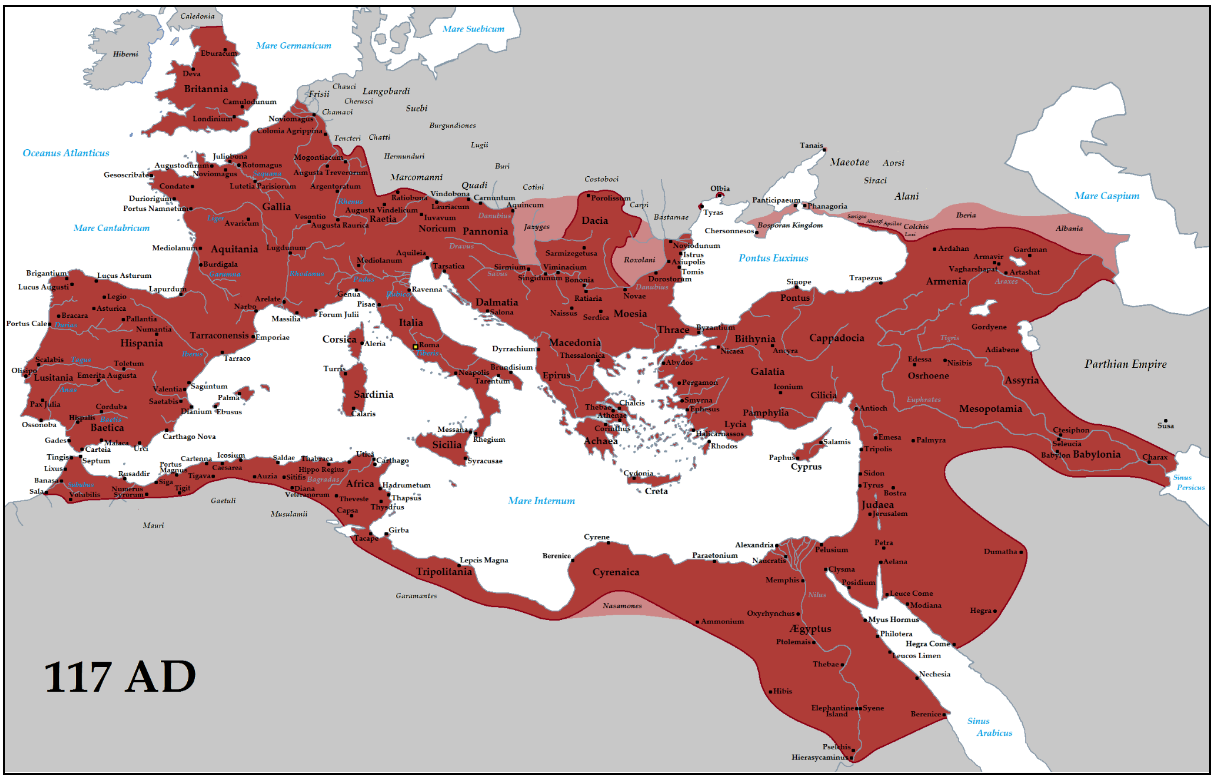


Figure 2.1. The Roman Empire in 117 AD at its greatest extent, at the time of Trajan's death. (Source: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY: SA 3.0 Unported, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Empire_Trajan_117AD.png)

2.2.1 Key Authors and their Methods of Investigating Female Benefaction

A brief background on these key researchers is necessary before diving into the more complex debates on the topic of female benefaction. It makes sense to begin with work by Emily Hemelrijk, which primarily focuses on Roman Italy, but also includes some cases from North Africa, Gaul, and Spain. Hemelrijk's work is currently the most representative research on female benefaction, covering much of the western Roman Empire and leading to clear and succinct conclusions that are difficult to criticise. She defines her focus as Italy and the Latin-speaking provinces, and she focuses on non-imperial women who made notable contributions to their cities and local citizens (Hemelrijk 2015, 113). This thesis seeks to bridge the gap between Hemelrijk and her predecessor Riet Van Bremen, who focused on the Roman East before Hemelrijk researched the Roman West. Future research will ideally possess the scope to represent the women living throughout all of the Roman Empire during the first to third centuries AD, organising the most recent published data on female benefaction and drawing the most accurate and comprehensive conclusions. Whether the donations were obligatory or otherwise motivated, they are included within Hemelrijk's

corpus unless they are gifts to individuals or could be defined as votive offerings (Hemelrijk 2015, 113).

Hemelrijk's work provided much of the inspiration for this PhD topic and methodology, as her research in *Hidden Lives, Public Personae* (2015) proposed taking a quantitative approach to research that had previously been qualitative. Hemelrijk studied 338 inscriptions to compile a corpus that includes women as sole donors or with only one male co-donor (Hemelrijk 2015, 114). This means that some women who were included in other authors' research would have been removed from this data, as shared donations involving multiple male relatives would not have fit within Hemelrijk's scope. She excluded donations made by a man in honour of a woman, as this reflects more on his motivations and likely described the woman from his perspective (Hemelrijk 2015, 114). This is seen as a limitation by some in the field, as women were not acting in isolation but rather as part of larger communities, and separating them from their wider setting alters the narrative of the lives they were leading. Finally, donations made during a woman's lifetime or that were included in her testament following death are included, as it was a legal requirement to fulfill these wishes (Hemelrijk 2015, 114). Hemelrijk does not shy away from incomplete or incomprehensible epigraphic evidence but rather shines a light on this evidence while suggesting potential interpretations. This allows researchers to retain the complete corpus managed by Hemelrijk, while she expertly discusses the inscriptions which were clear in meaning.

Hemelrijk's strict guidelines allow researchers to grasp the scope of her research and understand the reasoning behind some very intentional choices. These choices are not necessarily reflective of previous researchers though, as Riet Van Bremen's work on female benefaction in the Roman East (which inspired Hemelrijk's research) approached the topic differently.

One theme that Hemelrijk does not spend much time on is the impact of proximity to Rome. While she acknowledges the differences between Rome and provincial regions, her work does not tend to focus on what impact distance could have had on cultures and traditions within the Roman Empire. Authors who do include this conversation within their scope are Lomas and Cornell, who highlight the unique position that Roman Italy held as a non-provincial region of the empire (Cornell and Lomas 2002, 1-2). Despite maintaining social structures reminiscent of cities in the provinces, Italian cities operated under different regulations and expectations. Additionally, proximity to Rome meant that there was unparalleled competition between members of the elite class, though Cornell and Lomas tend to focus more generally on male benefaction (Cornell and Lomas 2002, 2).

Van Bremen covered the area of Asia Minor in her research on female munificence, particularly focusing on the eastern Greek world from the early second century BC to the mid-third century AD (Van Bremen 1996, 6). When patterns in the Aegean overlapped with Asia Minor, those women were included in the data, but otherwise Greece was excluded from Van Bremen's scope (Van Bremen 1996, 6). She pointed out that the number of cities within her corpus is large, which indicated that the trends were not regional but representative of the larger Greek world (Van Bremen 1996, 6). Van Bremen acknowledged that the geographic scope and chronology of her research was imperfect when it comes to comparability, as juxtaposing cities of various sizes, influence, and initiatives can lead to inaccurate conclusions (Van Bremen 1996, 6). Another limitation of Van Bremen's research mirrors the statement above that women are somewhat isolated within her work, though there are more integrated discussions of family and male and female public roles within this work in comparison to Hemelrijk's corpus, particularly in the Family Strategies chapter (Van Bremen 1996, 237-272).

While Van Bremen acknowledged that her goal in researching themes in Greek history was to identify trends, the risk of generalisation is large when studying an area that is not able to provide conclusive evidence (Van Bremen 1996, 6). Martine de Marre also emphasised this point - that clear lack of evidence which would provide true and precise insight into women's lives during the Roman Empire is unavoidable (De Marre 2002, 1). De Marre brushed this difficulty aside and proceeded to clarify that few researchers on the topic of women in the Roman Empire seek to characterise the exact lifestyle and motivations of Roman women, but rather they hope to make strong hypotheses based on the evidence provided (De Marre 2002, 1).

When discussing theory of studying women's history, De Marre labeled the group or researchers who gather information about individual women to compile it into a comparative narrative as positivists (De Marre 2002, 1). She described the assuming nature of this group as problematic, as their conclusions accept social and cultural evidence as naturally occurring rather than a result of the developing society. In short, De Marre believed the positivist approach would be bettered by a holistic approach which takes inscriptions, ancient sources, social structures, along with any other information into account (De Marre 2002, 2). She championed Sarah Pomeroy and Riet Van Bremen's methodologies, saying they successfully used literary and epigraphic evidence to draw conclusions about women's roles in the Greco-Roman world (De Marre 2002, 3).

De Marre believed that more recent discoveries and approaches allowed her to take this holistic approach to look at the broader contexts (De Marre 2002, 2). In terms of the historical context, De Marre relied on legal documents referring to settings which would have impacted women's access to social power (De Marre 2002, 2). Psychology and philosophy were a major part of De Marre's approach, as she applied B.F. Skinner's method of 'controlled inferencing' to analyse what it is that ancient authors omit in their writings and why this information is left out (De Marre 2002, 2). In summary, De Marre clarified that a strong reliance on anthropological and sociological approaches allowed her to best understand the environment and to better inform her speculation about provincial Roman women themselves (De Marre 2002, 3).

While Rachel Meyers' recent work reiterates many of the same points as Hemelrijk, there are several novel points worth highlighting (Meyers 2019). She illustrates the benefits of using descriptive data to further support established conclusions, to identify new trends, and to clarify points which may have been incorrectly shared in earlier works (Meyers 2019, 327). Meyers' work primarily examines benefactresses' tendency to donate on their own, versus in a joint contribution with their husbands, and uses her corpus of over 330 unique female benefactors to substantiate her conclusions (Meyers 2019, 328). While Meyers focuses on elite benefactresses in the western provinces and includes donations such as community feasts or festivals (which are left out of this research on benefactresses' building donations), her work contributes detailed findings on women's roles, family relationships, types of donations, and reinforces the need for a mixed-methods analysis in the area of female benefaction which aids this research and other projects in this field (Meyers 2019, 328-330).

Karin Tate (2022) argues that one of the issues in researching female benefaction is that authors are too quick to place the focus on external sources, rather than on the women themselves (Tate 2022, ii). While there is a need to place Roman women in the society in which they lived, their motivations for benefaction can be separated from their roles as wives and mothers. Tate's scope maintained a detailed focus on five case studies in Italy and one in North Africa during the first to third centuries AD, an approach which varied greatly from the extensive corpora created by Van Bremen and Hemelrijk (Tate 2022). This concentration on the individual Roman woman is necessary to understand the most detailed characteristics of each of these benefactresses' lives, which further improves understanding of Roman women as a whole. Tate was inspired by creating 'more nuanced and culturally meaningful discussion by placing the female benefactors themselves at the centre of the discussion', though comparable conclusions are difficult to achieve with Tate's focused case studies (Tate 2022, ii).

2.2.2 Chronology and Legal Context

2.2.2.1 Chronological Development of Female Benefaction

Ancient Roman authors repeatedly stated that the place of women was in the *domus*, or private sphere, even during periods where researchers now know Roman women were active in their communities. Ulpian wrote in his jurist reflections that *feminae ab omnibus officiis civilibus vel publicis remotae sunt* ('women are separated from all civil and public functions') (Tate 2022, 10; Ulpian, *Dig*. 50.17.2.) This is conflicting evidence which must be understood as a cultural statement as much as a textual representation, as the physical remains indicate that this depiction is inaccurate (Tate 2022, 10; Schultz 2006, 10). Even so, it is even more noteworthy that women were able to rise to social and financial power when contemporary authors were deliberately downplaying their roles in the community.

There were a number of factors which would have influenced the rise and fall of civic munificence, and these varied across the empire (Hemelrijk 2015, 127). These trends have been explored on a broad and non-gender specific scale by authors such as Werner Eck (1984), Hélène Jouffroy (1986), Paul Veyne (1990), Kathryn Lomas and Tim Cornell (2002), Emily Hemelrijk (2015), and Rachel Meyers (2019) who collectively have researched the regions of Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor. There is a consensus between these authors and the corresponding data that public building projects expanded quickly throughout the empire during the imperial period, though the focus changed from early architectural projects to include less tangible donations such as banquets and events (Cornell and Lomas 2002, 5; Andreau 1977; Mrozek 1972). Veyne addresses the Greek origins of euergetism and uses this information to identify the rise of benefaction as a political tool rather than a community aid, providing a unique perspective that is frequently left out by authors with western-focused research questions (Veyne 1990, 70-155). Additionally, there is evidence that local elite competition as well as a desire to maintain the status quo led elite benefactors to continue the practice, though the non-elite participants in public giving contradict these findings (Gordon 1990, 224; Hoyer 2013, 576-578; Meyers 2019, 340).

Hemelrijk in particular delves into patterns of female euergetism within the larger benefaction trends studied by earlier researchers and is quick to note that elite benefaction by women emerged in Italy before any other region, which is logical since the empresses were some of the original examples of monumental benefactresses (Hemelrijk 2015, 127). She points out that excluding Rome, which was affected by the imperial monopoly on building construction, the peak of female benefaction in Italy was in the late first century AD and early second century AD (Hemelrijk 2015, 127). This is unlike the chronological patterns of North Africa,

where elite female benefaction began in the mid-first century AD and then grew to its peak in the early third century AD (Hemelrijk 2015, 127).

An interesting debate emerges between experts on the topic of what inspired increased female benefaction. Early authors such as Victor Chapot have indicated that the emergence of benefactresses was due to the increased amount of social events, of which women were integral players (Chapot 1904, 163). This conclusion is rather simplistic, however, as it proposed that women rose to civic prominence with significant financial power simply in order to fund festivals and games. Chapot, along with later authors, also suggested that cities began to consider donations from women during times of economic struggle, but Hemelrijk and Van Bremen conclude that this is again removing agency from the significance of female benefaction (Tate 2022, 66; Van Bremen 1996, 4; Chapot 1904, 162-3). Van Bremen summarises the issue with Chapot's conclusion with her statement: 'they are, moreover, alike in their linking of female prominence and visibility with general decay, regression, and decline' (Van Bremen 1996, 4).

Van Bremen labeled the group of authors discussed above, which included Chapot and Veyne, as negativists (Van Bremen 1996, 4). The 'optimist' group included those who suggested that political activities by women were spurred by a resurgence of ancient matriarchy, for example in the region of Asia Minor, and included those who proposed that the economic freedom for women gradually increased, leading to increased social power (Van Bremen 1996, 4). The optimists include Sarah Pomeroy, Paul Trebilco, and Guy Rogers, as they explored the legal progression in Roman women's rights and the impact that access to finances had upon elite women (Pomeroy 1977; Rogers 1992; Trebilco 1991).

Van Bremen's understanding of female munificence does not fall into either the negative or optimist group. She believes that it would be incorrect to overstate the political nature of offices held by elite Roman women, and she highlights that these roles were more ceremonial than administrative (Van Bremen 1996, 4). Interestingly, both women and men could hold the role of magistrate, but for men it included political duties while female magistrates had a more symbolic role in this position (Van Bremen 1996, 4). Wen highlights that religious roles such as priesthoods would have still inherently placed a woman in the public sphere, providing influence and opportunities unavailable to those without these positions (Wen 2024, 178; Webb 2022, 164-67). Van Bremen strays from these questions around the extent to which women gained political power and focuses instead on the increased inclusion of women in public life, despite their restricted access to politics in the Greek East, her area of study (Van Bremen 1996, 4). Perhaps this approach should be

labeled the neutral hypothesis in comparison with the optimists and the negativists factions. Meyers' commentary on this topic adds that when competition grew within local communities, it was necessary for women and children to participate actively within euergetism in their cities in order to deepen the family's claim to elite status, and thus there was not necessarily a negative connotation to female benefaction when it enhanced the family reputation (Meyers 2019, 343).

Fejfer contributes to the topic of chronology with the statement: 'while the wives and other female family members of Roman officials were honoured with statues in the Roman East from the early first century BC onwards, the earliest honorific statues of "real" contemporary women in the west date from the very end of the Republic' (Fejfer 2008, 331). The vast regional differences across time periods is another topic to be explored, as the access to public visual representations of financially and socially powerful women in the Roman East certainly had a major impact on cultural expectations and acceptance.

2.2.2.2 Legal Background and the Context of Female Financial Management

Van Bremen discusses how in the first two centuries AD, Roman laws began to stretch across the empire into the provinces, where there was a rapidly growing population of Roman citizens (De Marre 2002, 30; Van Bremen 1996). These developments lead us to question how provincial communities adapted to new cultural expectations and legal requirements that came with Roman expansion. The Romans in Italy held the hierarchical ideal of control by the senior man of the household over his family and dependents, but it is likely that these beliefs did not transfer seamlessly into provinces with different cultural and social norms and, perhaps, with different, laws on the guardianship of women (*tutela*) (Van Bremen 1996, 226; Mitteis 1891, 153-154, 209-210).

Van Bremen investigated practical legal requirements for female financial management and decision making. Oversight by a woman's father (and then her husband) regarding approvals for financial spending and management were practiced since the Classical and Hellenistic time periods in Greek society (Schaps 1979, 48-60; Van Bremen 1996, 206; Vatin 1970, 241-252). Van Bremen explored *Institutes* by Gaius which outlined the definition of *tutela,* but focuses primarily on Roman Italy and Roman citizens elsewhere in the empire (G. *Inst.* 1.193; Van Bremen 1996, 206). This practice evidently continued into the Roman imperial period, where if a woman was to marry *sin manu (*'without hand', insinuating without power*)*, it would mean that her father would manage her legal affairs until his death, and if she married *cum manu (*similarly 'with hand', or with legal power*)*, then the assigned tutor role would pass to her husband with marriage (Gardner 1986, 5-30; Van Bremen 1996, 206). This

meant that the woman would not be able to manage her financial spendings or any property until the death of her guardian, whether it was her father or husband. At this point, a tutor would be assigned based on the deceased's will (Gardner 1986, 5-30; Van Bremen 1996, 207).

Over time, these types of guardianships slowly became more relaxed and allowed some women to act outside the constraints of guardianship by the time that Roman laws began to govern Greek cities. When the *ius trium liberorum* (right of three children) was established for Roman citizens between 18 BC and 9 AD, there became a significant amount of flexibility for women to operate outside of guardianship (Morrell 2020, 90; Van Bremen 1996, 207). By adhering to the laws set out by the *Lex Julia* and the *Lex Papia Poppaea* (legislation created with the aim of increasing the population and nourishing the view of the strength of marriage), women were able to able to be granted the *ius trium liberorum* if they had three children (four for freedwomen), which allowed them to be freed from the aforementioned *tutela,* thus granting them right of inheritance and changing the financial power dynamic (Morrell 2020, 91-92; Van Bremen 1996, 226-227; Gardner 1986, 20-21). It is worth noting here that just because the *ius trium liberorum* legislation was passed and women could manage their wealth in less restrictive ways, most women were not wealthy enough or connected to their communities in ways which would lead them to become benefactresses (Wen 2024, 184).

The *tutela* was not the only form of male control over women, and thus the removal of the *tutela* for women who birthed more than three children did not revolutionise female benefaction. Van Bremen concluded that financial decisions such as benefaction would typically impact entire families rather than individual members of the families (Morrell 2020, 102; Van Bremen 1996, 207-208). This would mean that women's access to financial freedom was relatively unchanged by the new legislation when the benefactress was an individual within a larger family group, as there was still social control over who in a family or group was able to donate their private funds (Morrell 2020, 95; Van Bremen 1996, 208). If a woman received financial freedom due to the new *ius trium liberorum* legislation, it would only have a major impact on her benefaction capabilities if there were no other family members to get in her way. We see that this is the case with elite benefactresses such as Plancia Magna (***AM 62***) and Terentia Paramone (***It 96***) in Pompeii, and Iunia Theodora (***AM 43***) in Corinth who make no mention of any relevant male family members.

On the other hand, a woman had the ability to control the access to funds by bequeathing them to her daughter(s) in her will. Van Bremen cites a specific case in her study, namely a

woman from the island of Thera (Santorini) called Epikteta who was able to direct family funds to her daughter Epiteleia (with approval of the *kyrios*, her daughter's husband) through her last will and testament (Van Bremen 1996, 212-215). Epikteta was the senior family member responsible for carrying out the wishes of her two deceased sons for their commemoration which involved an annual banquet for male relatives. She used her power to include in these provisions a statue of herself and altered the banquet to an annual sacrifice to commemorate the family members who had died, including herself, two sons, and husband (Van Bremen 1996, 215). This case study indicates that women who were able to maneuver their way skillfully through the hoops created by laws and social expectations could open doors for their daughters and other female relatives, especially with the support of their daughter's husbands (*kyrios)* in the case of Epiteleia.

2.2.3 Culture of Benefactresses

2.2.3.1 Roles, Representation, And Commissioners

A major debate in research on Roman benefactresses revolves around where to place them in Roman society. There was once a tendency to place women's actions within the realm of men and male activities, an approach adopted by Riet Van Bremen, Werner Eck, and Mary Boatwright (Eck 2013; Van Bremen 1996; Boatwright 1991). It is difficult to separate the motivations for benefaction between men and women, and for some authors it seemed natural to indicate that women desired to donate in order to publicly support and bring honour to their families.

Although scholars often have found it most appropriate to treat both male and female benefactors as equals, Hemelrijk argued that this approach removes women's agency by disregarding women's ability to have motivations specific to them (Hemelrijk 2015, 112). Hemelrijk emphasised that women should not be analysed only in their roles as family members - daughters, wives, mothers - as this also removes a woman's personal inspiration and reasoning (Hemelrijk 2015, 112). Hemelrijk takes the stance that as political outsiders, but of a certain status, elite benefactresses carved out a space unique from any other social group (Hemelrijk 2015, 112). Meyers adds to this point by calling for a combination of several approaches, where women are examined on their own (in order to identify their separate motivations and values), as well as placed within the wider environment so that an appropriate comparison of actions can be evaluated (Meyers 2019, 346-347).

When analysing the social mobility of elite female benefactresses, the language and portrayal of these women plays an important role. Benefactresses almost certainly would have had a say in the way that they were portrayed in any monumental inscriptions, although

the motivations would vary depending on whether the donation was honorific, for a building, or for a statue. Hemelrijk discusses the formulaic approach which would have been applied when a benefactress was advising the creation of an inscription on her building or statue base (Hemelrijk 2015, 157). While direct self-praise was avoided, the intentional naming of the cost, location, or significance of the donation could be used to emphasise the kindness and magnanimity of the benefactress (Hemelrijk 2015, 157). With this in mind, researchers should read building inscriptions warily, as there was often an agenda in mind at the time of commissioning. The way that researchers adapt to this knowledge varies, as some interpret the inscriptions more literally than others.

One of the most fascinating points which Hemelrijk emphasises is that elite benefactresses were not solely inspired by imperial women, as there often were examples of reciprocity where imperial women would take cues from elite benefactresses and their building commissions. There also were cases of innovation, where elite benefactresses sought to create their own symbolism within structures (Hemelrijk 2005b, 168-170). This is shown by Eumachia in Pompeii (***It 35***), who has been linked to Livia due to the similarities between the *Porticus Liviae* (built by the empress Livia) and Eumachia's monumental building (*chalcidicum*) (Fig. 2.2) (Cooley 2013, 31-36; Longfellow 2021, 121-124). Alison Cooley provided an excellent analysis of the timeframes of these donations and concluded that it is highly possible that Eumachia paired visual representations of *Pietas* and *Concordia* along with a statue of Livia between 9 BC and 22 AD, before Livia and Tiberius' rededication of the *Porticus Liviae* in 10 AD*,* where the former cult of *Concordia* became the cult of *Concordia Augusta (*Cooley 2013, 33-36; Longfellow 2021, 123). This demonstrates that there was not necessarily a unidirectional path for inspiration between local elites and the imperial family members.

Figure 2.2. Eumachia's *Portico della Concordia Augusta* in Pompeii. (Photo by author.)

Researchers have discussed those instances in which a benefactress chose to clarify her free birth or notable connections, thus heightening her own status. When there was additional space to list family relations and social standing, women were tactical in their choices, as this could set up the family to rise in the political sphere or establish themselves as notable locals (Hemelrijk 2015, 157). Though benefactresses were happy to list familial connections to honour the family name for posterity, they also made sure to state that the donation was paid for out of their own funds (Hemelrijk 2015, 157). An excellent example of this is again shown by Eumachia in Pompeii (***It 35***), as she strategically mentioned her son within her inscription, likely in order to elevate his political standing, though Longfellow recently disputed this due to the honorary statue in the building being of Eumachia and not her son (Longfellow 2021, 125). Eumachia highlighted that she 'built at her own expense the *chalcidicum*, crypt and *porticus* in honour of Augustan Concord and Piety and also dedicated them' (Cooley 2013, 33; *CIL* 10.810–811; Longfellow 2021, 125-126). With this, she cemented both her own and her son's importance within the local community, asserted her financial contribution, and linked the building and herself to the imperial family.

Another benefactress, the wealthy Plancia Magna from Perge in Asia Minor (***AM 62***), provided insight on ways in which the wording of an inscription could be influenced if the commissioner of the inscription was someone other than the benefactress herself (Caceres-Cerda 2018, 55). Within her gate complex, Plancia Magna is depicted in statue

form, donated by two of her freedmen (Caceres-Cerda 2018, 55-58). Despite being a member of the town council, a priestess, and notable benefactress who had donated a monumental gate complex around 120 AD, the inscriptions accompanying the statue neglected to mention her civic contributions (Fejfer 2008, 363). If Plancia Magna had set up these statues and inscriptions herself, would she have left out her public accomplishments or did that occur because the statues were commissioned by two male dependents?

When it came to honorific inscriptions, namely those monuments set up for a benefactress by the community in gratitude, the primary decision-making was in the remit of the local council. The town councilors would be the people to dictate nearly every piece of the donation, including the inscription (Hemelrijk 2015, 158). This is not to say that the person being honoured would not have input, as these complex social interactions would ideally lead to a result in which everyone was happy (Hemelrijk 2015, 158); in the cases in which a female honorand was especially satisfied with the result, she could choose to reimburse the council's expenses for the dedicatory statue (Hemelrijk 2015, 158). This highlights the importance of pleasing the person being honoured, so that future donations or reimbursements would be encouraged and could be anticipated. While honorific inscriptions were written in a way where the honoured person is supposedly surprised and grateful for the honour, there were confidential conversations around what would please this elite individual the most (Hemelrijk 2015, 158).

Women across the Roman Empire were communicating in varying languages, though primarily in Greek and Latin. While analysing this research, it is important to note that women in the regions of the Greek East included inscriptions mostly in Greek (though there are examples where women commissioned bilingual or Latin inscriptions), while benefactresses in the west were primarily donating inscriptions in Latin, though other languages such as Punic were also used (Valantasis 2000, 11).

Hemerijk questions whether the standardised language and formatting of inscriptions indicated insincerity and a lack of originality (Hemelrijk 2015, 166). While the formulaic approach to these inscriptions ensured that the donor came across in an appropriate manner, it should not be assumed that being uncreative meant the benefactor was apathetic (Hemelrijk 2015, 166-167). Jane Fejfer also contributed to this topic, and in looking for possible regional preferences, she concluded that there were differences between the Roman East and West in terms of honorary inscriptions (Fejfer 2008). She shared that inscriptions for women in the east were more likely to include both the standard praise for the

matronly values of the benefactress alongside expressed appreciation for their public generosity (Fejfer 2008, 37).

2.2.3.2 Motivation

> *Public buildings can be approached as reflections of both communal identity and self-image, and of the preoccupations and priorities of the individuals and groups who paid for them.*
> - Cornell and Lomas 2002, 5

Motivation is one of the most hotly debated themes in research on female benefaction, as authors contribute several different perspectives. Some authors take a hard stance on Roman life being male-centred and warrior-focused, where women were only contributing rarely and as honorary men; only at the forefront of society once eligible male figures had been depleted (Smethurst 1950, 86-87). Marleen Flory suggests that the production of heirs for the family was the main priority for Roman women, based on the power which having children provided the imperial women (Flory 1993, 292-294). Authors such as Riet Van Bremen and Margaret Woodhull focused on the role of women as individuals in a complex society, although continuing to include men in the conversation as they all played a part within a family hierarchy (Woodhull 1999, 78-79, 132; Van Bremen 1996, 96). Even more recent authors, such as Shanshan Wen, highlight how women were drawn to mention male family members within inscriptions because of a sense of duty to serve the family (Wen 2024, 182). Wen goes on to also discuss how women acted as part of a female network and as local community members, but the statements around how including men in their inscriptions made their ‘public presence more acceptable’ continue to reflect a belief that benefactresses’ motivation heavily lay with family obligations (Wen 2024, 182).

These works received criticism from authors such as Karin Tate, who believes that while these earlier works led to important discussions whether ancient women 'acted in their own right', they also restricted female agency by placing elite benefactresses primarily in the domestic and family spheres (Tate 2022, 17). She goes on to say that female benefaction may have even come across as misguided, depending on society’s view of acceptable female roles, which would be a lens to apply in future work (Tate 2022, 9).

While some of these authors have suggested that female benefaction had the aim of elevating male relatives in order to enhance their political career, this view seems to be contradicted by evidence of benefactresses donating of their own accord, with their own

money, and without mentioning any of their male relatives (Hemelrijk 2015, 114, 165). The motivations of benefactors would have to have been quite complex, as variations in 'wealth, social status, ambition, and family traditions' would have substantial impact on their financial decisions (Hemelrijk 2015, 166). While it is known that Roman women could not legally hold government positions, their local activism indicates that they too had notable public presences which could sway political campaigns (Wen 2024, 178). Hemelrijk closely examines behaviours by female benefactors compared with their male counterparts, and concludes that on the whole, women did not stray far from the behaviours exhibited by elite men (Hemelrijk 2015, 164-168). Meyers reiterates this point when stating that men as well as women were often identified by their relationship to a notable parent or relative in inscriptions, but researchers tend to only take this inscription convention to suggest a desire to act as a support to male family members when the donor was a woman (Meyers 2019, 344). This research seeks to establish that female benefaction was not a lesser contribution to Roman society, but rather that female benefactresses had their own motivations and goals when providing financial support and embellishment for their cities. These would have included demonstrating Roman values, providing a legacy for their family, and personal pride and accomplishment, which were similarly exhibited by male donors but embodied in distinct ways based on the experiences of Roman men and women in society.

2.2.3.3 Return on Investment

Benefactresses who donated hundreds of thousands of sesterces toward a public building would expect honorific statues or public recognition in return. But was this public attention worth the costly donations? This is difficult to measure, but it is worth some discussion here.

Some researchers will go as far as to say that there was very little motivation for local elites to provide for their communities, and the primary focus of their generosity was on enhancing personal and familial prestige (Cornell and Lomas 2002, 2). If true, this would have gone against the writings of Cicero, who emphasised the importance of practical munificence which went beyond superficial and attention-seeking performances (Cic. *De Off.* 2.60–1).

While there are many divergent discussions around women’s place in the Roman world, it is crucial to contextualise their role in their unique societies and local environments to fully understand the influence by their relatives, their communities, and their own internal desire for social power. Tate (2022) sums up research on relationships between benefactresses and their larger social groups well with the following statement:

> *…it is important to contextualize women's actions in terms of the hierarchies within which they were acting. Not doing so would be like studying male public benefactions without a consideration of the complicated networks of personal and public patronages or competition for prestige appointments that drove their actions.*
>
> - Tate 2022, 24

It is simple to assume that monumental benefactions often came from a self-serving mindset, but there likely were generous intentions as well. Having a family name on a public building may have created a sense of accomplishment through beautifying a city in which they had great pride (Hemelrijk 2015, 166). Hemelrijk addresses the unselfish and humble intentions behind religious donations, as there are a particularly large amount of these, and they are highlighted in inscriptions regardless of their size, indicating that religious donations were reputable in Roman society (Hemelrijk 2015, 166).

There is also an inheritance factor when it comes to motivations for beneficence. Often it would be expected that if a parent was particularly munificent, the children would be too (Hemelrijk 2015, 166). Children of benefactors could feel this pressure from their communities, but also may have been inspired to repair works which were donated by family members in the past, in order to ensure that their familial contributions and inscriptions were maintained (Hemelrijk 2015, 167). While a husband and wife pair co-donated in some cases, it is possible that they would donate individually and even in competition when continuing the tradition of their kin (Hemelrijk 2015, 167). Longfellow points out the importance of emphasising parental relationships in inscriptions, as 11 of 12 public priestesses she researched (many of whom were also benefactresses) highlighted their role as a daughter of a named parent (Longfellow 2014, 84). The case of Eumachia (***It 35***) does not stray from this standardised formula, as her statue base in Pompeii set up by the fullers (Roman laundry workers) lists her father's name and her public role with no mention of her husband (Hemelrijk 2015, 474). While one can highlight that this is the standard formula, it does seem to provide additional clarification around parental roles, as Eumachia's husband was the connection between Eumachia and the fullers, so his absence from the inscription indicates that the epigraphic formula highlighting parents was more respected than one may have thought (Longfellow 2014, 87).

Several opportunities opened up for benefactresses following their integration into the local civic network, which would have extended beyond family pride and political roles for male relatives, and into more visible honours and positions. The key outcome of a donation by a

local benefactor was often public honour, which could be found in various forms, both physical statues as well as ceremonial positions (Hemelrijk 2015, 171). The first form was an honorific statue or inscription, which further extended the impact of a donation by adding another example of the benefactress's name to the civic landscape, added a visual reference to her identity, and would have often required her input to ensure she was sufficiently pleased with the honour and that the relationship between benefactress and council remained positive for future donations (Hemelrijk 2015, 170-171; Van Nijf 1997, 117-120). Brennan and Pettit (2004) describe this kind of exchange between a benefactress and her community as part of an 'economy of esteem', where social standing plays a similar role to that of a market economy or a legal system, and provides control within a given environment (Brennan and Pettit 2004, 66-77; Hemelrijk 2015, 171). Aside from a statue, honorands were occasionally provided with a public funeral or monumental tomb, which in the case of Mamia in Pompeii, continued to provide prestige long after her death (Longfellow 2015, 86). A woman in Paestum named Mineia was honoured through the minting of a bronze coin featuring her portrait, which would have been exchanged daily between residents of Paestum and nearby communities (Crawford 1973, 52-55; Hemelrijk 2015, 172; Weiss 2005, 63).

Ceremonial accolades would have included receiving titles 'for life', such as in the case of receiving the offices of *stephanephoria* or *demiourgia* in Asia Minor (Dmitriev 2005, 53-56; Van Bremen 1996, 30-40). Privileged seating at banquets, theatres, or even a synagogue would have also been a potential reward or thanks for a community benefactor, where again, public visibility would have been a factor in social esteem (Brooten 1982, 143-144; Erny 2012, 37; Hemelrijk 2015, 164, 170-171; Woodhull 2018, 231). While some women were more modest regarding accepting the honours bestowed upon them, others highlighted them with pride and sometimes even commissioned them themselves (Hemelrijk 2015, 172). These examples show the requirement for balance when attempting to exhibit virtues appropriate for someone striving to appear humble while also seeking public esteem.

2.2.3.4 Buildings: Trends, Patterns, And Prices

Many different buildings were donated by benefactresses, but there were clear preferences for certain structures. When reviewing structures which were seen as unattractive options, infrastructural projects such as walls or defensive reinforcements come to mind immediately, as these were costly and did not result in glamorous recognition (Hemelrijk 2015, 126). Political structures such as *curiae* or *basilicas* are uncommon or nonexistent when considering female donors, likely due to the exclusion of women from the realm of politics (Hemelrijk 2015, 125). Hemelrijk points out that women would have been aware of the

general public's desire for social and community structures, and were happy to oblige (Hemelrijk 2015, 130). It is important to highlight here that while this research examines women's donations and choices, they most often reflect the same donation choices which were being made by male donors. The differences in donation types for male and female benefactors would lie in areas where women were excluded from participation, which would have included political, academic, or legal settings, as seen below.

While women may have steered away from donating political buildings, there were still plenty of other options. Known building donation costs range from 4,000 to 200,000 sesterces, and often the listed fees were not representative of the true donation amount, due to additional adornment (Hemelrijk 2015, 118). Women could also donate portions of a structure, which allowed less wealthy benefactresses to participate (Hemelrijk 2015, 119). These partial donations could be defined as restoration, furnishing, or adornment of a monumental building, though without an inscription naming the cost it would be difficult to determine how grand the additions were (Hemelrijk 2015, 119). According to Thomas and Witschel (1992), benefactresses may have labeled the donation a 'restoration' even if it was a full reconstruction, in order to preserve history and prestige, such as in the case of the Temple of Demeter in Cumae, Italy (***It 54***) (Hemelrijk 2015, 119).

Earlier publications suggested that women were not commissioning monumental buildings, but rather committing to smaller donations, but more recent work shows that monumental building structures were, in fact, some of the most prominent donations by female benefactors (Hemelrijk 2015, 115; Patterson 2006, 173). Women's names and funding connections were attributed to many forms of public buildings, which can be grouped into categories such as religious buildings, infrastructural buildings, utilitarian buildings, and structures for entertainment (Hemelrijk 2015, 116). In terms of restoration or maintenance works, Hemelrijk notes that donations toward repairs of an existing building were seen as less desirable than forming a new structure with one's own name on the inscription, though Meyers adds that during the reign of Antoninus Pius, many buildings were falling into disrepair and the emperor directed benefactors to put their funds toward restoring a building rather than constructing a new one (Meyers 2019, 341; Hemelrijk 2015, 116; *Dig* 50.10.7). This is an area which requires further examination, as epigraphic evidence often indicated that a structure was a new build while the physical evidence suggested that prior constructions had existed.

The preferences that Roman benefactors had for monumental buildings shifted over time. From around 500 BC to the beginning of the imperial period, there was a focus on

infrastructure, as city walls and gates were both beneficial to the city in terms of defense, and large enough to make a notable impact as a benefactor (Hemelrijk 2015, 128). This evolved during the first and second centuries AD, where the focus was less on infrastructure and became more varied as entertainment structures grew more popular. Women were less likely to donate defensive structures, and instead focused on commissioning entertainment and religious buildings. The focus of elite Roman communities shifted in the second to third centuries AD to social camaraderie rather than the political personas of the past (Patterson 2006, 173). Interestingly, public bathhouses also were prominent donations during the first and second centuries AD (Hemelrijk 2015, 128). These could be donated as whole structures, or could be extended, decorated, or restored (Hemelrijk 2015, 124). There likely was great variety in bath structures, as they could be modest buildings or grand, eye-catching structures. Epigraphic evidence from North Africa indicates that a restored and well-maintained bath complex would bring high regard and praise to a city (Fejfer 2008, 60).

A linked structure was the aqueduct, as they often fed the communal water features. Originally they were structures built by private benefactors, but over time became larger projects supported by the emperors (Ellis 1997, 144-145). While a bathhouse was perhaps more decorated or adorned, the robust structure that was the aqueduct was needed in many areas for water transport. To provide a visual of the work required, in North Africa, an aqueduct which supplied Carthage with water is known to have stretched over 90 kilometres (Hodge 1992, 346). In the Roman East, aqueducts utilised water which came out of qanats, or tunnels drilled into hillsides (Hodge 1992, 20). Romans were known for their technical capabilities, and the aqueduct was a feat of engineering at the time which would have demonstrated power in a visual format (Ellis 1997, 144). As public baths and fountain complexes were important community gathering places, the aqueducts won over the local people in other ways (Ellis 1997, 145).

A trend toward religious building donations such as temples was obvious (Hemelrijk 2015, 117, 118). This predominance of religious donations could have been due to legal requirements during the Republican period, where women could only provide funding for religious structures, though this hypothetical requirement would have had to be dissolved in the Imperial period (Schultz 2007, 18-26).

In a separate category, there were only a few types of entertainment complexes commissioned by women. This is not to say that they were unattractive options like infrastructural projects, but there was potentially a distaste for women's participation in the arts or perhaps these types of projects were unpopular due to their high costs. The

amphitheatre donated by Ummidia Quadratilla in the Italian town of Casinum comes to mind (***It 103***), as Pliny the Younger looked down on her involvement in pantomimes and neglected to highlight her status as a self-made benefactress in his writings; instead, praise for her is limited to her role as a grandmother (Fig. 2.3) (Hemelrijk 2015, 109-111).

Figure 2.3. Amphitheatre donated by Ummidia Quadratilla in Roman Casinum. (Photo by author.)

Some of the above trends were true for Italy, but should not be generalised to the other provinces, as they each were developing their civic munificence traditions in their own ways. North Africa saw a prominence of temples, much like elsewhere in the Roman Empire, but also continued donating infrastructural works and entertainment structures (Hemelrijk 2015, 129). It is possible that infrastructural works continued in North Africa for longer, as it was less built up than Rome and other Italian cities and the need for public buildings was greater.

In terms of personal preference, Ummidia Quadratilla's (***It 103***) example mentioned above demonstrates a woman's desire to donate a structure suited to her lifestyle and interests. Despite the fact that pantomimes were often looked down upon by elite members of society, Ummidia was a proponent of this form of entertainment and built a theatre to bring the performances to the public on a larger scale (Hemelrijk 2015, 130). Ancient authors such as Cicero and Pliny the Younger have shared their thoughts on donations they deemed useful or not (Cic. *Offic*. 2.60–1; Plin. *Ep*. 7.24.4), but evidently this pressure from elite authors did not deter elite benefactresses from commissioning buildings which corresponded to their

own interests (Hemelrijk 2015, 130).

It is important to recognise that not only did the trends in the donation of monumental buildings and statues vary greatly between regions, but they also varied between cities in the same region. Jane Fejfer points out that while statue portraits are commonly found in sanctuaries in the Roman East, the stark difference in prominence of sanctuary portraits between the cities of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in present-day Libya shows that individual cities had unique preferences (Fejfer 2008, 60). The sanctuaries in Italy did not typically have this frequency of honorific statues, leading to new questions related to regional differences, one of the topics this dissertation seeks to explore (Fejfer 2008, 60).

Fejfer also highlights that the portraits of benefactresses in Cyrene (present-day Libya) found in sanctuaries, were actually some of the few examples of female honorary statues found in public places in the region (Fejfer 2008, 62). Perhaps this is because while sanctuaries could be utilised as meeting places for a variety of groups, they also had a religious significance, and were a setting where women were more likely to play a role (Fejfer 2008, 62).

2.2.4 The Gap in the Research

The works by Riet Van Bremen, Emily Hemelrijk, and Rachel Meyers clearly demand a continued comparative focus on elite benefaction by women in the Roman Empire, specifically in the regions of Italy, Asia Minor, and North Africa. While there previously was not enough epigraphic evidence for an analysis of these regions in whole, more recent research has led to hypotheses which can be placed alongside each other to create further regional conclusions. Aided by the research of several other authors mentioned in this review of the literature, this thesis is prepared to develop the understanding of elite female benefaction in exciting and innovative ways.

The most pronounced gap in the literature lies within the topic of regional comparison (Pomeroy 1998, 491). While there is varied amounts of information published on the individual regions of Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor, the comparison between these unique localities is lacking. This thesis seeks to understand the history, culture, and motivations of each region in order to determine why certain trends did or did not emerge. With the ability to compare regions, comes the endless possibilities presented by comparing benefactresses' social status, public roles, family relationships, and more. This approach is greater in breadth than any research that has come previously, though it has built upon years of well-executed studies.

Additionally, this research will follow in Hemelrijk's footsteps by focusing on monumental building benefaction. This segment of female benefaction will allow for a spotlight on understanding the most notable projects within a community, while providing examples of self-representation via commissioned statues within the structures. Through defining a clear focus for this research, the author is able to set defined boundaries and guidelines to understand which women and what evidence is eligible for analysis.

The methodology utilised when studying Roman benefaction has varied between earlier researchers, as some have relied heavily on epigraphic evidence, while others took a deeper dive into social structures and corroboration provided by ancient sources. This research seeks to employ a holistic approach to understand women's roles within the realm of public benefaction through detailed data analysis, using methodologies similar to but more comprehensive than the tables created by Van Bremen and Hemelrijk (Keegan 2015, 712). An additional strength is the close ties between the text and the data, as the women are referenced clearly within the chapters, linking them back to the corpus (Lindner and Lamond 2017, 665). As much of the previous research has been primarily qualitative, this analytical analysis will allow for new results and conclusions, hopefully inspiring future research to follow in this methodology.

One of the key strengths of this research is its comparative nature of recording interregional data. This study seeks to provide evidence (with the understanding that there is limited information available) which is backed by numbers and representative data as well as embedded theory and context. Van Bremen and Hemelrijk have set a high standard for this approach, and it is with their research and methodologies that this investigation can explore female benefaction even further. The intention to publish this dataset in a way where it can continue to be filtered and manipulated by future researchers will be one of its greatest strengths (Langford 2018, 1002, Raepsaet-Charlier 2018, 576).

A final note in regards to the research gap lies with the examination of non-elite women. This research began with the assumption that there would not be many lower status women donating buildings in the epigraphic record, but this research has proven that that was a naïve assumption which must be countered to ensure representation of all women from the Roman period. The prevalence of freedwomen within the corpus is astounding, and well worth the investigation they receive in this research, as well as the guaranteed future research on the topic.

2.3 Negotiating Gender in the Roman Empire

2.3.1 Introduction

The earliest documented evidence for roles held by women in the Roman Empire comes from ancient authors such as Pliny, Juvenal, Cicero, and Livy (*Pliny 7.24;* Juv. *Sat. 6*; Cicero's *De Am. 46*; Livy's *Ab urbe condita*). These male literary figures either praised women as faithful and devoted wives or criticised them as indecisive and excessively opinionated. In reviewing 21 texts from these authors, Lefkowitz and Fant (1982) discovered that all of the women who were mentioned were credited for their 'chastity, marital fidelity, wifely and motherly devotion, and dedication to housework'. Within the narratives, women were lauded for their devotion to their children, domestic chores, weaving, and supporting their partners in political and social endeavours. Forbis (1990) highlights one Roman man's commentary on the uniformity of women's commemoration, which indicates that the ancient Romans were acutely aware that their representations of 'good women' were lacking personalised depth:

> *Quibus de causeis quom omnium bonarum feminarum simplex similis- que esse laudatio soleat, quod naturalia bona propria custodia servata varietates verborum non desiderent, satisque sit eadem omnes bona fama digna fecisse, et quia adquirere novas laudes mulieri sit arduom, quom minoribus varietatibus vita iactetur, necessario communia esse colenda, ne quod amissum ex iustis praecepteis cetera turpet.*
>
> For these reasons praise for all good women is simple and similar, since their native goodness and the trust they have maintained do not require a diversity of words. Sufficient is the fact that they have all done the same good deeds with the fine reputation they deserve, and since it is hard to find new forms of praise for a woman, since their lives fluctuate with less diversity, by necessity we pay tribute to values they hold in common, so that nothing may be lost from fair precepts and harm what remains.
>
> - *CIL* 6.10230 = ILS 8394, translated by Lefkowitz and Fant 1982, 136

See below Pliny's commentary on Ummidia Quadratilla (***It 103***), a successful benefactress and businesswoman who orchestrated pantomime performances for the community of Casinum (Sick 1999, 330; Pliny 7.24):

> *audivi ipsam ... solere se, ut feminam in illo otio sexus, laxare animum lusu calculorum, solere spectare pantomimos suos…* (Pliny 7.24.5)
>
> I have heard that she herself used to relax her mind with checkers or watch her pantomimes, as women do in the idleness of their sex (Sick 1999, 330).

Through owning slaves and her own theatrical business, Ummidia was criticised for extravagant behaviour, though one could suggest that a man in this position would not receive such harsh reproval (Sick 1999, 330). As Ummidia did not hold the traditional roles associated with domesticity, this example demonstrates the critiques shared by male literary figures of the time. These sentiments are compounded by contemporary authors who read the critical work of authors such as Pliny and proceed to describe Ummidia in their own words as not being 'particularly virtuous' or as a 'morally ambiguous' figure (Sick 1999, 330; Fantham 1994, 350; Dobson 1982, 82). This exemplifies the potential dangers of reading ancient literature as an accurate representation of historic figures, especially when those figures are women.

Pliny's sentiments toward women are benign in comparison to the scathing descriptions in Juvenal's *Satire 6 (*Juv. *Sat.* 6.). While *Satire* 6 takes an almost entirely negative view on Roman women of Juvenal's time, it does highlight the desired roles for women, even if he thinks that no one meets these expectations *(*Juv. *Sat*. 6.). Juvenal mentions the concept of *pudicitia* several times, making clear to readers that this virtue was highly valued by men such as himself *(*Braund 1992, 74; Juv. *Sat*. 6.). Braund defines this value as 'sexual purity', encompassing both the unmarried virgin and the dedicated wife throughout a marriage who could not be accused of adultery (Braund 1992, 74; Lattimore 1942, 295-296). The term *pudicitia* was commonly found on epitaphs praising an honourable wife, and thus was a virtue that was highly valued in Roman society (Braund 1992, 74).

Often, terms which would not be associated with weak morals in modern-day were debated in ancient literature. In Cicero's *Laelius De Amicitia*, he describes the value of friendship, and states that women would need it more than men due to their weak character and strength (Cic. *De Am.* 46). Again, this well-known text would have provided an understanding of gender and created expectations around female virtues and character.

> *Alios autem dicere aiunt multo etiam inhumanius (quem locum breviter paulo ante perstrinxi) praesidii adiumentique causa, non benevolentiae neque caritatis amicitias esse expetendas; itaque, ut quisque minimum firmitatis*

haberet minimumque virium, ita amicitias adpetere maxime; ex eo fieri, ut mulierculae magis amicitiarum praesidia quaerant quam viri et inopes quam opulenti et calamitosi quam ii, qui putentur beati.

- Cic. *De Am.* 46

Friendships must be sought for the sake of the defence and aid they give and not out of goodwill and affection; therefore, that those least endowed with firmness of character and strength of body have the greatest longing for friendship; and consequently, that helpless women, more than men, seek its shelter, the poor more than the rich, and the unfortunate more than those who are accounted fortunate.

- Cic. *De Am.* 46; translated by Thayer 2013

Here women are described as both lacking character and physical strength, indicating that these are values on which men prided themselves (*De Am.* 46). Texts such as this could lead to questions regarding whether male friendship would have been interpreted as a display of weakness, or whether the occurrence of friendship among men was considered to be happenstance rather than created from a longing for companionship.

Through lenses such as these, archaeologists and historians were led to believe that women were not engaged in politics or society on their own terms, and it is only recently that researchers have sought to understand whether these depictions were accurately portraying the women of the Roman Empire or if these writings were simply misinformed propaganda. Recent scholars have reevaluated our prior knowledge regarding women's roles and the impact of gender expectations within Roman society. Their work provides a foundation upon which this paper will build (Boatwright 2021, 2000; Hemelrijk 2015, 2004, 1999; Carroll 2013; Fejfer 2008; Schultz 2006; Cornell and Lomas 2002).

Women were expected to express their gender through roles in various spheres, such as the private, domestic, religious, and political domains. By understanding the expectations and social norms that governed women's lives, scholars can better investigate instances where women defied their prescribed roles.

2.3.2 Masculinity and Femininity

When examining gender ideology in ancient Rome, one of the most basic understandings is that masculinity was associated with the public sphere and femininity was associated with the *domus*, or the household (D'Ambra 1989, 392-400; Hemelrijk 2004a, 188). So what does

the *domus* entail, and what words were associated with this feminine realm? Hemelrijk highlights the words *pudicitia, modestia, obsequium, lanificium* which roughly translate to modesty/virtue, humility, compliance, and weaving (depending on the circumstances) (Hemelrijk 2004a, 188). These words appear repeatedly within ancient texts and inscriptions, emphasising the roles the ideal Roman woman was expected to fulfill. Femininity was recorded as being modest and complacent, while completing all of the household jobs, most respected of which was wool-working tasks.

On the other hand, men are described with words emphasising their political prowess and physical strength, which made them the ideal warrior (Hemelrijk 2004a, 188; McDonnell 2002, 235-261). Masculine descriptors provided more honour than feminine adjectives, and Hemelrijk makes clear that one of the most offensive insults for a man was to be compared to a woman (Hemelrijk 2004a, 189). The term *mollitia* was used to denote effeminacy, and would be associated with weakness, promiscuity, and opulence (Edwards 1993, 63–97; Hemelrijk 2004a, 189; Vidén 1993, 110-129). This illustrates that not only were the expectations and social roles at odds, but that there was a clear social order which denoted the more powerful and respectable sex. The contrast between the roles, and thus the beliefs about the different sexes, is glaringly clear, and researchers must stop to think about the impact these expectations would have upon each member of society, even once women were allowed to be involved in the public realm.

2.3.3 Female Agency

'...Agency is having the power and capacity to act as one chooses'

- Bowden and Mummery 2009, 124–25.

When examining women in the ancient world, and their day-to-day experiences, it is important to not separate them from the other players in their environment. Once we are able to understand the baseline for women and their access to certain physical and metaphorical spaces, we are able to identify those who acted outside of the norm and showed greater access to agency. Establishing a baseline for women's experience in the ancient Roman world is near impossible though, especially when considering women across regions, financial classes, families, and social statuses. There are few examples of ancient writings by elite women, and even less which come from women of a lower social standing (Gilles et. al. 2024, 3). We know about the legal influences on women's lives such as the *ius trium liberorum,* which would have previously limited women's ability to act on a desire to participate in benefaction or within local affairs, but once this restriction was lifted, the increase in female benefaction participation indicates that women were waiting for increased

opportunities. While women were eventually legally allowed to manage their finances, there would have still been cultural norms and expectations around what was appropriate, which some women were willing to obey while others went beyond the predictable behaviour.

Feminist theorists have identified ways to try to place female agency on a level plane to male agency, through changing the narrative and hierarchy around private and public spaces. While public spaces are usually seen as more important due to political and economic decisions taking place within them, equality feminists call for the private space to hold the same weight to those discussing agency, as the private sphere is needed to be successful in the public sphere (Gilles et. al. 2024, 5). Another group, which is referred to as 'difference feminists', takes a slightly different approach in valuing women's contributions as equal to men's rather than leveling out the spaces where women and men are most active (Gilles et. al. 2024, 6). An approach which corresponds with discussing women who went against the grain of appropriate actions defined by men is discussed in Frye (1997). This lens suggests that women who were able to oppose male-centric norms held more agency. When women were actively donating structures in areas of the city which may have been considered male by locals, such as political settings, intellectual settings, or entertainment settings, they were resisting the system of oppression created by their male peers (Frye 1997, 30-32, 35-37).

Collective agency also plays a large role in this research when women donating as a group are discussed (Bowden and Mummery 2009, 145-146; Bandura 2000, 76). For some researchers, collective agency is more difficult to discuss, as their idea of agency is individual-based. But a group of women, all of a lower social status, choosing to donate a religious building, is a clear example of collective decision making which was intended to benefit both the individuals and the group as a whole. Bandura's research on collective agency is particularly relevant, as he shared that 'many desired outcomes are only possible through interdependent efforts,' which is evident with benefactresses' group donations, where a combination of wealth and prestige was necessary to accomplish a large contribution (Bandura 2000, 75). Group donations naturally vary between regions, which is supported by Abrams' work on collective agency, where she states that understanding one's self is first defined by the social environment they are placed within (Abrams 1999, 825). This indicates that the context of co-donors in Asia Minor would vary from those in Italy, and thus understanding each social environment is necessary before one could understand the agency these co-donors had (Abrams 1999, 825). Gilles et. al. defines the concept of agency within their book as being possible through individual as well as group circumstances, which is the same approach which will be applied in this research (Gilles et. al. 2024, 10-11).

With this framework on female agency, understanding the systems which allowed these women to participate in public benefaction in unique ways becomes more feasible. Whether treating public and private spaces as equals or separating agency from the individual, these theories described above aid researchers in properly understanding and discussing the range of access for ancient women to act as they choose.

2.3.4 Ancient Sources

2.3.4.1 Documenting Pompeiian Women

Without the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD, Pompeii may have only retained a reputation today as a typical Roman town, but since the ash preserved evidence of public life at one precise stage in time, the remains allow a unique insight into the lives of people of varying genders, classes, and social statuses all within one environment (Longfellow 2024, 153). Longfellow compiles evidence of women influencing political campaigns (see below), offering their buildings for rent, and calculating their personal loan interest (Longfellow 2024, 153-154; Cooley and Cooley 2004, 170-171; Savunen 1995, 195). Swetnam-Burland (2024) adds to this list of occupations held by women in Pompeii and wider Italy, citing examples of wool-workers, midwives, and artisans making jewelry and textiles (Swetnam-Burland 2024, 29-49).

> *L(ucium) Popi[dium] S[ecun]d[u]m aed(ilem) o(ro) v(os) f(aciatis) /*
> *Taed[i]a secunda cupiens avia rog(at) et fecit.*
> - *CIL 4.7469*

> “I beg you to elect Lucius Popidius Secundus aedile. His eager grandmother Taedia Secunda asks (you) and made (this poster).”
> - *CIL 4.7469,* translated by Longfellow 2024, 153

Interestingly, these women come from varied backgrounds, with the political activist being an elite woman, the landlord being non-elite though owned her land, and the loaner likely being less wealthy than the landlord (Longfellow 2024, 153-154; D’Ambra 2021, 89; Cooley and Cooley 2004, 170-171; Savunen 1995, 195). While in many cities, these insights have to be pieced together from building donation epigraphy or funerary monuments, the benefit of Pompeii is that the remnants of these women’s lives are visible for all to see, as if they were written yesterday.

2.3.4.2 Celerinus and His Wife Marcia Procula

When understanding the expression of gender within the Roman world, one of the first places researchers can explore is within the representations on funerary monuments. The way that men and women sought to be remembered and represented for future generations indicates which characteristics they strived to emulate during their lifetimes. Recent research has investigated these portrayals in the Rhine and Danube regions during the Roman Empire, focusing on the dress and bodily adornment visible on these portraits (Carroll 2013, 2).

When examining a funerary monument found in Cologne, Germany, from a burial in the late first or early second century AD, the depiction of the deceased army veteran (Marcus Valerius Celerinus) indicates much about his social status and cultural roles (Fig. 2.4) (Carroll 2013, 4-5). Celerinus was depicted on the funerary monument in a domestic setting, reclining among his wife and servants. Both he and his wife Marcia Procula were adhering to their accepted social roles, he in a position of strength and she in a supporting role (Carroll 2013, 5; Gilchrist 1999, 77). In addition to their positioning on the grave monument, the couple's dress also indicated the expected roles. Celerinus was depicted wearing a toga and the inscription emphasised his position as a soldier, while Procula was seen wearing modest garments which indicated chastity and good moral character (Carroll 2013, 5). Additionally, Procula was depicted with spinning materials, further reinforcing her position as a proper Roman woman, and indicating her status as an elite, nurturing figure (Carroll 2013, 5; Larsson Lovén 2007). All of these details are crucial to creating a comprehensive understanding of the virtues and gender roles which Romans felt essential to model in everyday life.

2.3.4.3 Laudatio Turiae

Hemelrijk describes a carved funerary oration from the first century BC which had been held at a woman's internment (known as *Laudatio Turiae*) in Rome, where the husband champions his wife's militaristic actions and uses other 'masculine' words to depict her (Hemelrijk 2004a, 185; de Ligt, 2001). The contrast between this inscription and the more frequently occurring depictions (where husbands cherish their wife's domestic skills and virtuous manner) leads authors to wonder what inspired this man to reflect in this manner (Hemelrijk 2004a, 185).

Figure 2.4. Funerary monument of Marcus Valerius Celerinus and Marcia Procula. Marble gravestone depicting wool basket, distaffs, and spindle. Cologne, Germany, ca. A.D. 100. Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Cologne. CIL 8.8283. (Source: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY: SA 4.0 International, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grabstein_des_Veteranen_Marcus_Valerius_Celerinus_und_seiner_Gemahlin_Marcia_Procula.jpg)

Upon examining the historical context of public lamentations for the dead, it is evident that this particular inscription deviates from the norm. Initially, only men were allowed to engage in these formal mourning speeches, with women only being allowed to participate as the deceased figure, but not as the narrator, from the late second century BC (Hemelrijk 2004a, 187). Gendered social expectations precluded women from receiving public commendation until men realised that they could enhance their own social status by delivering eulogies for their wives and female relatives (Hemelrijk 2004a, 187). With regards to the *Laudatio Turiae*, the husband explicitly stated at the conclusion of his oration that he intended to bring glory to his deceased wife. However, it is more probable that he sought to gain social, and potentially political, power through his tribute (Hemelrijk 2004a, 187).

This example illustrates some of the ideologies around masculinity and femininity within relationships and wider society in the Roman Empire. There was a plasticity which allowed for men (and women) to manipulate the expected gender roles to suit their needs, especially when seeking political gain. This is not to say that it was common for Roman citizens to venture beyond the typical social expectations, but it was not unheard of either.

2.3.4.4 *De Consolatione ad Helviam*

Classicists are able to identify rules around masculinity and femininity from written sources as well, in particular from Seneca's *De Consolatione ad Helviam,* where the philosopher showers his aunt Helvia with praise for her role in supporting her husband, the governor of Egypt (Hemelrijk 2004a, 188).

> *'per sedecim annos, quibus Aegyptum maritus eius optinuit, numquam in publico conspecta est, neminem provincialem domum suam admisit, nihil a viro petit, nihil a se peti passa est. Itaque loquax et in contumelias praefectorum ingeniosa provincia, . . . velut unicum sanctitatis exemplum suspexit. . . . Multum erat, si per XVI annos illam provincia probasset; plus est, quod ignoravit.'*
>
> - Sen. *Helv.* 19.6

> Throughout the sixteen years during which her husband was governor of Egypt she was never seen in public, never admitted a native to her house, sought no favor from her husband, nor suffered any to be sought from herself. And so a province that was gossipy and ingenious in devising insults for its rulers…respected her as a singular example of blamelessness...It would be much to her credit if she had won the approval of the province for sixteen years; that she had escaped its notice is still more.
>
> - Sen. *Helv.* 19.6, translated by Hemelrijk 2004a, 188

This excerpt makes clear a few expectations: that a woman was expected to remain within the household, avoid those of different social statuses or classes, and leave her husband alone while also requiring no favour from others (Hemelrijk 2004a, 188). By accomplishing these things, Helvia was shown to uphold the highest standards. By Roman standards, keeping out of the way and not drawing attention to herself made her a role model for other elite women. It is important, however, to keep in mind that this is the perspective of ancient

male authors, and may not reflect the true nature of women's relationship in the public sphere.

2.3.5 Honorary Men

One of the more interesting phenomena within this structured world of gender, was the occurrence of a woman being defined as an 'honorary man' (Hemelrijk 1999, 89-92). This meant that she took on these typically male attributes in a respectable fashion and rose above the others in her gendered social group. While intended to be complimentary, there were ancient women who found themselves critiqued for playing too masculine a role in society (Hemelrijk 2004a, 191-192).

A woman could show dedication to her husband, but if that was seen as personal ambition, she would be vilified (Hemelrijk 2004a, 192). This is seen with the personification of Fulvia, whose husband was the notable Mark Antony. Her actions were described as intrusive (though it was never in doubt that she played a pivotal role in both politics and military efforts) and a key criticism against her was that she inadequately fulfilled the role of a modest and virtuous woman (Fig. 2.5) (Hemelrijk 2004a, 192). After her death, Fulvia's reputation was smeared with insults regarding her lack of sexual morals and absence of the standard feminine characteristics, with Plutarch sharing his disdain for her values through the seething comment that Flavia 'had no interest in spinning or housekeeping' (Hemelrijk 2004a, 192; *Plut. Ant.* 10.3).

Figure 2.5. Depiction of Fulvia inspecting the severed head of her critic, Cicero,
Oil on canvas. Francisco Maura y Montaner, 1888. Museo del Prado. (Source: Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=58355157)

What we can learn from these descriptions is that women were held to a high standard within a very specific role, where they were constantly looked down upon in comparison to men, and at the same time also criticised for expanding from beyond the private sphere into any setting where they could exercise any form of control or power. Ancient Roman women had to walk a tightrope to ensure that they remained in the good graces of their families and communities, a task which left little time for negotiating increased financial or social mobility.

2.3.6 Imperial Role Models

Women were often compared to the wives of the emperors when their femininity and virtues were discussed. Scholars often highlighted how Livia embodied the role of the wife, consistently showing exemplary character and acting respectfully toward her husband Augustus. A comparison is made between Turia (the woman eulogised in *Laudatio Turiae*) and Livia when it was highlighted that Turia provided dowries for the less wealthy girls of her family (Hemelrijk 2004a, 195). Livia was known for doing the same, and thus inspired women with financial status to perform this action in order to be celebrated for their matronly actions (Hemelrijk 2004a, 195; Dio 58.2.3). While it could be said that this activity was a natural decision outside of the inspiration of the empress, the comparison of the two women becomes more suspect when one learns that Turia's husband also commented on his reverence for Emperor Augustus (Hemelrijk 2004, 195; Gowing 1992, 293-296).

We can explore Livia as an icon of Roman female values during the reign of Augustus through the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, the poem addressed to Livia following the death of her son Nero Claudius Drusus (Scourfield 2019). Originally attributed to Ovid, this poem has been deemed a false representation of the author, though it continues to share a view into how the empress was acknowledged by others. When the *Consolatio ad Liviam* is examined, the masculine narrative focuses on the loss of Augustus' heir while the feminine depiction focuses on Livia's role as a grieving mother (Jenkins 2009, 3).

One of the most intriguing descriptions of Livia was her applied title of *princeps*, a descriptor typically reserved for notable politicians or for the emperor and his heirs (Jenkins 2009, 1; Syme 1939, 311-312, 322-323). When applied to Livia, this masculine term suggests a role for the empress which emphasised her public participation and political power, which was then juxtaposed with her position as a mourning mother (Jenkins 2009, 1). Jenkins and Milnor address the difficulties the imperial household and the public faced regarding the evolving social accessibility for women at the time of Drusus' death (Jenkins 2009, 1; Milnor 2004, 4). As Augustus pursued classical expectations of Roman women outside of the imperial family, the people found themselves uneasy with the growing involvement of Livia

and Octavia within the public sphere (Milnor 2004, 7). The traditional feminine gender roles were being shaped by the empress while the emperor was still insisting on women's confinement to the private sphere…a stance which was met with opposition (Milnor 2004, 59-62).

We can conclude that there was not a clear and accepted view of gender roles, and that there was some tension regarding women's acceptance in the public sphere. Ancient male authors tended to emphasise domesticity and chastity, but when we examine text outside of the standard funerary monuments or descriptions of the 'ideal woman', we can see that women's situations were far more complex. There remains an excellent opportunity for uncovering further understanding through in-depth study of these alternative sources.

2.3.7 Conclusion

In summary, ancient (male) authors described Roman women's roles through a conservative and anxious lens, clinging to social norms of the past and responding carefully to the emergence of women into new social spheres (Hemelrijk 2004a, 197). While some women were content with following the traditional roles, perhaps because these actions were what the emperor ordered, there were other women who were not to be swayed by the political schemes. Evidence from funerary monuments and ancient texts provide insight into what the depictions of women often looked like, though the underlying tensions created by gendered biases is also apparent.

In examining the broader definitions of gender roles across the Roman Empire, it is evident that there is no clear embodiment of either masculine or feminine roles. Certain words and phrases were more commonly applied to men and women, but the crossover of this vocabulary was also seen in the examples discussed. Modern researchers approach this topic with fewer biases and a greater wealth of information at their disposal. By examining the past through a more nuanced and critical lens, researchers can gain clearer insights, ultimately expanding our knowledge of the past. This research seeks to eliminate biases as much as possible, through seeing the information provided by ancient benefactresses as data points which impart answers through advanced analysis.

2.4 Benefaction in the Roman Empire and Women as Benefactors

2.4.1 Introduction

Benefaction from prominent families within elite social circles in ancient societies was a phenomenon which occurred for many centuries in various forms, and in a way continues to occur today in some societies. Initially dominated by male figures, benefaction changed over the centuries to include a more diverse group of financially powerful and socially generous individuals. Through this research, we can begin to gain a better understanding of the settings which supported local benefactors, and the ways that these elite community members were able to contribute to their local environments.

2.4.2 Defining Benefaction

It is important to understand the fundamental definitions of benefaction (which can also be referred to as munificence or euergetism). Veyne provides an overview of the history of the term benefaction, linking the practice to the Latin term *beneficium* (Veyne 1990, 347). *Beneficium* can be defined as the will to do good, or to contribute a favour. This lines up well with the adjacent term, munificence, which can translate generally to generosity, or more directly can mean 'gift-giving' (Kalinbayrak 2011, 6). The Greek term euergetism is linked to French historian André Boulanger, who studied Greek inscriptions featuring instances of public giving (Boulanger 1923, 25). According to Boulanger, a benefactor or participant of public munificence was someone with some amount of wealth who used their fortune to benefit the community (Veyne 1990, 10; Boulanger 1923, 25). It is worth highlighting here that this initial definition does not address the motivations behind benefaction, and thus the simplified phrase 'to benefit the community' has more complex intentions behind it. This will be examined later.

Following the understanding of the language behind the meaning of benefaction, one can begin to discuss the historical context. The virtue of generosity, and its demonstration through public munificence, has an origin that goes back to tribal groups living in Greece between 800 and 400 BC (Veyne 1990, 72). In this time, a member of the tribe was responsible for providing meals or amusement for the rest of the community, in a practice called *hestiasis* (Veyne 1990, 72; Andreades 1933). As time went on, Greek communities grew in size and complexity, and the practice evolved to encourage generosity which would benefit the entire *polis,* or city state (Hansen 2006, 56). Due to the ancient Greeks' value system which praised social responsibility and condemned greed, the tradition of benefaction led to donations of monumental structures as well as communal feasts and games (Veyne

1990, 72). The custom was assimilated by the Romans, and evolved over time to appear as a very different social and political phenomenon.

2.4.3 Participation in Public Giving

The conversation naturally moves next to the question of, 'who was able to participate in benefaction?' For the sake of the scope of this research, we will focus on who was able to participate in benefaction during the rise and existence of the Roman Empire. With Hellenistic evidence of benefaction as a powerful social tradition, it makes sense that these practices continued throughout the Roman Empire (Veyne 1990, 94-105). While this research does not examine donations by Roman emperors, their contributions would have first inspired the financially-able elite donors, and then donors of other classes once the practice became widely popular (Wen 2024, 177).

Public munificence was a male-dominated tradition and heavily focused on exchanges of political power during the Roman Republic (Veyne 1990, 232-236). In a world where citizens were separated into the *plebeian* or *patrician* class, benefaction was a tool to enhance existing power and prestige, not as a means of earning power like in Hellenistic society (Raaflaub 2005). The emphasis on condemning greed was less of a factor in Rome, as the elites were eager to gain power and wealth. In 496 BC, *plebeians* gained the ability to participate in politics as magistrates, and then as consuls in 366 BC, thus widening the ability to participate in euergetism (Raaflaub 2005, 206).

In Augustus' *Res Gestae,* he spent ten chapters highlighting his public contributions to the Roman people, at one point claiming that he 'had found it [Rome] built of brick and left it in marble' (*Res Gestae* 15, 17, 18; Suet. *Aug.* 28). Interestingly, the copies of the *Res Gestae* in Italy were lost, but three copies were found in the Roman East, the most complete of which was located near present-day Ankara (Brunt and Moore 1967, 1-2). The distant locations of these copies provides insight into the reach that word of Augustus' munificence had, and creates an image of inspired provincial Romans seeking to make their own cities places of great renown. Augustus' emphasis on celebrating the construction of useful structures changed the landscape for public giving, severely reducing the number of public festivals and feasts, and instead redirecting the focus to erecting buildings which would benefit the public (Veyne 1990, 252). In a way, this restricted access to benefaction yet again, as less wealthy citizens would not have the funds for larger construction projects.

In due time, the Roman way of living, expressed through monumental structures and public buildings, branched out into the newly conquered provinces (Edmondson, 2006, 257-260;

Drinkwater 1987, 350-351). While imperial goodwill provided materials to many provincial cities during this unification of Roman identity, there were many structures which were required that were not commissioned by imperial benefaction programmes - this is when private benefactors rose to prominence in the Greek East and Roman West (Zuiderhoek 2009, 1, 18-21, 35-42). Zuiderhoek's argument is not endorsing the hypothesis that the treasury of the emperor was unable to pay for these buildings donated by private citizens, but rather that the empire saw private benefaction as a part of its tradition and alleviated the need to use public money for these building purposes (Zuiderhoek 2009, 1, 18-21, 35-42).

In the Roman West (which would have encompassed Italy, Gaul, Spain, and North Africa), Roman armies were expanding their reach and revolutionising the city structures for veterans and active military personnel (Edmondson 2006, 257-260). Provincial cities were entirely replanned or newly constructed, and the newfound Roman communities were linked to Italy through cultural structures and the dissemination of the imperial cult ideology (Onians 1999, 166-167). These new provincial cities were, of course, nothing like the native communities, and reflected the nearby region of Italy (Ward-Perkins 1970, 19). With these new Roman communities, there were new opportunities for upward social mobility. The local elite quickly took notice of the circumstances and began to desire the title of Roman citizen, which could eventually lead them to more significant participation in politics, such as senatorial roles (Duncan-Jones 1990, 174-184). Intercity competition and elites vying for imperial acknowledgement contributed to increased architectural benefaction across the empire.

The Roman East was a different story, as these cities had been urbanised before the Romans even existed. Thus the strategy was different during the expansion into Greece and Asia Minor. Romans had to be creative to manipulate the Hellenised communities into accepting Roman culture (Nevett and Perkins 2000, 218). Building inscriptions by local elites from this time period can be found in both Greek and Latin, indicating the slow acceptance of the new cultural revolution (Gatzke 2020, 385-386, 388; Valantasis 2000, 11). Similarly to the peoples in North Africa, the Greeks acknowledged their position within the Roman Empire by honouring the emperor with an imperial cult of their own (Zanker 1988, 297-334; Price 1984). This contributed to the hosting of festivals and construction of temples which would distinctly link private benefactors with both their local communities and the seat of power in Rome…a beneficial connection to maintain.

2.4.4 Women and Benefaction

While benefaction tends to be associated with men of an elite background who possessed citizenship, there is substantial evidence that indicates that these were not the only individuals engaging with the practice. Two communities which did not fit into this prescribed category were freedmen and women (Kalinbayrak 2011, 28). Though they may have had substantial financial power, their status would have removed them from most political and social arenas. Fortunately, there was an arena where women were actively engaged and which permitted them to gain social power while adhering to the typical norms: religion (Hänninen 2019).

Due to a desire to increase the elite population of Roman citizens, Augustus instituted the *lex Julia* (18 BC) and the *lex Papia Poppaea* (9 AD), which provided incentives for actions such as having large families, avoiding divorce, and remarrying soon after widowing (Morrell 2020, 92). Women were unable to take control of their finances or inherit wealth from others until the *ius trium liberorum* was established as part of these marriage laws. *Ius trium liberorum* translated to the law of three children, and meant that once a woman had three living children (four if she was a freedwoman, and five in the provinces), she was not required to have a man serve as her guardian and was free to do what she desired with her finances (McCullough 2015, 10; *Dig*. 27, 1; *Inst. Iust*. 1, 25).

It was at this stage that female benefaction spread throughout the empire. There is a debate regarding whether female management of property was already the social standard and the *lex Julia* and the *lex Papia Poppaea* simply legalised a practice which was by then typically accepted (Morrell 2020, 90). Morrell discusses the complexities of this discourse, suggesting that financial freedom prior to the *ius trium liberorum* would depend on the regional social norms, the particular guardian selected for a woman, and her social status (Morrell 2020, 90). Additionally, while this law may have expanded financial freedom for many women, it potentially created more restrictions for freedwomen, as they may have had more financial freedom prior to the requirement to have four children to receive exemption from guardianship (Morrell 2020, 90).

Within the dataset created for this research, the earlier forms of benefaction (grouped into the first century BC) by women were dominated by the construction of temples or enhancements of earlier structures (noted by terms such as restoration, upkeep, and adornment). With this knowledge, and the information grouped within the corpus,

researchers can determine how these trends changed over time as female benefaction became accepted and widespread within the Roman Empire.

2.4.5 Motivations for Benefaction

As discussed, Greek tradition emphasised giving away wealth as a sign of a virtuous person who was not tempted by greed (Veyne 1990, 5, 9-10). In the Roman Republic, and later the Roman Empire, this sentiment was recognised but was no longer the driving force behind benefaction. The Roman elite sought power and recognition, and utilised benefaction as a means of reaching those goals (Veyne 1990, 5, 9-10).

The motivations for benefaction varied between different cultures, classes, and social groups but the initial forms of Roman benefaction would have revolved around the celebration of war victories (Veyne 1990, 235). The returning army would have shared the spoils of war with the community through hosting festivals and feasts, while erecting monuments such as arches or columns to commemorate the events (Veyne 1990, 235). There were often men who prayed to the gods during war, promising religious retribution for a successful military campaign (Rüpke 2006, 220). Because of these commitments, returning soldiers would fulfill their promises through building temples or financing celebrations which honoured the god or goddess from which they originally requested protection (Rüpke 2006, 220).

Outside of the military relationship with benefaction, elites saw building commissions as a way of preserving their memory for future generations. This would not only be a personal desire for memorial, but it also was a way of ensuring that their posterity would find success and prestige by being linked to a historically relevant figure. Building donations were seen as highly valuable contributions in comparison to other (often more affordable) options such as festivals and banquets. Emperor Antoninus Pius made his thoughts clear on the benefits of building commissions, and Roman citizens would have taken note on his preferences:

> *I have agreed to all his requests for supplemental funding and welcomed the fact that he has not chosen the usual method of those engaged in political life who, for the sake of immediate prestige, lavish their funds on shows and grain distributions and prizes for the games, but has chosen a way by which he may make the city more imposing in the future.*
>
> - *Die Inschriften von Ephesos* 1491 *(SIG3 850)*

For some benefactors, the option to finance these larger public contributions was not possible, and thus they would choose to participate in munificence through hosting public

feasts and games (Andreau 1977; Mrozek 1972). In part, these events were expected to be hosted as they were a part of a magistrate's duty, though it would be up to the magistrate how extravagant they would be. Certain events within a city would also demand publicly hosted events; notable funerals are mentioned as one of the most frequent occurrences (Cornell and Lomas 2002, 4-5).

Alternatively, there were some forms of public munificence which were solely financial, and they were recognised by the public as well. Benefactors involved with these contributions may have been motivated by the more personal connections involved, as financial donations could often be contributed in order to fund a woman's dowry or to aid in providing ransom money to recover a prisoner of war (Cic. *De Off*. 2.60–1; Sen. *Ben*. 1.2.4). Depending on the location and the nuances of the community, these donations could display the same values shown by building donations or public feasts on a smaller scale. The Roman philosophers Cicero and Seneca both praised this form of benefaction as being particularly honourable, though this sentiment would make sense as they were both known for providing community support through these means (Cic. *De Off.* 2.60–1; Sen. *Ben.* 1.2.4). This form of benefaction is discussed by authors such as Cornell, Lomas, Wiedemann, and Wallace-Hadrill who note its prevalence prior to the Augustan era and debate whether this is public munificence, financial services, or friendly patronage (Wiedemann 2003; Cornell and Lomas 2002, Wallace-Hadrill 1988).

Most benefactors would have declared that it was due to their traditional values that they wanted to beautify the community, though it would be more likely that they sought political gain or public protection through declaring their loyalty to the community, the empire, and local tradition (Cornell and Lomas 2002, 3; Veyne 1990, 117-118; Silverman 1977, 12-14). By showing their commitment to the local community or the emperor, benefactors were indicating that they were trustworthy and loyal, two traits which were beneficial to exhibit alongside their political careers (Hänninen 2019, 73). This is not to say that there were not any benefactors who truly adhered to the Greek traditional values denouncing greed, though this true euergetism would be difficult to extract from inscription phrasing.

People living across different centuries were motivated to participate in public giving for diverse reasons. There were trends and regional distinctions, as benefactors were keen to provide for their communities in ways that would best serve them and their particular goals. One could say that there was no one clear representation of a Roman benefactor, as while they were trying to demonstrate how they were all the image of a powerful Roman, they also sought to carve out a unique place for themselves in the memory of the people.

2.4.6 Decline of Public Giving

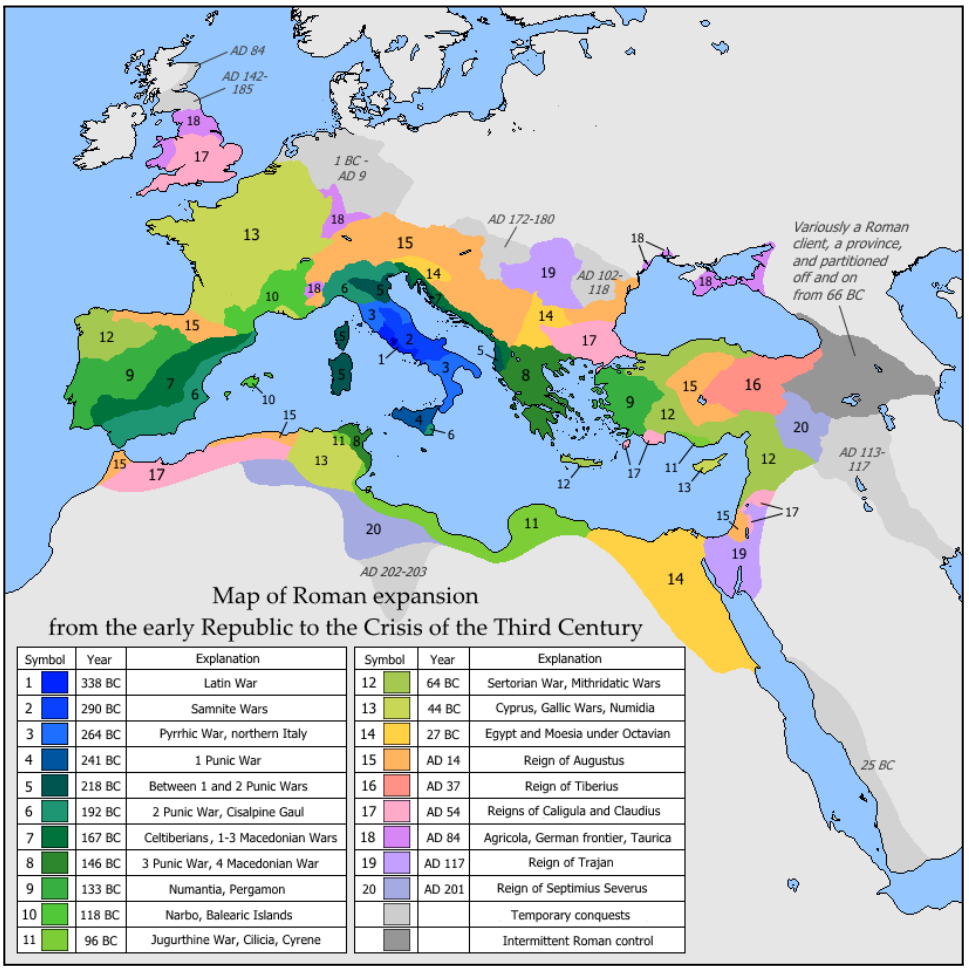
While the decline of benefaction is a massive topic which reaches outside of the scope of this research, it is important to acknowledge that this happened rapidly and for several reasons. One suggested reason for the decline in both benefaction as well as trade, infrastructure, and overall Roman power is the epidemics which plagued the empire during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (Zuiderhoek 2009, 154-155). The reduced population across all classes led to economic instability, where extra finances for public benefit were more difficult to find (Zuiderhoek 2009, 155). The other likely culprit was the impact caused by the rise of Christianity. Brown examines this change in belief system, and reflects on euergetism as a system where elites embellished the city or bestowed gifts upon “the people” but ignored the class which was those in the greatest poverty (Brown 2002, 4-5). On the other hand, Christianity emphasised caring for the poor, and thus motivations and public response to public giving changed (Zuiderhoek 2009, 157; Brown 2002, 5-6). Zuiderhoek sums up his final chapter by reflecting on the years where public benefaction was ultimately successful, citing the first and second centuries AD, as the cities in question did appear to briefly maintain cordial class relations while there was an underlying tension which was sure to bring down the system eventually (Zuiderhoek 2009, 158-159).

2.4.7 Conclusions

Benefaction was a catalyst for social mobility for people from a variety of backgrounds. Whether the benefactor was a free Roman citizen who sought political power in Rome, a freedman who wanted to use his newfound standing to move up in his community politics, or a woman with three children who was able to establish her social status through munificence; each benefactor had their own motivations which led them to participate publicly in this way.

To be put simply, Roman cities would not have flourished as quickly or abundantly without benefaction. Euergetism can be designated as the cause for the expansion of religion, amenities, Roman identity, and power throughout the Roman Empire (Veyne 1990). Zanker (1988) observed a pattern of Rome-centred outward expansion which emphasised an imperial role and Italian presence in provincial areas. This may have been true in the grand scheme of benefaction, but there is evidence that supports local distinctiveness as well. The partnership between the virtues pushed by the overarching empire and the priorities of the local communities was a phenomenon that exemplified regional culture and acceptance of change.

2.5 Brief History of the Regions of Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor



Symbol	Year	Explanation
1	338 BC	Latin War
2	290 BC	Samnite Wars
3	264 BC	Pyrrhic War, northern Italy
4	241 BC	1 Punic War
5	218 BC	Between 1 and 2 Punic Wars
6	192 BC	2 Punic War, Cisalpine Gaul
7	167 BC	Celtiberians, 1-3 Macedonian Wars
8	146 BC	3 Punic War, 4 Macedonian War
9	133 BC	Numantia, Pergamon
10	118 BC	Narbo, Balearic Islands
11	96 BC	Jugurthine War, Cilicia, Cyrene

Symbol	Year	Explanation
12	64 BC	Sertorian War, Mithridatic Wars
13	44 BC	Cyprus, Gallic Wars, Numidia
14	27 BC	Egypt and Moesia under Octavian
15	AD 14	Reign of Augustus
16	AD 37	Reign of Tiberius
17	AD 54	Reigns of Caligula and Claudius
18	AD 84	Agricola, German frontier, Taurica
19	AD 117	Reign of Trajan
20	AD 201	Reign of Septimius Severus
		Temporary conquests
		Intermittent Roman control

Figure 2.6. Map of Roman expansion from the early Republic to the third century AD. (Source: Imperium Romanum, https://imperiumromanum.pl/en/curiosities/map-showing-growth-of-roman-empire/)

2.5.1 Introduction

As this research examines benefaction within the regions of Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor, it is important to briefly review the context of how these regions became a part of the empire (Fulford 1992, 294). While this is a topic that could be explained over hundreds of pages, the intention for this section is to be both brief and thorough in covering the necessary history for the scope of this thesis. While there was the possibility of exploring the battles and wars which brought each relevant region into the empire, the focus of this research is on the cultural impact experienced by benefactresses in Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor, and thus this section will review the cultural experiences more deeply than the militaristic ones.

2.5.2 Expansion Before the Empire

Expansion into neighbouring regions had been occurring for centuries before the Roman territories became the Roman Empire. Rome began to branch out into neighbouring cities which were ruled by the Etruscans, Samnites, Umbrians, and other city-states, and by 283 BC had conquered most of Italy (Hoyos 2019, 8). Once conquered, the newly acquired territories were absorbed into the Roman military and economic system, providing defensive power as well as a stable food and resource supply (Hoyos 2019, 8; Fishwick and Shaw 1977, 373). In the third and second centuries BC, the Punic Wars led to a victory against Carthage, further establishing Roman dominance and adding Sicily as ammunition for further expansion (Fig. 2.6) (Hoyos 2019, 18-20). Once Rome destroyed the city of Carthage in 146 BC, they established Africa as the newest province to be acquired (Hoyos 2019, 29-31). Roman forces were intervening in the Greek East in the mid-first century BC as well, eventually defeating the Macedonians and the Seleucid Empire, solidifying control into the Aegean and Asia Minor (Fig. 2.6) (Hoyos 2019, 24, 68).

As political tensions rose, military leaders such as Julius Caesar, saw expansion as a way to prove competence (Hoyos 2019, 81). Caesar conquered Gaul in the mid-first century BC, but then was assassinated, leading to civil wars which paved the way for the rise of his adopted son Octavian, later known as Caesar Augustus (Hoyos 2019, 38-39, 84).

2.5.3 Expansion During the Roman Empire

When considering expansion into Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor, the incorporation of varied territories and people into the Roman system must be seen as more than fueled by military conquests, but rather as influenced by the mentality of imperialism. Rather than applying the lens of Romanisation, this review seeks to emphasise the negotiation, cultural exchange, and economic priorities which played a role in the expansion of the Roman Empire. Continuing on from the expansion during the Republic, under Augustus, colonisation continued, and several provinces were added to the empire (Fig. 2.6) (Hoyos 2019, 92, 100). Interestingly, Augustus advised Tiberius to not continue to expand the empire at the rate he did (Ober 1982, 306). Whether this was in order to be remembered as the most victorious in imperial expansion or because he truly believed that continued annexation would lead to the fall of the Roman Empire may never be known (Morley 2010, 47; Ober 1982, 325-326). This early interaction contributes to the understanding that expansion was often more about personal pride than a need to add territories to the empire. The Romans placed a lot of weight on how they would be remembered, and the idea of being the emperor who annexed a notable amount of land or a certain rival tribe motivated the Roman leaders for many years,

though eventually their priorities shifted (Morley 2010, 47; Ober 1982, 326). One of the reasons for this was the established power of the emperor, where new imperial leaders did not have to expand on a large scale, but rather they would only need to achieve one or two victories in order to be remembered fondly (Morley 2010, 47).

The propaganda communicated by Roman emperors is also worth noting. When conquering a new territory, the Romans communicated that they were bringing peace to the region, and that without their intervention the local people would be without resources and the promise of Roman aid (Morley 2010, 59; Ober 1982, 328). This links to the idea that non-Romans were barbaric and needed to be civilised, rhetoric that led to positive views toward imperialism both among emperors and their loyal elite (Mata 2017, 28-30). As the depiction of what a 'good' emperor shifted over time, from one who brought riches to one who brought peace, imperialism was a constant in the Roman Empire which influenced external decision making as well as internal sense of pride by its leaders.

2.5.4 The Rise of Roman Italy

Rome went from being a small city-state in Italy, to an empire which conquered much of Europe and Asia, particularly littoral regions. The approach by Rome in the region of Italy was multi-pronged; they utilised military conquest, political alliances, and the establishment of colonies to unite the territory under Roman rule (Hoyos 2019).

When examining battles, there were several encounters (both major and minor events) which led to the annexation of city-states and local tribes. These include the Latin War (340-338 BC) and the Samnite Wars (third and second centuries BC) (Maschek 2021, 320; Hoyos 2019, 7). In terms of diplomatic access, Roman leaders offered certain benefits and advantages to allies who would aid them in their expansion efforts and demonstrate loyalty, particularly benefiting soldiers who wanted to rise financially and socially (Hoyos 2019, 76; Yeo 1959, 104). For the less powerful confederates, this allegiance promised to elevate their power and control, and was worth promising to the likely victor that was Rome.

Rome strategically created colonies which were led by loyal Roman citizens, and implemented Roman culture and law into the newfound territories (Hoyos 2019, 1, 4, 23; Yeo 1959, 106). Through offering citizenship and certain legal rights, the Romans recruited people who were loyal enough to their new leaders to continue their expansion (Hoyos 2019, 76; Yeo 1959, 104). Geographically, the colonies allowed the Romans to strategically place loyal elites into certain regions, and exert more repressive control over others (Hoyos 2019, 135). When the Romans worked to connect these newly organised Italian colonies, they

further unified the region in commerce and culture, extending the Roman influence through the movement of troops and people (Hoyos 2019, 37-38, 149-151). Research over the last several decades has shifted from discussing these expansion practices through colonial, anti-colonial, postcolonial, to most recently, decolonial frameworks (Mattingly 2023, xix). With this lens in mind, this research aims to approach each unique region on its own terms rather than from the narrative of the oppressors, Rome.

2.5.5 Conquest in North Africa

Advancement into North Africa can be understood by the Romans' strong desire for access to the fertile soil as well as access to ports for economic and military gain (Mattingly 2023, 16; Hoyos 2019, 31; Fishwick and Shaw 1977). The empire was growing quickly, and more farmable land was needed to feed the people who were newly dependent on the Roman system. Carthage played an important role in the encroachment of North Africa, since once it was destroyed in the Third Punic War, Rome was able to fully take control over the region (Hoyos 2019, 22, 31). The advancement into the region continued with the annexation of parts of Numidia and Mauretania (between 40 and 44 BC) by Claudius, though there was retaliation from local tribes and nomadic groups during this forced assimilation (Hoyos 2019, 31, 34, 110, 117, 180). In terms of chronology, in Augustus' *Res Gestae*, he established that a singular Africa was a part of the Roman Empire, indicating that by 32 BC (though some say as early as 40 BC), the region was united as Africa Proconsularis and was officially ruled by the emperor (Fishwick and Shaw 1977, 370).

North Africa was valued for its mineral resources and farming capabilities, as they both provided wealth and materials for the Roman people, particularly the soldiers (Fulford 1992, 295). Grain, corn, and oil were the major exports from the African cities. At times when there were riots over food provision in Rome, the first place to turn was North Africa to alleviate the famines, though this meant that establishing clear-cut trade routes was a necessity (Fulford 1992, 297; Fishwick and Shaw 1977, 373). As an outpost, Roman cities in North Africa served as highly desired connections to wider points of the expanding empire, both for food transport as well as for new expansion efforts (Evans 2011, xi; Fulford 1992, 297). Trade routes with the eastern Mediterranean were secured through the ports in North Africa, and projected Roman influence at an even greater rate across the continents (Fulford 1992).

Politically, expansion into North Africa varied, as the Romans knew that they could recruit local leaders from the region by promising political power, citizenship, and land (Morley 2010, 55). Where cities did not have a history of self-governing, the Roman leaders determined that the established bureaucratic systems would suffice for efficiency, and did not allow

independent governance until centuries later (Morley 2010, 55). City centres were established, and local populations were gathered into more urban settings, which both provided local identity and communities while also ensuring that the Roman leaders were able to maintain control (Morley 2010, 56-57).

2.5.6 Expansion in Asia Minor

Asia Minor differed from the regions of Italy and North Africa because of the established historic connections and significant recent Hellenistic history (Hoyos 2019, 181-182; Eckstein 2012, 3). Roman influence in the region began with the defeat of the Seleucid Kingdom in the Roman-Seleucid Wars, where Rome was able to grasp a foothold in Asia (Hoyos 2019, 24; Evans 2011, 39-45).The next major acquisition in Asia Minor was the Kingdom of Pergamum, given to the Romans in 133 BC after the death of the king Attalus (Eckstein 2012, 16; Evans 2011, xi). The king of nearby Pontus, Mithridates VI, took over much of Asia Minor, and ordered the massacre of any Roman or Italian residents, resulting in a death toll over 80,000 (Evans 2011, 55). In response, the Roman General Sulla attacked Mithridates VI, and after a long period of war, succeeded against the king in 85 BC and acquired much of the territory of Asia Minor (Evans 2011, 56-63).

While expansion could be aggressive and brutal, at times there also needed to be a negotiation between the conquerors and the conquered so that management of the new territory could be left to the local powers. When it came to Greek colonisation, the local politicians were allowed to proceed with their existing legal system even though it differed from the typical Roman oligarchy system as this meant less work for Roman representatives to manage (Morley 2010, 50). Coercion by the Roman elite led to competition for citizenship, resources, and other privileges, meaning that local aristocrats were committed to praising the emperor and political leaders in hope that the good favour would be returned to their cities (Morley 2010, 53-54).

2.5.7 Cultural Transmission

One facet of Roman expansion which fascinates researchers is the transmission of cultural artefacts or traditions across regions as they were acquired during the eras of Roman imperialism. Archaeologists find artefacts scattered across the empire, and are able to determine that local processes were altered due to either a Roman immigrant moving to the region or a local traveling abroad and bringing a tradition back home (Hoyos 2019, 185). Clothing styles, cultural norms, building strategy, and more became interconnected as the newly colonised members of the Roman Empire began to mingle on a large scale (Hoyos 2019, 180-181; Moatti 2006, 117-119).

One feature of Roman life which was highly desired within new provinces was the integration of Roman infrastructure (Hoyos 2019, 179). For example, Roman citizens who moved to North Africa would find comfort in establishing a familiar urban identity, and desired at minimum a city forum, basilica, and temple (Mattingly 2023, 345; Lassère 2015, 382). Benefactors benefitted from these opportunities, and provided these structures in order to establish themselves as local elites in the region while also contributing to the success of their political careers (Mattingly 2023, 346; Hoyos 2019, 179). This practice and development is discussed and examined throughout this research, and understanding the context of Roman expansion brings new light to the elite's and provinces' motivations. Once central city structures were built, the community was able to progress to holding 'Roman' events in and around their new city centres, further contributing to moulding a Roman identity in provincial cities (Morley 2010, 46). Dio confirms this transition within Romano-Germanic communities with the excerpt: 'The natives were adapting themselves to orderly Roman ways and were becoming accustomed to holding markets and were meeting in peaceful assemblies' (Dio, 65.18.2–3).

For the Romans, the integration of Roman culture was essential if they wanted the colonies to be peaceful, pay taxes, and adhere to Roman laws (Hoyos 2019, 180-181). These practices were taught to the elites of the new territories, and the expectation was that they would teach the rest of the community the Roman ways (Hoyos 2019, 181). There were also times when the Roman leaders would conclude that it made more sense to leave local elites to continue to manage a region as they had done before colonisation, as it meant that the local leaders would respond more positively to Roman rule and that less oversight was needed (Morley 2010, 47-52). This transition of power can be seen through epigraphic evidence, as locals began to include references to their Roman citizenship, building donations, and naming traditions (Morley 2010, 51).

Tactics for introducing Roman traditions to North Africa were often dissimilar from those employed to integrate Roman culture into the Hellenistic Asia Minor. The exchange of the provision of Roman citizenship in these regions, and the integration of eastern Romans into elite society in Italy was perhaps the most visual cultural exchange regarding expansion into Asia Minor (Hoyos 2019, 181-182; Mattingly 2023, 67). As the Greek orators were already respected by their Roman counterparts, it was not a stretch to integrate them into high level priesthoods and political positions, particularly of the imperial cult (Vera 2018, 219, 229-232; Hoyos 2019, 182). There were other examples of Roman influence creeping into eastern life though, as some cities in Asia Minor began to incorporate the Roman gladiatorial shows and built full-sized amphitheatres to account for the spectacles (Hoyos 2019, 183; Mann 2009,

274-279).

Figure 2.7. Funerary relief from Palmyra with Roman stylistic influence. Limestone. Palmyra, Syria, ca. 2nd–3rd century A.D. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Acquired in 1902; purchased from Azeez Khayat. (Source: New York,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number: 02.29.1)

Art and funerary techniques were adopted in even the furthest regions of the empire, as there is evidence of sculptors from Aphrodisias being called to work in the capital of Rome, indicating that their work was of the highest Roman quality (Erim and Roueché 1982, 103, 108-109). Research examining the hand positions and gestures shown in Palmyrene funerary monuments has concluded that Palmyrene depictions may have emulated traditional Roman gestures, demonstrating the impact of exchange and blend of cultures (though it is possible these gestures meant something entirely different in Palmyra) (Fig. 2.7) (Heyn 2010, 634-635). Palmyrene style motifs have been found as far north as Britain, demonstrating that not only were traditionally Italic cultures being exchanged, but all of the provinces of the empire were introduced to each other through military, trade, or other movement (Hoyos 2019, 185).

There were a few characteristics which the Romans did not pay much mind to changing in the colonies, including local language and religion (Woolf 1994, 128-130). While the universal languages of the Roman Empire were considered to be Latin and Greek, it was not a legal issue if documents were presented in a local language, and there generally was no pressure for residents of any province to begin speaking Latin or Greek (Hoyos 2019, 186; Woolf 1994, 128-130). The same went for religion; Roman religion was typically accepting of new gods or goddesses, and thus the incorporation of Greek, Egyptian, Celtic, or other deities was not seen as problematic (Hoyos 2019, 187; Mattingly 2023, 381-385; Vera 2018, 104, 229-232).

When discussing cultural transmission, Woolf stated 'if the Greeks invented *humanitas*, the Romans were the reason why it could spread further' (Woolf 2000, 58). While not to minimise the countless battles and lives lost in Roman expansion, there were also meetings of the minds which transformed cultures and societies in ways that we still experience today. While acknowledging the imperialist attitudes and barbaric colonisation, there also were moments where the Romans quickly welcomed peoples from vastly different cultures, and inspired them to share their traditions and experiences across thousands of miles (Mattingly 2004; James 1999). Mattingly's commentary on globalisation theory and the cultural flow from the provincial regions back into Roman culture emphasises this exchange as well, negating the idea that people within the colonies saw the Roman ways as better or more refined (Mattingly 2023, 50). The context provided here creates a deeper understanding of the people who are explored in this corpus, and concurrently, the hope is that a more holistic understanding of the impact of Roman expansion is gained from this research's discussion.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Several conversations arise when evaluating lives of women in the ancient world, whether that is addressing their identities in public and private spaces, their involvement in politics, their social and cultural power, and whether it makes sense to research them in a bubble or as part of the wider Roman environment. Before beginning the data analysis for this research, it was important to explore each of these debates to determine the appropriate method to employ, and it was determined that a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis would highlight new findings and define possible directions for this research to proceed in the future.

A comparative mixed-methods approach is not a new concept, but is yet to be seen on the topic of female benefaction (Carroll and Rothe 2010, 3479-3484; Robinson 2007, 388; Sale et. al. 2002, 43-53). Between the most notable researchers in this field, there have been discrepant approaches to understanding female benefactresses, their motivations, and their place within a male-centric Roman world. Hemelrijk's corpus focused on inscriptions from buildings and funerary monuments, excluding ancient literary sources due to their inherent discrimination of women and non-elite perspectives (Hemelrijk 2015). This approach was followed by Tate, who then proceeded to investigate benefactresses on a more granular level, exploring specific benefactresses who were identified in Hemelrijk's work (Tate 2022). Since the publication of Hemelrijk's corpus in 2015, and Van Bremen's research on benefaction in the Roman East in 1996, new inscriptions have been identified, adding to the hundreds of existing inscriptions in the aforementioned works (Van Bremen 1996). This is where this research will begin, though the aim is to not separate these benefactresses from their wider environments where Roman men were also active.

The mixed-methods approach suited this research due to there being many details which could not be easily quantified, and required a thorough investigation into thematic patterns. On the other hand, there were so many instances of female benefaction that relying on detailed case studies would also not be representative of the array of women participating in civic munificence. By examining these roles, relationships, religious choices, and depictions through a mixed approach, the overlap of unique regional experiences and related cultural assimilation became more clear.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

While several previous frameworks have been applied to the study of female benefaction in Ancient Rome, the understanding of the contexts discussed varies and the methodologies often either separate women from their wider settings or apply too much weight upon individual case studies which cannot be taken as representative of a larger community or entire region. This research sought to reduce these conflicts through combining mixed-methods, which provided context for localised donations, male equivalents, and family groups, while also forming a broad comparative corpus which further revealed consistencies and patterns reflecting the case studies and also revealing new trends. In this way, quantification functioned as a means of identifying patterns, whilst interpretation remained the primary mode of analysis. With this approach, this work sought to support these traditional methodologies, while applying new interpretive lenses to contextualise material evidence and using data as a vehicle to reach the possible answers to the core research questions. The methodological choices described were guided by these questions, particularly by how female benefaction functioned as an entry point to civic participation, agency, and social mobility within communities. The key methodological contribution of this work is the approach designated as interregional comparative analysis, as this does three things:

1. Allows for comparison between varied regions, therefore reducing isolation and examining the Roman Empire as an entity containing many varied communities
2. Allows for quantified results from broad corpus-based filtering, providing an alternate view from case-study approaches which cannot represent larger segments of benefactresses
3. Employs qualitative methodologies to interpret the quantified findings by applying context from intentionally selected theoretical frameworks

In contrast to previous works, this research's focus on regional comparison sought to reduce isolation both in the results from the corpus-based comparison as well as in the qualitative understanding of the patterns and trends found within the dataset. Through placing the benefactresses from across the empire within one corpus, a new perspective was formed beyond local analysis which allowed for a more accurate identification of regional practices as well as a discovery of shared practices.

This research relied on a mixed-methods approach, meaning that the quantification of characteristics within the dataset was paired with the qualitative analysis of the regional

contexts, as well as the localised case studies, as they relied on each other to create an informed understanding of both regional and interregional trends. Carroll and Rothe (2010) aptly clarified the importance of mixed-methods by implicating that it is important to know that a particular trend is occurring, and it is equally important to know why or how (Carroll and Rothe 2010, 3480). The dataset was used to identify and compare the analogous characteristics across regions, allowing for the detection of patterns as well as absences within the data. These raw findings were not refined until they were examined through a qualitative lens, which applied localised case studies, epigraphic evidence, visual depictions, and historical context to explore the significance of the patterns identified (Ackoff 1989, 3-9).

The intention of this research was not to pursue a positivist model, but rather to use the dataset as a tool that supported comparative analysis alongside qualitative analysis which provided the contextual depth required for the topic. While previous works have relied heavily on one method or another, this work sought to amalgamate methods in order to form newly developed results and discussion. This approach sought to reduce the limitations of earlier research which were limited by their regional focus or narrow exploration, to provide a nuanced understanding of the experiences of ancient Roman women, specifically benefactresses.

3.2.1 Qualitative Lens

The qualitative work of this research began with the examination of corpora, case studies, papers, and catalogues in order to compile the largest spreadsheet feasible where the women included were clearly defined as benefactresses, who acted individually or with male family members as her own entity in some form, indicated through a use of phrasing such as *sua pecunia* when describing her contribution. This work led to a base understanding of comparable characteristics with which to later form the structured dataset. Through this qualitative analysis, the columns of the spreadsheet were identified, and included: Reference Number, Name, City/Region, Date, Benefaction Type, Non-religious entity honored by the benefaction, Religious entity honored by the benefaction, Public Role, Social Status, Inscription, Notable Family, Inscription Reference, and Discussion Reference. Each of these characteristics could be compared across regions in some form, and were often represented within the relevant texts available.

A particularly important piece of the qualitative analysis was the implementation of six case studies across the three regions to provide intraregional comparison on themes which could not be evaluated on a broad scale using the corpus data. While only examining a couple cases from each region is a limitation, one which is often faced by any work which focuses

only on case studies, it did provide insight into the individual circumstances experienced by benefactresses such as local demographics, epigraphic density, male family member relationships, competing benefactors, regional traditions, and local expectations. This limitation caused by individual case studies is one of the reasons for the mixed-method approach within this work, which employed the qualitative case study results as another tool to create more in-depth contextual findings. They allowed for patterns to be revealed which could be applied throughout this thesis, and helped in establishing how individual inscriptions contributed to broader understanding in the area of benefaction. Each of these interregional and intraregional investigations add to the wider research field in distinct ways, providing a deeper understanding of benefactresses and their associated decisions in the Roman world.

The qualitative lens was informed by established approaches relevant to ancient Roman studies as well, which allowed these benefactresses to be analysed within pertinent systems of power, visibility, and social capital. The theoretical perspectives described below moulded how patterns in the dataset were interpreted, particularly in terms of power, gendered visibility, and the negotiation of social positioning.

3.2.1.1 Hegemony and Power

When placing Roman women, and more particularly benefactresses, within the wider Roman world, discussions around their access to and influence on power quickly arise. Notably, Woodhull's approach assumed that women's accumulation of power during the Augustan era was due to the increased emphasis on motherhood and birthrates, which she explained using Gramsci's model of hegemony (Woodhull 1999, 15-16). At a basic level, Gramsci's political theory explained how ruling classes apply their own interests onto subdominant groups in order to maintain control (Gramsci 1975, 180-183; Mouffe 1979, 180). The intention behind this process is to alleviate threats from the subgroups and to maintain power (Mouffe 1979, 181). 'Expansive hegemony' as described by Gramsci was a successful version of his theory where the priorities of the less dominant groups are acted on, in order to move the aims of the ruling group forward (Gramsci 1975, 180-183; Mouffe 1979, 181-183).

Gramsci's theory can be tied to female benefaction, particularly during the Augustan era, through emphasising how women continuously rebelled against the social constraints enforced by legal limitations, such as restricted access to public life outside of the prescribed domestic roles (Gramsci 1975; Woodhull 1999, 17-18; Livy 34.1; App., *Bell. Civ*. 4.32–34). Once it became clear that his power would not be as effective without a positive endorsement from groups of women, Augustus shifted legislative priorities to grant women freedom from tutelage with the *ius trium liberorum* (Woodhull 1999, 17-18). While this legal

change may have allowed women more social impact in the short term, it also aided the empire by leading to the production of more Roman citizens and by increasing the opportunities for local benefaction practices.

Hegemony contributed to the theoretical framework used to evaluate this corpus because it emphasised how women were not just acting on their own individual planes, but were a part of a hierarchical system where actors had varying agency and motives (Gramsci 1975, 180-183; Mouffe 1979, 184). Whether it was politics or local network systems, women were both passively and actively involved in conversations where they had to both give and take in order to drive their personal narratives forward (Mouffe 1979, 182-183).

3.2.1.2 Social and Cultural Capital

While Gramsci's theoretical model revolved around political gain (either for the ruling parties or the subdominant groups), Pierre Bourdieu's model on capital focused on economic, social, and cultural gain (Bourdieu 1986, 241-258). According to Bourdieu, these three types of capital are exchanged within a larger system, and while financial or economic capital is the most conventional form, there are times where it is not the most effective form for the person or group being discussed (Bourdieu 1986, 241-258; Woodhull 1999, 19).

When looking at Roman benefactresses, once they were able to manage their own finances, it is possible they had economic capital from family or business ventures. This was not as valuable to them as cultural or social capital though, so they may have used their economic capital to create a scenario where they increased these other forms of wealth, such as through public benefaction (Woodhull 1999, 18-19). Woodhull indicated that this exchange of economic capital for social capital was likely due to society seeing social capital as more feminine and fitting for Roman women (Woodhull 1999, 19).

This research does not follow that line of thinking, as it limits the women's agency rather than treating them similarly to their male counterparts in regards to motivation. Woodhull indicated that the transformation of capital from economic to cultural, in terms of building donations, positioned a benefactress as a caregiver for her community, but as this research shows, the structures women donated could also lead to connotations of women as protectors, teachers, and religious leaders (Richlin 2014, 207-209; Woodhull 1999, 18-19).

Nevertheless, Bourdieu's model provided a lens for this research to examine motivations behind donations across the three regions being studied (Bourdieu 1986, 241-258). Motivation is a key theme when discussing Roman benefactresses, as it forces researchers

to return to the humanity of the women and their lives, rather than seeing them as data points in a spreadsheet. This model supported this research's need for qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to reveal and interpret patterns that emerge from the dataset.

3.2.1.3 Understanding Space and Structure

Several approaches have been proposed in the area of understanding ancient buildings as tools of communication. William McDonald and Paul Zanker were two early researchers in this field, and went on to inspire the research of Paul Rehak and Dianne Favro (Favro 1996.; MacDonald 1986; Rehak 2006; Zanker 1988). MacDonald's research, which looked at imperial architecture, explored key areas of movement within Roman cities, emphasising these "armatures" (features) as characteristics of Roman development which contributed to civic identities (MacDonald 1986, 30). Zanker's work focused on emperors' donation patterns over time, but draws out ideas which could apply to a range of donors regarding how infrastructure could be used as a tool to reflect the cultural moments which were occurring at the same time as construction (Tate 2022, 19; Zanker 1988, 65-66). For example, Zanker reviews Augustus' tendency to donate structures honouring certain religious cults he valued, a connection which is easily applied to benefactresses across the empire (Zanker 1988, 98-100). Both studies were able to widen their perspectives by examining ancient buildings and urban settings as part of a wider system.

Rehak highlighted that his approach to understanding the meaning behind monumental donations was intended to be more holistic than previous works, due to his commitment to a holistic interpretation rather than a focus on decorative elements (Rehak 2006, 101). The intention was to apply this holistic approach to the present research, in order to grasp as much of the full picture as possible through evaluating varying characteristics of a building and its corresponding inscription. Through evaluating buildings themselves, and their role within a larger community, the debates around the impact of male and female donors are made less relevant as the focus is on the structure itself (Tate 2022, 20). This framework allows for more nuance in interpretations and reduces the potential for bias from both modern perspectives and historical evidence. Favro similarly engaged with the topic of buildings within an urban setting, and indicated that one building cannot be taken as the full picture but rather as a piece in the larger environment (Favro 1996, 10). Whether a building was buried within a defined area of a community, or acted as a transitional marker between zones, is relevant information to understanding the motivations of the donor as well as the impact of the donation over time (Tate 2022, 20). These works do not only inspire an

approach to understanding buildings in the ancient world, but also the people who built them, as they can also be considered reflections of the settings by which they were surrounded.

3.2.2 Quantitative Approach

The quantitative element acts as a tool based on the systematic collection of data informed by the qualitative approach. The variables which were identified as analogous, informative, and contextually comparable were integrated into the core research dataset in order to apply several layers of data filtration which revealed patterns which were analysed using the qualitative lens described above. The trends, concentrations of benefactresses or characteristics exhibited by benefactresses, and absences noted either in individual regions or across the three regions of study provided the empirical foundation for further comparative evaluations. The application of this spreadsheet as a tool will be described later in this chapter.

3.2.3 Applying the qualitative approach to the quantified findings

The patterns identified at corpus level were not functional without the application of the contextual analysis formed through the qualitative approach, which is why the mixed-methods approach is fundamental to this research. This ideology was supported by Weber (1949), when he stated that there was a need for both ‘the “rational or objective” (as in quantitative research) and “empathic or subjective” (as in qualitative research) dimensions for understanding human phenomena’ (Carroll and Rothe 2010, 3481-3482; Weber 1949). Regional differences were not the results themselves, but rather the analysis of these regional instances based on contextual, qualitative research, formed the findings of this research. The quantified data required the qualitative contextualisation to transition from data, to information, and finally to knowledge (Carroll and Rothe 2010, 3479-3480). Patterns of absence in the dataset were also considered meaningful in this research, as they prompted further qualitative investigation.

These mixed-methods engaged with each other through the qualitative research informing the corpus collection, and the corpus informing the case studies selected, which then informed the processing of data from the quantification within the corpus, all of which demonstrated the importance of the application of several approaches to uphold these findings. This complementary approach has been supported by social theorists for nearly a century, as they indicated a belief that information, data, and context must be understood from a comprehensive point-of-view for the findings to not be superficial (Cooley 1926, 59, 73-74). The functions of iterative process means that the results were not reliant on either

numbers or case studies as the core tools with which to perform analysis, but rather both were essential to embedding context within this research.

3.2.4 Framing this research

The limitations described within the literature review were often acknowledged by the authors themselves, and these methods have formed the record which has led to this research approach. When examining the lives of ancient people, it is well-known that there would have been several layers of context and experiences which are impossible for researchers to re-establish, though we must try to not isolate parts of the experience through either reducing them to numbers or examining each benefactress as an individual who was not affected by the wider power dynamics, gendered beliefs, and social influences. This research hopes to alleviate some of the friction from these limitations through forming a wider acknowledgement of the varied regions across the Roman Empire, while also providing agency to localised communities and unique instances within them.

3.3 Data Collection for Comparative Analysis

3.3.1 Sources

The decision to use epigraphic information from buildings and funerary monuments donated by women across the empire was clear from the start, though the incorporation of women who were mentioned in literary histories was added after the initial corpus creation. The women who were mentioned in historical accounts were only included if a clear case was made for their donations. The initial exploration for these primary sources came from searching publications for applicable benefactresses, beginning with Van Bremen's *The Limits of Participation* (1996) and Hemelrijk's *Hidden Lives, Public Personae* (2015), before expanding to more contemporary papers as well as confirming the benefactresses' eligibility from inspecting direct text from epigraphic corpora. The structures themselves are not to be neglected as a resource, as they also provide valuable visual information that aids in understanding the women who donated them.

3.3.2 Inclusion Criteria

The author originally considered the inclusion of honorary statues commissioned by women or donated to honour an elite benefactress, but as this broadened the focus beyond an appropriate breadth, the author concluded that a focus on donated building structures would allow for more detailed analysis. This exclusion reflects a methodological boundary, rather than a judgement of significance of honorary practices, as there is so much to contribute to

honorific statue research that would not be possible within the bounds of this thesis. While benefaction was a reciprocal act which relied on exchange between the donor and the community, remnants of honorary statues which were not directly situated within a donated building or without an inscription which clearly denoted the exchange which occurred could lead to unclear data and potentially be misrepresentative within the quantitative findings. For this reason, the only honorary statues included in this dataset were ones which were undoubtedly linked to a building donation. An exploration into honorary statues as pieces of the system of benefaction would be equally interesting and worthwhile to explore in future research.

Buildings described as 'monumental' were initially the focal point of this research, but as some structures were further investigated, the potential of wanting to discuss non-monumental structures increased. Primarily, elite benefactresses are known for temples and honorary buildings, but Hemelrijk touches on the possibility of *culinae* (kitchens) within the temple area, which required further discussion as these could be donated by non-elite women who still sought to be involved with benefaction in some way (Hänninen 2019, 69; Hemelrijk 2015, 119, 459). Additionally, some women commissioned parts of monumental structures, which were still significant enough in size and cost to be included in this corpus.

There is also the topic of non-building donations, which often occurred in the form of festivals, games, or financial donations toward people or organisations in need. While these were considered welcomed celebrations and generous donations, this research excluded them to dive deeper into the motivations and trends that emerged around buildings donated by women within the Roman Empire, specifically regions of Italy, Asia Minor, and North Africa.

Similar to the narrow approach on monumental buildings, the author initially described the research subjects as 'elite benefactresses', but as research continued, women who were not of elite status emerged as benefactors in a significant capacity. As these actions are fascinating and equally worth discussing, the scope grew to include non-elite women as well as elite benefactresses.

3.3.3 Structure

The creation of this research corpus began with the transcription of relevant information about benefactresses that were appropriate for the scope of this research from prior publications into my dataset. As the author sought to increase the amount of descriptive quantitative information available on female benefaction, this project set out to introduce

several new categories of data points to allow for increased analysis. The most recent and comprehensive research into Roman female benefaction has been completed by Emily Hemelrijk, and her publication *Hidden Lives, Public Personae: Women and Civic Life in the Roman West* was the clear choice for beginning this comparative research (Hemelrijk 2015). This project intends to build upon these earlier corpora, to make the information more clear, comprehensive, and replicable for future research. Hemelrijk's corpus included the following categories: name, corpus, ancient site, type of monument and inscription, date, social status, priesthood, benefactions/public honours, and further details. This information provided an excellent basis for expanding upon these themes and new categories as well.

Van Bremen's corpus was laid out more simplistically and was less structured than Hemelrijk's work or this dataset (Hemelrijk 2015; Van Bremen 1996). Van Bremen utilised lists within *The Limits of Participation* (1996) to group benefactresses, and then later delved into individual case studies. The lists within Van Bremen's work included categories such as epigraphic location, references in previous literature, public roles, family links, and time of benefaction. While the information provided is essential to the field, the manner of presenting data in list form leads to it being difficult to draw comparisons between the benefactresses mentioned.

With this in mind, this corpus includes name, city/region, date, benefaction, honouree (if distinct from the named benefactress), religious association, public role, social status, iconography, inscription, notable family members, and further notes. This is an expansion from both Hemelrijk and Van Bremen's analytical categories but will lead to new conclusions and further support the work of these authors. Not only will the expansion in fields lead to new conclusions, but the ability to compare between the Roman East and Roman West allows for deductions around cultural and social differences in an entirely fresh and innovative manner.

3.3.4 Categorisation

Each of the categories chosen to be used within this corpus was selected very intentionally based on their comparability as well as how they relate to discussing regional differences, community agency, family relationships, and women's networks. The first factor that determined if a category was reasonable was whether there were enough benefactresses who retained the information for it to be valuable. If only five of the 200+ benefactresses had information associated with the impact of Rome on their role, then that data point would not be useful in this research. A secondary factor for the chosen categories in this data was whether the information could be used to compare life between the regions. If information

was only relevant to a particular region, such as Asia Minor, then it would not provide insight into the comparisons between regions, which is what this research aims to achieve. For this reason, information that is not applicable across the regions was excluded.

3.3.4.1 Reference Number

A reference number was applied to each benefactress in the corpus to make it easier to identify the woman mentioned in the text within the spreadsheet. This idea came to fruition as the Quantitative Findings Chapter and Discussion Chapter were being written so that the corpus and thesis paired better as resources.

3.3.4.2 City/Region

This column was essential to identify benefactresses' regions of activity, compare inter-city donations, and to sort and filter the data based on location. There are a variety of data points from excavations in the three regions explored in this research, and the aim was to ensure that no one region completely dominated the dataset. As Italy has been researched more broadly, there are 111 benefactresses from this region included in the corpus. A total of 57 benefactresses are highlighted from North Africa, and 79 are highlighted from Asia Minor.

3.3.4.3 Date

In an ideal scenario, all of the benefactresses in the corpus would have corresponding date information, but this is not the case due to limitations in archaeological evidence. In some cases, the date of the donation itself was recorded, while in other cases, the date of the benefactress's death was recorded. Many of the categories of this dataset have ample information for some benefactresses and little to no information for others. The combination of these data points alongside intentional data processing allows for well-informed results and conclusions.

While some specific dates are included in the notes for the benefactresses, the decision was made to group the date section into centuries so that the results could emerge more clearly. Individual decades were beyond the scope of this research to explore, and likely would not have shown trends as clearly as the separation into centuries has.

3.3.4.4 Benefaction

This column provides some of the most important and interesting information, as filtering by benefaction type can reveal nuances that have not been discussed in earlier research. Because of the significance of the Benefaction section, it was important to pull in as many details as possible while making sure that the data points were consistent and comparable

when processing the data. This will be discussed further in the Data Processing section, but it is key here to share that nearly all of the benefactresses had information to include in this section, as we had to know that there was a donation associated with a woman to define her as a benefactress. This section contained the most data points of any other sections and frequently had multiple points that were applicable, as benefactresses donated either multiple buildings or multiple structures within one building. The options within this column range from pieces of a building structure such as porticus to full bathhouse or theatre complexes.

3.3.4.5 Non-religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction

In terms of social and cultural influence, noting the non-religious and religious figures highlighted within a benefactress's inscription provided insight into their motivations. Non-religious entities included the imperial family, the donor's family, the people, and specific family members. Family members are highlighted in another column and only appeared in this column if they were selected as the honouree for the building donation, rather than more generally as a relative of the benefactress. In the majority of cases, the non-religious figure or figures who were honoured with a building donation were members of the imperial elite and were either named individually or as the imperial family.

3.3.4.6 Religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction

On the other hand, the Religious Entities section includes gods and goddesses, as well as deified figures of the imperial family, including figures such as Bona Dea, Isis, Juno, Fortuna Augusta, and a few mentions of "the deified empressIn exploring the religious motivations of benefactresses, this section is key for noting which religious figures were culturally important to these women, and also which religious figures were important for gaining the general public's favour when donating as a woman. These choices were strategic and now allow researchers to better understand with which deities benefactresses sought to link themselves.

It is important to note that some deities had corresponding Greek equivalents, particularly in Asia Minor. This information was considered and is represented in the graphs in the Quantitative Findings Chapter and is also referenced in the Discussion Chapter.

3.3.4.7 Public Role

The Public Role column identified the elected or honorary roles that these benefactresses held within their respective communities. Oftentimes, these roles were what motivated them to participate in public giving, as it was seen as a requirement or expectation of the role.

Examples of roles which fall into this column include: *archiereiai*, Daughters of the City, *flaminicae*, and *magistrae*. Holding certain public positions elevated the woman in the eyes of society, and noting which role she held and how that influenced donation tactics led to informed conclusions that allowed for a better understanding of Roman life in these regions. Similarly to the religious entities sections, there were public roles that were similar in duty but named differently or in another language across the regions. This information was noted and applied within the Quantitative Findings Chapter as well as the Discussion Chapter.

3.3.4.8 Social Status

While public role details provide more direct information on a woman's standing, social status insight adds dimension to understanding where a benefactress was coming from financially and socially. For example, if a woman was noted as a freedwoman, it was clear that she had formerly been a slave who had gained independence, which was already a significant change in social status. For her to go on and have enough spare funds to donate a structure in her city in her own name and in her own right, this would be significant in discussing her motivations, challenges, and successes. The number of women who highlighted their social status varied, especially regionally, so this column was not the most filled out in terms of data points, but when the social status information was provided it almost always played a role in the discussion of the benefactress's contributions. This is one of the only columns where the contents of the cells don't vary beyond five options: freedwoman, decurial, equestrian, senatorial, and one imperial freedwoman.

3.3.4.9 Notable Family

After the Benefaction Type section, the Notable Family category was the most fully filled section of the dataset. This is because of the traditions which inspired benefactresses to identify their family members by their relationship, and because frequently benefactresses co-donated with members of their families. Additionally, benefactresses honoured their children with their donations, again providing insight into their familial motivations. This section heavily features husbands and fathers of the noted benefactresses, but there are ample examples of other family members as well, including great-great-grandfathers, siblings, and children

3.3.4.10 Inscriptions and Iconography

Information on the inscription language and any kind of linked iconography was noted, as these were original categories for inclusion. Following the creation of the corpus and the beginning of the analysis for results, these two categories were deemed outside of the scope

of this project and thus only feature in case studies rather than in larger segments of the Quantitative Findings and Discussion Chapters.

3.3.5 Tools

During the creation of this comparative corpus and throughout the research process, Google Sheets was used to produce the dataset, add information, and filter the data to show direct comparison between regions, time periods, and individual benefactresses. This programme was used due to the ability to easily access it from different locations, the automatic saving features, its adjacency to the widely used Excel programme, and due to the author's familiarity with the platform. Additionally, using an Excel spreadsheet allows future researchers from various backgrounds to be able to access the data, and add to it based on their regional or temporal boundaries. Following the completion of this project, the author will preserve the data on Research Data York, the university's data repository. Replication and reproducibility are key pieces of the open research process, and the aim is for this research to be a useful tool for the next generation of researchers investigating female benefaction.

Additionally, there are many projects within archaeology which can be evaluated using this mixed-methods approach, and it is the hope of the author that the methodology used within this research will allow future researchers to contemplate how they can use epigraphic data more effectively in their projects.

3.4 Limitations

There is one key limitation within the methodology described above: the varied amount of benefactresses in each of the three study regions in the corpus, a common problem in archaeology, as regions have been excavated to different levels of completion. In the field of Classical Archaeology, Italy has often been in the spotlight for excavations and has led the way in terms of recording archaeological data from earlier years in modern archaeology. Because of factors like this, the largest number of benefactresses in this corpus comes from Italy, but it is important to note that this does not necessarily mean that female benefaction was more commonly occurring in this region. This limitation further emphasises the need for an interpretive, question-led approach, as numerical representation alone cannot capture the social dynamics shaping women's participation in civic munificence.

One of the most important ways of addressing this limitation is by highlighting it from the beginning. An awareness of the different number of featured benefactresses from a given region allows readers to understand the data as incomparable at first glance. Through

repeating the number of relevant benefactresses throughout the Quantitative Findings and Discussion Chapters, figures and tables are understood for the trends they do show rather than creating misunderstanding of the regional representation.

An additional facet of this limitation is that there is no way of knowing how much information about benefactresses is absent from our data in each region. In other words, how much of each region has been excavated? If this dataset includes 50% of the possible information from benefactresses from Italy (not feasible to calculate, but used here to visualise the issue), how can that accurately compare to the 10% of possible information which has been collected and examined from North Africa. While it is impossible to know the answers to this scenario, it is important to acknowledge that these issues exist and are considered while analysing the data that is captured within this corpus.

3.5 Conclusion

This research set out to explore both quantitative and qualitative information and thus employed a mixed-methods approach, as this opens many doors for researchers in social sciences and allows us to understand our field in a new and innovative way. The methodology described in this chapter could be applied across disciplines, to create more nuanced and deeper understandings of ancient and contemporary peoples, and the work done in this thesis has demonstrated how effective it can be.

Several research questions were laid out at the beginning of this chapter, and it is important to reflect on how effective this methodology is in evaluating them. The core question this methodology seeks to answer is: “how did women in these varying regions similarly experience the world of benefaction and what unique restrictions did they face within their communities?” This question is key to understanding the purpose of this research, as ancient Roman benefactresses from different regions varied greatly in their motivations and activities, and capturing these nuances has been difficult. With the ability to filter out some factors or characteristics within the corpus to isolate themes and comparable experiences, this research does begin to answer the question of the impact of different cultures on women within the empire.

CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This research uses both qualitative and quantitative analysis to identify patterns regarding the ways in which Roman benefactresses' expressed and negotiated their public and religious identities using inscriptions and monuments across the regions of Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor. While the dataset is seen as the main tool to identify new conclusions on this research topic, qualitative analysis is also needed to better interpret the evidence and gauge how women engaged with civic and religious life as benefactresses. By understanding which cultural characteristics shared similarities and which were unique from each other, the discussion benefits from a holistic viewpoint which will lead the research in this field forward.

The emergence of cultural traditions, such as the epigraphic habit, is examined within these qualitative findings, providing a fuller picture of the ways that public roles, imperial cult relationships, religious figures, and depictions intersect in the Roman world. Here, the varying degrees of visibility and agency of Roman benefactresses will be investigated, as inscriptions and material evidence provide additional context to understanding the expression of women’s identities and their impact on local culture, as well as local culture’s impact on them as notable figures in their communities.

4.2 Public Roles Held by Benefactresses in the Roman Empire

In order to fully understand the similarities and differences between the public roles held by benefactress in Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor in the first to third centuries AD, it is essential that a full context is provided. In this corpus these roles are coded and seen linked to each other, but there is a significant background narrative held by each benefactress and it is important to get the nuances correct in understanding them.

The public roles in Italy and North Africa were far more similar in nature than those held by benefactresses in Asia Minor. Because of this, the section below on North Africa will be briefer in length, as it will overlap greatly with the section contextualising roles in Roman Italy, though there are some differences which will be separated and discussed. The subsections below will reflect the sections which appear in the Findings Chapters, in order to easily access the context in this chapter while reviewing the analysis and discussion.

4.2.1 Public Roles in Roman Italy

It is essential to highlight the impact that the imperial women and the imperial cult had on female benefactors in Roman Italy. The imperial family inspired and influenced women in Italy in a multitude of ways, and the imperial women both opened and closed doors for benefactresses seeking to make a name for themselves (Wen 2024, 177).

4.2.1.1 Imperial Women and their Influence on Public Roles for Women

It would be remiss to discuss the public roles held by women in Roman Italy without first highlighting the impact that the imperial women had on the creation and continuation of these positions. The imperial women were not solely responsible for the creation of powerful roles for elite women, but they were certainly heavily involved. Octavia and Livia were the first women to gain freedom from tutelage, or guardianship, and quickly positioned themselves as benefactors similar to their male relations (Flory 1993, 293). In order to maintain their appearances, the imperial women found a way to merge their emphasis on traditional values with their newfound access to benefaction, mainly through promoting themselves as dutiful wives and mothers (Figs. 4.1 and 4.2) (Kleiner 1996, 30).

Figures 3.1 (left) and **3.2** (right).
Figure 4.1 Octavia on the reverse of an *aureus* of Mark Antony. Minted in 39 B.C. Altes Museum, Berlin. (Source: Berlin, Altes Museum. Photo: Barbara McManus, 2013, www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/indexcoins.html).
Figure 4.2 Portrait of Livia from between 37 and 31 BC, where she is represented as a virtuous Roman woman. Pentelic marble. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. Accession no. 23.211. (Source: The Walters Art Museum, CC0 1.0 Universal)

One area where the imperial women were directly responsible for women's access to notable roles is in the case of the imperial cult. As the imperial women were popular in their lifetimes,

it should not be surprising that the public wanted to continue to honour them in death. As new imperial women were deified, priesthoods honouring them within the imperial cult broadened, and women gained more access to a religious environment which carried notable power. Another way the imperial family was involved in benefaction by elite women is that benefaction could often be seen as a form of communication with other women in elevated positions. Through highlighting an emperor or his wife, a benefactress might ask for good favour from the imperial family, which could come in the form of an honorific title, a new position which would reflect highly on the woman, or influence for the benefactress' city (Hemelrijk and Woolf 2013, 483).

In each region discussed here, there are women who held the role of priestess of the imperial cult. This indicates that the imperial cult's influence stretched throughout the Roman Empire and was considered a valuable and honourable cult to be a part of. A unique difference between the city of Rome and the cities expanding outward from the capital was that in Rome imperial family members would only be honoured after death, while in regional cities in both Italy and beyond, these emperors and empresses received cult status while they were still living (Hemelrijk 2015, 70; Taylor 1920). In cities further afield, priestesses from the elite classes were recruited to help enhance their honors and public image, while in Rome, no priestesses of the imperial cult are attested, aside from Livia and Agrippina Minor (Hemelrijk 2005b, 138).

4.2.1.2 *Sacerdotes* (Priestesses)

As the most commonly held role among Italian benefactresses in this corpus is that of *sacerdos* or priestess, contextualising this role is a clear place to start. The evidence for women in these roles primarily comes from funerary monuments, where women were honoured for their contributions to certain cults (Schultz 2006, 70). The role of priestess was not limited to a Vestal Virgin priesthood (as is often suggested by ancient literature), but rather expanded throughout the empire, leading the priesthoods of a large number of gods and goddesses as well as deified imperial family members (Schultz 2006, 70; Hemelrijk 2015, 37). For some sanctuaries, only a single priestess was required, but for others, several priestesses were needed (Schultz 2006, 71).

Most Roman priesthoods required an entrance fee-like payment called the *summa honoraria*, which increased the role's prestige and encouraged priestesses to fund public donations and events. This financial contribution to aid the public made the priesthood positions more acceptable to the non-elite who may have otherwise resented the exclusivity (Hemelrijk 2015, 39).

The variations in this role would have often been specified by qualifiers which were inscribed alongside the role of *sacerdos*, such as *sacerdos divae*, which would have indicated that the woman was definitively a priestess of the imperial cult (McIntyre 2016, 98; Hemelrijk 2015, 45-50). Some women were denoted as a *sacerdos prima* or *summa,* demonstrating that there was a defined hierarchy in some priestess groups (Schultz 2006, 71). Typically, priests and priestesses would be responsible for ritual performances and the supervision of spectacles and events (Hemelrijk 2015, 38). There is evidence of women serving as priestesses and being aided by male magistrates, suggesting that the hierarchy of available authoritative roles was more complicated than once thought (Schultz 2006, 72). Previous assumptions that priestesses would only have held ceremonial or matronal roles are susceptible to contemporary biases cannot be confirmed (Hemelrijk 2015, 40).

As the empire constantly expanded and evolved, the expectations for this role would vary from region to region in terms of the observation and coordination of election, duties, rituals, etc (Hemelrijk 2015, 38; Schultz 2006, 70). There also may have been expectations regarding chastity and marriage during the tenure of the priestesses' time in office, though these regulations are often debated, and would have varied from cult to cult (Schultz 2006, 74-76, 78). If this was the case, Schultz suggests that these cults may have appealed to women who were widowed or spinsters (Schultz 2006, 78).

4.2.1.3 *Magistra*

Schultz indicates that epigraphic records are oftentimes the only form of documenting women in this position, as female *magistrae* are excluded from ancient historical literature (Schultz 2006, 70). Inscriptions from dedicatory offerings such as funds or statues definitively link women to the role of *magistra*, despite this lack of written historical representation (Schultz 2006, 71).

The particulars of the role of *magistra* are debated, but the general responsibilities of this position were administrative and included the organisation of cult activities (Hemelrijk 2015, 89). Inscriptions indicate that the role of *magistra* (and *ministra*) was sometimes held alongside male cult officials, demonstrating that there was not a clear separation between genders (Schultz 2006, 70). *Magistrae* may have aided priestesses at points, but primarily they were officials within the larger cult activities. As an additional role for women aside from that of priestess, the position of a *magistra* opened doors for women of lower social classes to be more involved in a cult community.

4.2.1.4 *Flaminica*

While the benefactresses which appear in this research material were often also priestesses, the frequently mentioned title *flaminica* indicates that the title-holder was specifically a priestess of the imperial cult. Oftentimes, the alternative title *sacerdos* (*diva*) *Augustae* is used, which more directly connects the benefactress to the imperial family (Hemelrijk 2015, 49; McIntyre 2010, 220). While the delineations may seem fairly clear, there are exceptions in regards to who certain *flaminica* honoured or how the cult would operate in distinct cities (Hemelrijk 2015, 50). This is another role where qualifiers would aid in specifying the distinct role a benefactress held. These would indicate the history of the role in the region, as *flaminica prima* would confirm that she was the first priestess of the described cult in the area, and would contribute to understanding the wider adherence to the cult in the area (Hemelrijk 2006, 100; McIntyre 2016, 98). These small details are crucial to furthering investigations of local acceptance of the imperial cult, the impact on benefactresses' social mobility and status, and understanding regional differences in cult expression.

Alongside the understanding that the majority of *flaminicae* were priestesses of the imperial cult, it is important to underline the power this role provided as well as the expectations which came along with it. This interplay of giving and taking would have contributed to certain women being more involved in, or sometimes rejected from, the higher echelons of the cult in their local community. In order to join, there was a costly *summa honoraria* which exceeded the fees expected in other cults, closely linking the cult to the most elite class (Hemelrijk 2015, 72; Tate 2022, 33). The *summa honoraria* is key to the conversation around benefaction, as many priestesses would donate a structure in place of paying a cash fee, which was the impetus for many donations by elite women.

Many benefactresses throughout the Italian section of this dataset added the qualifier *perpetua,* which was used to indicate that the role was held 'for life' (though this lifetime status could be due to a symbolic title following the years in which the priestess was actively responsible in the cult) (Hemelrijk 2015, 77). Regardless, these women would have been notable within their communities, and would have held local and further reaching renown for holding these esteemed positions (Hemelrijk 2015, 77).

4.2.1.5 *Patrona*

There was only one *patrona* in the region of Italy, but as Nummia Varia (***It 69***) is the only surviving example of a female patron documented on a bronze tablet called a *tabula patronatus,* it is worthwhile to highlight her here. Councils would have recorded their decision to select a patroness along with their reasoning on these *tabulae patronatus*, which is

fortunate for researchers today to gain insight into the role, and how one woman would have achieved patroness status (Hemelrijk 2004b, 420).

Nummiam Variam c(larissimam) f(eminam) sacerdotem Veneris Felicis, ea adfecti/one adque prono animo circa nos agere coepisse pro instituto / benevolentiae suae, sicut et parentes eius semper egerunt, ut / merito debeat ex consensu universorum patrona praefecturae / nostrae fieri, quo magis magisque hoc honore, qui est aput nos potissi/mus, tantae claritati eius oblato dignatione benignitatis eius glori/osi et in omnibus tuti ac defensi esse possimus, (.)

Placere universis conscriptis Nummiae Variae, c(larissimae) f(eminae) sacerdoti Veneris / Felicis, pro splendore dignitatis suae patrocinium praefecturae nos/trae deferri petique ab eius claritate et eximia benignitate, ut hunc / honorem sibi a nobis oblatum libenti et prono animo suscipere / et singulos universosque nos remque publicam nostram in cl/ientelam domus suae recipere dignetur et in quibuscumque / ratio exegerit, intercedente auctoritate dignitatis suae, tutos de/ fensosque praestet.

- *CIL 9.3429 = ILS 6110*

Nummia Varia, a woman of senatorial rank, priestess of Venus Felix, has started to act with such affection and good-will towards us, in accordance with her custom of benevolence, just as her parents have always done, that she should rightfully and unanimously be made patrona of our praefectura, in the hope that by offering this honour, which is highest in our city, to her so illustrious excellency, we may be more and more renowned by the repute of her benevolence and in all respects be safe and protected (...)

All members of the council have decided to bestow on Nummia Varia, a woman of senatorial rank, priestess of Venus Felix, in accordance with the splendour of her high rank, the patronage of our praefectura, and to ask from her excellency and extraordinary benevolence, that she may accept this honour we offer to her with willing and favourable inclination and that she deigns to take us and our res publica, individually and universally,

under the protection of her house and that, in whatever matters it may reasonably be required, she may intervene with the authority belonging to her rank and protect us and keep us safe.

- *CIL 9.3429* = *ILS 6110,* translated by Hemelrijk 2004b, 421

In this text, Nummia is honoured for her benefactions (a tradition carried on from her parents evidently) and her priesthood of Venus Felix. Her senatorial status is highlighted, and the council note an expectation that she will bring protection to the people of Peltuinum Vestinum in Italy. In a way, she was an ancient lobbyist for the city, using her influence in a non-political role to impact political opinions and advocate for Peltuinum Vestinum.

4.2.1.6 Roman Citizen

Primarily, elite benefactresses would have been Roman citizens, and this is known through epigraphic evidence detailing their ancestry, naming patterns, and through statuary depictions where they were wearing traditional Roman dress (Hemelrijk 2015, 21). When women in Italy made a point of noting their Roman citizenship in inscriptions, it indicates that they may have been descendents of non-Roman families, or that they had acquired citizenship (Hemelrijk 2015, 27). While many benefactresses in Italy would take the status of citizen for granted, there would have been women who saw the status as an achievement or an example of their social mobility.

In 212 AD, the *Constitutio Antoniniana* was established, granting citizenship to free people of the whole Roman Empire (Hemelrijk 2015, 27). This would have made the title of citizen less prestigious, and thus women would have had to find another way to display their elite social standing.

4.2.1.7 Analysis

After examining the patterns of public roles in Italy, a few things become clear. In Roman Italy, public roles were closely tied to the imperial cult, meaning that these benefactresses knew that linking themselves to the imperial family would aid them in the public and religious spheres. This desire to emulate the imperial women would have influenced other behaviours, such as depiction choices, donation trends, and inscription language. Knowing the tie between women and the imperial cult was particularly strong in Italy also provides context for understanding the values which needed to be externally visible in benefactresses' donations, particularly loyalty, virtue, and domesticity. The ability to participate in the epigraphic habit through public donations allowed women to commemorate details of their lives the same way as their male counterparts, creating a new sense of civic belonging. This will be explored in

North Africa and Asia Minor below, before tying the overlapping trends of the regions together in a broader comparison.

4.2.2 Public Roles in Roman North Africa

4.2.2.1 *Flaminica*

In the second and third centuries AD, the title of *flaminica perpetua* (priestess of the imperial cult) was frequently occurring among benefactresses in North Africa (Hemelrijk 2015, 78). In fact, North Africa exhibits the greatest number of mentions of imperial priestesses, even greater than Italy (Hemelrijk 2015, 69). As mentioned previously, the entrance fee for imperial priesthood was considerable and thus this role would have been held by more elite and wealthy benefactresses (Hemelrijk 2015, 78; Duncan-Jones 1982, 82-88). On the other hand, there were also instances where the title would be bestowed upon elite women who had links to beneficent family members or prestige outside of the role (Hemelrijk 2015, 78).

4.2.2.2 *Patrona*

As the role of benefactress is tied closely to her patronage toward the city, the differentiation between a typical benefactress and a city *patrona* may seem small, though this would be a mistaken conclusion. This role would elevate a woman above her peers, and would sometimes earn her the description of being an 'honorary man' in her city - a powerful statement in the Roman Empire (Hemelrijk 2004b, 425). There are numerous references to this role within epigraphic references, though the particularities of the role are debated (Hemelrijk 1999, 89-92).

The legal aspects of officially naming a patron of the city are recorded within inscriptions, but authors debate whether it was bestowed upon a woman in order to thank her for past donations and initiate an expectation for future donations or whether the role was assigned to promote civic interests locally and among the governing parties in Rome (Eilers 2002, 84-105*;* Hemelrijk 2004b, 416). This stance placed patronesses as advocates and protectors when it came to imperial privilege, where the patronesses would use their connections to bring their local cities favourable outcomes (Hemelrijk 2004b, 416; Eilers 2002, 84-105; Duncan-Jones 1972, 12-16). Duthoy argues that while social status and connections were key pieces of the role of *patrona*, the active participation in euergetism would look indiscernible from the participation shown by other civic benefactresses (Duthoy 1984). The responsibilities tended toward elite networking rather than being focused on public giving.

Hemelrijk states that 'compared to male patrons female city patrons were exceptional: against roughly 1,200 male patrons of communities recorded in Italy and the western provinces during the first three centuries AD there are only nineteen women whose patronage of a city is beyond reasonable doubt' (Hemelrijk 2004b, 417). This unique status indicates that only the most elite women would have been given this title by their communities. Hemelrijk found that of the fourteen civic patronesses who were of senatorial status, ten of them were directly related to consuls (Hemelrijk 2004b, 418). There is evidence that as the number of patrons decreased in the third century, the number of patronesses continued to increase. Perhaps this demonstrated that a preference for male city patrons dissolved over time and that women began to be chosen in their places, or that men became less engaged with the practices after hundreds of years of participating but cities still desired the benefits of benefactors and set their eyes on benefactresses to continue the practice (Hemelrijk 2004b, 418).

In terms of the responsibilities associated with this role, our understanding partially comes from statue bases set up to honour the patroness for her actions or accomplishments. There were many benefactresses but few patronesses, indicating that benefaction was not the key responsibility of these women (though it was encouraged) (Hemelrijk 2004b, 420). Hemelrijk points out that the benefactress Oscia Modesta in North Africa received a public statue naming her as the city's *civis et patrona,* and ponders whether this title was given due solely to her financial clout (Hemelrijk 2004b, 415).

4.2.2.3 Analysis

Female benefaction increased in North Africa a century later than in Italy, which would have contributed to different patterns. It is clear that both male and female donors sought to emulate the Italian system, and thus the main roles were *flaminica* and *patrona*. While women in Italy and Asia Minor had more variety in public role options, the benefactresses in North Africa were limited by a few core roles which would provide a public identity and influence.

4.2.3 Public Roles in Roman Asia Minor

While there is a significant overlap in roles across the three regions, the way these roles played out in the local cities often varied greatly. Various factors such as the expectations, the depictions of the women, and the responsibilities associated with a role all would depend on the local politics, family relations, and connections the city had with the imperial leaders in Rome. Additionally, it is important to remember that North Africa would have had a cultural history which was different from the newly created colonies. These local traditions shaped

the evolving roles for women, in both North Africa and Asia Minor, and influenced both the roles and the women holding them in distinctive ways.

4.2.3.1 *Hiéreia* (Priestess)

As is the case in each region explored in this thesis, the most commonly held role in Asia Minor was that of the *hiéreia* or priestess (Augier and Stevens 2017, 55). Most of the locatable inscriptions have already been translated to use the term priestess, but using Plancia Magna's (***AM 62***) inscription, the phrase *hiéreian tís Artémi* was used to denote that she was a priestess of Artemis (*IK Perge* 120). The way that this role was executed in Asia Minor would have differed from the way that priestesses engaged with the title in other regions, depending on cultural tradition and social expectations.

4.2.3.2 *Archiereiai*

The position of *archiereia* in Asia Minor is another role where some ancient and modern authors have indicated that women only held this position if their husbands were in the corresponding *archiereus* or *asiarchs* positions, removing agency from the women who served as *archiereia* (Hemelrijk 2015, 73). In simple terms, *archiereis* and *archiereiai* were high priests and priestesses, often linked to the imperial cult, though this characteristic is uncertain. Kearsley, for example, states that while there were a number of women who were *archiereiai* and whose husbands were *archiereis*, this did not indicate that the role of *archiereia* was honorary or simply given to the wife of an *archiereus* (Kearsley 1986, 183). This is further reinforced by an inscription found in Aphrodisias that underlines the responsibility of an *archiereia,* which was to coordinate all of the required sacrifices during her term, and does not link her role to a corresponding *archiereus* or *asiarch* (Kearsley 1986, 184-5; *MAMA VIII* 492b).

4.2.3.3 *Stephanephoroi*

The role of *stephanephoros* was the highest magistrate position and would have been the leading official of a Greek city (Kearsley 1999, 198). This title was synonymous with that of 'crown-wearer', as the *stephanephoros* would wear the crown of the local deity he or she chose to honour (Fig. 4.3) (Veyne 1990, 136). The *stephanephoroi* would take up their office at the beginning of the year, and either hold the position for a single year, but some, reportedly, for life (Veyne 1990, 170). *Stephanephoroi* were expected to donate generously to their cities and would often throw banquets to celebrate achievements or the conclusion of their time in office.

Figure 4.3. Bust of a woman wearing a *stephane*. The title *stephanephoros* translates to crown-wearer, which can be seen in the depiction here. Marble. Rome, ca. A.D. 134–147. Musée de la Bibliothèque nationale de France. Inventory no. 57.6. (Source: Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=655201)

This role would have been mostly symbolic, though women did hold other civic roles which carried more influence and power. It was possible to include funds in one's will to cover the fee necessary to hold the title of *stephanephoros,* indicating that this role was primarily ceremonial (as a deceased person would not be able to accomplish much in this position) as well as a format for the local council to auction off social capital (Robert 1966, 389; Veyne 1990, 136). Mantas refers to a recorded list of roles from Apollonis where a woman held the position of *stephanephoros* in the city for a period of a year, but he suggests that the roles with civic power in the city (*gymnasiarchos* and the *ephebarchos*) were held by only by men (Mantas 1999, 185). As will be discussed below, women were known to hold the role of *gymnasiarch* as well, refuting Mantas' claim that women only were responsible for symbolic roles.

An interesting case highlighted by Morgan is that of Attalis Apphion (***AM 12***), an elite woman whose honorific inscriptions note her immediate family links as well as her positions of high priestess and priestess in the city of Aphrodisias (Morgan 2014, 49). Inscriptions were found

which highlight her donation of columns for the Temple of Aphrodite, funds for the Sebasteion, and a testament for a public bathhouse (Morgan 2014, 49). While it is known that she also held the position of *stephanephoros* on multiple occasions, she did not include this in her inscription, indicating that perhaps these honorary roles were seen as less important when compared to religious roles with more considerable responsibilities (Morgan 2014, 49).

4.2.3.4 *Hydrophoros*

In the most literal sense, a *hydrophoros* was a 'water-carrier' and was a role held by priestesses in the Roman East (Figs. 4.4 and 4.5). As it would have been unacceptable to pray to the gods with unclean hands or dirty clothing, there was a great need for water in temples, and the *hydrophoros* would have been responsible for collecting that water (Burkert 1985, 77). She may have had access to a well on the site of the temple, or may have had to go further afield to collect the water needed (Burkert 1985, 78). There would have been vessels at the door to the temple (*perirranteria*) which visitors would have dipped their hands into to cleanse themselves (Burkert 1985, 77).

Plutarch's *Themistokles* 31, shares how Themistokles was responsible for monitoring Athens' water supply, and took the funds from fines on people who illegally tapped into the city's water supply for personal gain to install a bronze statue of a young woman carrying water, where the dedicatory statue inscription honours her as a *hydrophoros* (Dillon 1996, 197). From this we gain more insight around the position, and learn that the position was seen as honourable by city elites, while further confirming that the key responsibility of the *hydrophoros* was carrying water to religious environments, and perhaps within rituals.

Van Bremen and Busine debate the specifics of the role's requirements, and whether they were religious or administrative within a city (Busine 2006; Van Bremen 1996). It would appear that *hydrophoroi* were known as benefactors, and were often wealthy elites who were prominent within a community. When reviewing the benefactress Mnemosyne (***AM 57***), it is noted that her daughter was appointed to be a *hydrophoros* and was expected to contribute to the city either in cash funds or in the form of a building donation (Mantas 1994, 352; *IDidyma*, no 140). It is likely that at this time, her family members stepped in to help fulfill this expectation and to set her up to succeed in the notable role.

Numerous depictions of *hydrophoroi* exist today, and they typically represent a woman carrying a water jug on her head. One such figure of the mid-fourth century BC, now in the

Aydın Museum in Türkiye implies that these customs in the Roman East go back for centuries and would have been valued as cultural traditions in Asia Minor (Figs. 4.4 and 4.5).

Figures 4.4 (left) and **4.5** (right). **Figure 4.4** Terracotta depiction from Rhodes, Greece, of a *hydrophoros* or water bearer from the late fifth century BC. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. (Source: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Accession number: 2004.47.36). **Figure 4.5** A similar terracotta figure from ancient Knidos, circa the third century BC to the second century BC. Excavated by Sir Charles Thomas Newton in 1859. British Museum, London. (Source: The British Museum, Museum number 1859,1226.156)

4.2.3.5 *Gymnasiarchoi*

While the role of a *gymnasiarchia* does refer to *gymnasia*, these women holding these roles were not required to participate in any of the activities held at these buildings (Van Bremen 1996, 44-45). The role of the *gymnasiarchia* was mainly a liturgical position, held by elite men and women who volunteered to contribute to the *gymnasium* through oil donations or other funding ventures, and it was often linked to a relevant city priesthood (Van Bremen 1996, 44). The position has been described as a 'pseudo-office', where the role both had liturgical and organisational influence, though the managerial aspects may have disappeared by the Roman period (Van Bremen 1996, 66-67). There is a small differentiation to be identified when discussing *gymnasiarchoi*, as in some cities women who made one-off oil donations could claim the title, while in other cities the role was held over a longer period of time (Van Bremen 1996, 72).

There is an instance of a woman named Aurelia Leite (***AM 16***), who held the role of civic *gymnasiarchia* with her husband, and was credited for rebuilding and restoring the *gymnasium* of Paros where they lived (Van Bremen 1996, 71). This inscription shows that the way that women took on these roles varied; while some solely saw their duty to fund oil donations, others saw the upkeep of the local *gymnasium* as a part of the position as well (Van Bremen 1996, 71).

Interestingly, half of the women who are known to have held this title come from only two cities: Ephesos and Stratonikeia (Van Bremen 1996, 43). This reinforces the view that roles would have varied from city to city, and region to region. Perhaps these cities had a progressive view toward women holding elite civic positions, and thus there was more access to roles such as the *gymnasiarchia*. It is important to highlight the likelihood that the majority (at least half by Van Bremen's account) of these *gymnasiarchoi* would have jointly held the position with their husbands, though this does not necessarily take away from their social power in these roles (Van Bremen 1996, 43). Van Bremen disproves any suggestion that the role would have been honorary for the woman in a joint *gymnasiarchiai* position, as there is evidence that the couple would have shared the financial contributions evenly between themselves and there were instances where the two held separately assigned *gymnasiarchiai* positions (Van Bremen 1996, 69). There are multiple occasions where female *gymnasiarchoi* would specifically highlight their donations as being given directly to the women of the city, despite holding the role jointly with their husbands (Van Bremen 1996, 69-70).

4.2.3.6 Daughter/Mother of the City

One of the greatest honours which was bestowed upon women in Roman Asia Minor was the title of 'Mother of the City' or 'Daughter of the City'. Plancia Magna's (***AM 62***) original inscription language was used to confirm that the ancient Greek translation for Daughter of the City was *póleos thygatéra* while *meter poleos* was the phrase for Mother of the City (Adak 2020, 50; *IK Perge* 120). These women would have been of the most elite status, and undoubtedly bestowed much upon their cities, both in physical structures and in renown. There are corresponding references to male elites who were named the Father or Son of the City (Van Bremen 1996, 167). Unlike other titles mentioned above, these honours were confined to the Roman period and were not widely used until the second century AD (Van Bremen 1996, 167).

The title was held for life, and with that there was an expectation that these women would continue to provide for the city throughout their lives (Van Bremen 1996, 168). Van Bremen

describes the donations by Mothers of the City as exhibiting 'exemplary generosity', including the introduction of productions to the city's festival in Aphrodisias, or building the city's *gymnasium* at Termessos and promising lifelong funding (Van Bremen 1996, 168). The honorary title of Mother of the City appears infrequently, especially compared to its male equivalent, with there being approximately ten known cases in the region of Asia Minor (Van Bremen 1996, 168).

On the other hand, Daughter of the City appears more frequently. Robert outlines a civic adoption ceremony, where he implies that the city adopted a young woman as its 'daughter' and she was henceforth expected to provide for her 'parents' as they would also provide for her (Robert 1969, 316-322). Van Bremen suggests that a woman would be chosen to be 'Daughter of the City' in the cases where the family had considerable financial resources and there was no son to be designated 'Son of the City' (Van Bremen 1996, 169). By honouring a city heiress, the public and governing body received assurance that her funds would contribute to the local economy rather than go toward her future husband and his city (in the case that she married a non-local) (Van Bremen 1996, 169).

These titles were found across several cities, including Aphrodisias (9 known 'Daughters'), Perge, and Italy's Casinum. Like many other titles, there is evidence to suggest that 'mothers' and 'daughters' of the cities continued throughout a family, as there was one family in Strakonikeia where three generations (six individuals) carried one of these honorific titles, or the male variation of them (Van Bremen 1996, 169).

4.2.3.7 Roman Citizen

When discussing Roman women who highlighted their position as citizens, not only is it a factor if they originated from another region, but the evolution of women's access to citizenship must also be considered. Women were not considered full citizens due to being limited in several ways, as they could not participate in politics and their access to public-facing offices was limited (Tate 2022, 2). As women gained new freedoms, they would have sought to highlight these in inscriptions and funerary monuments as this access was something they strove to acquire throughout their lives. Tate (2022) harks on this separation between women and the full status of Roman citizenship, likely due to their inability to vote or hold public office, but the suggestion that they were more of the private sphere rather than the public because of their disenfranchisement seems defeatist.

While the Roman West had a more direct link to citizenship and Roman culture, the Roman East was grappling with maintaining its Hellenistic identity while adopting the new Roman

status. This context suggests that when benefactresses in the Roman East highlighted their Roman citizenship, they were making a statement to show that they were welcoming to the new culture and that they were eager to display their citizenship with pride. In fact, in this corpus, there are three mentions of women from Asia Minor highlighting their citizenship and only one woman highlighting this status in Italy, implying that it was more common to state this status in regions distant from Rome. This will be explored further in the Discussion Chapter.

4.2.3.8 Analysis

The benefactresses in Asia Minor benefited from a longer history of benefaction in the region, which contributed to the variety of roles in the region. Some of the roles reflected the emerging Roman traditions, while others referenced the local Hellenistic culture. Roles such as Mother of the City and Daughter of the City indicate that there was more acceptance around women holding prominent positions, even if they were ceremonial. The emphasis on highlighting Roman citizenship reflects the same trend across the empire, further indicating that provincial benefactresses sought to tie themselves to the power in Rome to legitimise their public identity.

4.2.4 Regional Comparison

The information above allows for a holistic qualitative analysis to better understand the public roles benefactresses held across the regions of Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor. If one thing is clear, it is that women in each region were able to identify the unique regional routes which would provide them social mobility through the system of benefaction. In Italy, there was a distinct pressure to highlight ties to the imperial women, and so benefactresses were drawn to positions such as flaminica or sacerdos to demonstrate their adherence to Roman values. This is seen to a lesser extent in North Africa and Asia Minor, where it is clear that the imperial draw exists, but there are other priorities for donors as well. Benefactresses in North Africa were interestingly highlighted as *patronae*, where they were seen as defenders of the city, a role which could be executed through advocating for their locality in elite circles. As the province of North Africa was built on military expansion, this defensive role seems appropriate as well as distinctive when compared to Italy and Asia Minor. Rituals and traditions in Asia Minor differed from those in the western empire, which was to be expected with the significance of Hellenistic history in the region. This was reflected in the variety of public roles available to benefactresses in Asia Minor, though there is also evidence that these women were accepting of Roman ideals as well, which is made clear through multiple inscriptions mentioning Roman citizenship.

What can be understood from these roles is that benefactresses were actively involved in their public settings, and utilised the platform provided by benefaction to highlight their personal values, their ties to the imperial family, and their place within the community. The roles were not necessarily consistent across the regions examined, but the ability to negotiate a role appropriate for the given setting indicates an awareness of local trends and traditions.

4.3 The Rise and Impact of the Imperial Cult on Benefactresses

4.3.1 Introduction

While this corpus does not focus on the imperial cult, and the leaders who used it resourcefully, it would be ignorant to assume that this would indicate that the cult does not play an important role throughout the scope of this research. The imperial cult was a source for women's access to social roles and religious positions, and also inspired women to enhance their lives outside of the home after they watched women like Livia and Octavia do so. Many benefactresses saw the perks of linking themselves to the imperial family and cult with their donations, and benefited appropriately from their honorific donations. As the cult was less restrictive outside of Rome, this provided opportunities for towns in the provinces to attract the attention of the imperial family, and inspired creativity for local benefactors in how they were going to approach this opportunity. Some of the most monumental structures from this corpus were built in order to honour the imperial cult, often alongside deities or historical figures, and researchers use these to understand the complexities of the relationship between those in the Roman centre of power and those further away. This section intends to create an understanding of how benefactresses used the imperial cult to increase their social mobility, power, and belonging. The tactics employed by benefactresses often varied between the regions being examined, but there are areas of similarities as well. Using the motif of the imperial cult, we are able to better grasp how benefactresses were interacting with their communities and the wider empire.

4.3.2 Women and the Imperial Cult in Roman Italy

4.3.2.1 The Imperial Cult and Its Integration in Rome and Italy

In order to understand the full impact of the imperial cult, qualitative analysis is applied to the early stages and spread of this cult. The cult itself began following the death of Julius Caesar (44 BC), though technically he had been granted divine honours two years earlier following the Battle of Thapsus (Gradel 2004, 61). A temple was constructed, and donated in Caesar's name, providing a holy space for his new followers (Gradel 2004, 55, 72). This deification

launched the imperial cult, which would go on to be used by imperial leaders to inspire, and preach to, Roman citizens for centuries to come.

Augustus, as the leader following Caesar, was put into a position where he would decide what the rules within the imperial cult were, and he quickly denounced any deification of emperors who were still alive. His decree on this topic was obeyed within the city of Rome, but in the provinces, Augustus allowed for temples in his honour as long as the goddess Roma was honoured as well (Gradel 2004, 75, 87). Perhaps this is due to his assured power within the city of Rome, and a desire for that same allegiance in the provinces. By Augustus' death in 14 AD, the imperial cult had risen to be the most prominent cult in the Roman regions outside of Italy, and in some regions of Italy as well (Burton 1912, 83).

As Augustus encouraged Romans to honour the imperial cult, his wife Livia took on a major role of endorsing this cult as well. She would actively honour her husband as emperor, commission buildings for the imperial cult, and act outside of the typical constraints placed upon women, as her freedoms were bountiful in comparison to the average female citizen (Kleiner 1996, 29-30). When the *ius trium liberorum* was introduced in 18 BC, and women gained control over their personal finances, they sought to find a use for their funds which would provide them with social power. The clear path to follow was Livia's, which led to increased participation in the imperial cult by the newly established benefactresses in the empire (Gardner 1986, 32). The expansion of and reception to priestesses of the imperial cult, as well as their direct association with benefaction, will be explored in the following sections.

Figure 4.6. Left: Depiction of Fulvia as Victory (Nike), c. 41 - 40 BC. Right: Athena standing left holding shield and spear. Circa 41–40 B.C. RPC I 3139; SNG Copenhagen. (Source: *Research Coins: The Coin Shop*)

4.3.2.2 Women's Involvement

Imperial Women's Involvement

The first instance where a woman was honoured by the imperial cult occurred when a town in Phrygia renamed itself to Fulvia (the wife of Antony) in the first century BC and honoured her with a coin where she was depicted as the goddess Victory (Fig. 4.6) (Grether 1946, 223). Frequent honours were bestowed upon Livia in the following century, as the cult developed and became more popular.

While Livia played a large role in honouring her husband in his role of emperor during his life, following his death she became the 'head of the cult of the deified Augustus' (Grether 1946, 222; Jordan 1881, 433). She became Julia Augusta following the death of Augustus, as his will decreed she would join the Julian family with the name Augusta, giving her access to ample power (Grether 1946, 233-234). While there was no cult honouring Julia Augusta in Rome during her lifetime, there is significant evidence of the existence of priestesses of Julia Augusta outside of the capital (Grether 1946, 238-239). Whether they honoured Julia Augusta herself, or the *genius* of the family is indeterminable, though there is some strong evidence that they were honouring the empress mother (Grether 1946, 239). There are several references to Julia Augusta being depicted as varying goddesses throughout the empire (Grether 1946).

Upon Livia's death, her son Tiberius forbade the deification of his mother, saying that this is what she wanted (though this was highly debated and doubted by those present) (Grether 1946, 245). It was not until 12 years later, under Claudius's reign, that Livia gained divine status (Grether 1946, 246). Almost immediately, the cult of the *Diva* was established, and evidence of a priestess of *Diva Augusta* was found dated to within a year of Livia's deification (Grether 1946, 249). Priestesses of the *Diva Augusta* were found within inscriptions from numerous cities, and they indicated that the office was only held by women (Grether 1946, 249-250).

Modern studies conclude that 16 women of the imperial family were deified by the end of the Roman Empire (McIntyre 2016, 93; Flory 1995). This list extends beyond the wives and daughters of the emperor to more extended family members such as nieces, sisters, and aunts (McIntyre 2016, 93). They would have been honoured singularly or as a group, depending on the preferences of the local cults, demonstrating the intention of the imperial family to be celebrated as a whole, not just as individual members (McIntyre 2016, 93). As time went on, the imperial family members would even link themselves to previously deified

ancestors in order to gain additional notoriety and solidify their later claim to divinity (McIntyre 2016, 94).

Non-Imperial Women and the Imperial Cult in Italy

This new cult, specifically created for women to honour a notable imperial woman, opened the doors for new benefactresses to link themselves to the imperial family while also contributing to their local cities. As the position of priestess of the imperial cult was unpaid and often required generously sized donations to the city, it typically would be decreed to the most elite women in a region. The women of the imperial cult would have been honoured by their followers giving various offerings, either in thanks, to honour them, or to ask them for something (McIntyre 2016, 95). When honouring the divine imperial women as a collective, a temple or festival may have been donated (McIntyre 2016, 95).

There is a smaller number of benefactresses active in Italy in this dataset who honoured the imperial cult with either their inscriptions, public role, or donations, in comparison to North Africa and Asia Minor. This is because Roman citizens in Rome, and often in other parts of Italy, were not allowed to honour a deified emperor or empress until after their deaths, while in the distant provinces the rules were more relaxed. There were likely some benefactors who honoured members of the imperial cult before their deaths, but it certainly was less common, and potentially was seen as inappropriate. Additionally, since the period of Augustus, benefaction was not allowed in Rome except by imperial family members, which would be another reason for fewer examples of imperial cult worship in Italy (Hemelrijk 2015, 70).

When examining what this system meant to the women in Roman Italy, there are a few points to make clear. As the imperial cult stemmed from the power of the imperial family in Rome, there would have been much stronger feelings regarding the imperial cult, as well as adherence to prescribed cult behaviours. This can be seen with the way that strict rules were established within the city regarding honouring members of the imperial family before their death, as well as by the rule that only imperial members were allowed to participate in benefaction. While women in the region were geographically much closer to the imperial family and the connected imperial cult, they were quite limited in their abilities to use the imperial cult as a tool when compared to benefactresses in the provinces.

4.3.3 Women and the Imperial Cult in Roman North Africa

4.3.3.1 The Imperial Cult and Its Integration in North Africa

The earliest indications of the imperial cult in North Africa appear early in the first century AD, in Leptis Magna and in Avitina, near Carthage (Rives 2001, 425). Since the empire was relatively new at this time, the imperial cult would have been similarly novel, and its extension into the North African provinces indicates that the cult was quickly to expand and become influential (Rives 2001, 426; Ladjimi Sebaï 1990). As the imperial cult was primarily a political instrument, used to unite the provinces with Rome, the people in North Africa were apt to prove themselves through associating themselves with it appropriately (Fishwick 1964, 348, 353). Since the early examples of inscriptions honouring the imperial cult in North Africa mirror those in Italy, Rives logically concludes that these priests of the cult likely came from Italy and brought the cult traditions with them to the North African provinces (Rives 2001, 426).

Rives suggests that some North Africans may not have desired to fully embrace the cult as their own, but they did seek to participate and reap the benefits (Rives 2001, 432; Poinssot 1958, 65-66). This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that native North Africans retained their Punic office titles alongside the addition of their new Roman titles of *flamen* or *flamines* (Rives 2001, 432). In Leptis Magna, there were clear examples of integration between Punic culture and the Roman imperial cult in the city forum, where temples of the imperial cult and patron Punic deity Shadrapa were built side by side (Rives 2001, 433; Di Vita 1968; Fishwick 1964, 348). This demonstrated acceptance of the imperial cult deities on an esteemed level equal to that of the more historic Punic gods. This theme continues in bilingual inscriptions at the market in Leptis Magna and through the continuation of Punic naming conventions which were found with some Roman additions (Rives 2001, 434; Levi Della Vida and Amadazi Guzzo 1987, 48-53; *IRT* 319).

Various groups and individuals with diverse interests and competing ideologies in North Africa constructed identities through religion, and in this case the elites utilised the imperial cult for their purposes. This may have differed from the growth of the imperial cult in Italy; power would have still been a major motivator, but the reverence for the imperial family would have occurred more naturally than it would have among native North Africans. On the other hand, North African princes and kings may have sought deification for themselves in a form that mimicked the deification by the imperial cult. If so, establishing a tradition of deifying leaders in the Roman Empire would have benefited them in their mission, establishing another motivation for the integration of the imperial cult in the region. King Juba

in Mauretania exemplifies this motivation, as he was both an advocate for the assimilation of the imperial cult and was deified after his death (Rives 2001, 428-429; Tert. *Apol*. 24. 7.).

4.3.3.2 Women's Involvement and Donations

The priesthood of the imperial cult allowed women access to social power and local prestige, increasing their social mobility without the need for direct access to political positions. There were limitations in terms of access to the roles provided by the imperial cult, as women would have had to contribute a large *summa honoraria*.

The most frequently occurring title for priestesses of the imperial cult in North Africa was *flaminica perpetua*, a logical choice to complement the male equivalent, *flamen perpetuus* (McIntyre 2016, 99). The priestesses would have been elected to the role for a year, though some with the title signifier *perpetua* would likely have held the role for life as indicated (McIntyre 2016, 99). Within the role, the priestesses would have contributed to the community through building commissions, games, festivals, and funding.

Within this dataset, the *flaminicae* donated primarily in the second and third centuries AD in North Africa, and indicated a preference for donating temples. While many of these benefactresses are known from the numerous statues set up around cities of North Africa in thanks for their generosity, five *flaminicae* have associated information concretely linking them to temples in Thugga and Thuburnica in Africa Proconsularis (today's Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripolitania).

Licinia Prisca

Licinia Prisca (***NA 40***) was a benefactress in the first century AD who donated a temple *cella* and *porticus* honouring Ceres Augusta with her husband in Thugga (Bertolazzi 2016, 89). It should be highlighted that she was a freedwoman, who was granted the position of *flaminica perpetua (*a role which was usually reserved for freeborn members of the city) after donating the temple features with her husband. As a thank you, she donated a second temple in honour of Venus Concordia, from her own funds. The inscription on the architrave placed above her building entrance reveals her motivations (Bertolazzi 2016, 88).

> Inscription 1: *Cereri [A]ug(ustae) sacrum / M(arcus) Licinius M(arci) l(ibertus) [T]yrann[u]s et Licinia M(arci) l(iberta) Prisca / voto susc[ep]to pro [sa]lute M(arci) Licini Rufi patroni / cellam cum p[o]rticibu[s et] c[olumnas lapi]deas posuerunt.*
> *- CIL 8.26464 = AE 1969/70, 648*

Translation 1: *In the sanctuary of Ceres Augusta / Marcus Licinius Tyrannus, freedman of Marcus, and Licinia Prisca, freedwoman of Marcus / having taken a vow for the safety of Marcus Licinius Rufus, their patron / they erected a cella with porticoes and stone columns.*
- CIL 8.26464 = AE 1969/70, 648

Inscription 2: *[V]eneri Concordiae sacrum / [Licinia] M(arci) l(iberta) Prisca Licini Tyranni uxor flamin[ica perpetua(?)] / [templum d(e)] s(ua) p(ecunia) f(aciendum) c(uravit) idemque dedicavit.*
- AE 1969/70, 650

Translation 2: *Licinia, the freedwoman of Marcus, Prisca, the perpetual wife of the Tyrant Licinius, saw to it that a temple was built with her own money and dedicated it to the sacred temple of Venus Concordia.*
- AE 1969/70, 650

Bertolazzi shows that the cost of donations by priestesses of the imperial cult increased from the first century to the third century AD, suggesting that initial donations by these women were not equal in value to their male counterparts, but by the third century this was no longer the case (Bertolazzi 2016, 104). The occurrence of this transition throughout the first few centuries AD provides insight into the increased prestige of the role of *flaminica perpetua* in North Africa.

Figure 4.7. Remains of Julia Paula Laenatiana Temple to Minerva in Thugga. (Image by Roberto Piperno.)

Julia Paula Laenatiana

Another benefactress active in Thugga was Julia Paula Laenatiana (***NA 32***), a *flaminica perpetua* of decurial status donating in the second century AD. She is known for donating from her own funds a temple to Minerva, as is indicated in the fragmented inscriptions below. The site was spread over a considerable amount of land, the temple itself with a sizable inner area surrounded by *porticus* (Bertolazzi 2016, 93). A series of dedications was found in the nearby area, further demonstrating that the temple was a frequently used building by Thugga residents, and supporting the impact of this priestess of the imperial cult.

> *Pro s[a]lute Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) [T.] Aelii Hadr[i]ani Antonini [Aug(usti) Pii] liberorumq(ue) eius Julia Paula Laenatiana ob honorem flaminatus sui perp[etui - - -] templum Minervae solo privato [exstruxit - - - et ob dedicatione]m pago et civi[tati - - - et decu]rionibus sportulas et [universo populo] gimnasium et epulum dedit. Curatoribus Asicio Adiutore et M. Ter[entio - - -].*

> *[Pro salute Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) T. A]eli(i) Hadriani Antonini Aug(usti) Pii liberorumq(ue) eius Julia Paula Laenati[ana ob honorem flamin]atus sui perp(etui) [- - - templum Minervae solo privato extruxit - - - et ob dedicationem pago et civitati - - - et decurionibus sportulas et universo populo gimnasium et] epulum dedit. Cura[toribus Asicio Adiuto]re et M. Terentio Gell[- - -].*

- *CIL* 8.1491 = 26525 = *ILAfr* 522

For the salvation of the emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antonins Augustus Pious and his children, Julia Paula Laenatiana, for the honour of the perpetual flaminat, had the temple of Minerva built on land which belonged to her; on the day of the dedication, she offered sportules to the decurions of the pagus and city as well as bathing oil and a banquet to all the people, being curators Asicius Adiutor and Mr. Terentius Gell[-- -].

- Translated by Saint-Amans 2004

Lucilia Cale

In Thuburnica, Africa Proconsularis, Lucilia Cale (***NA 42***) donated a temple to Mercury (Fig. 4.8), the *Genius of Sesase*, and the Augustan Pantheon in the third century AD (De Marre 2002, 357). The inscription states that she was a *flaminica*, and that she paid for the temple at her own cost in the fulfillment of a vow (De Marre 2002, 357). A similar temple in Thugga was listed as costing 120,000 sesterces, so it is likely that this temple would have been a comparable cost for the benefactress.

Figure 4.8. Circular cella of Lucilia Cale's Temple of Mercury donation in Thuburnica. (Source: Barbara McManus, 2010 in Thuburbo Maius, Tunisia.)

She wished in her inscription for the wellbeing of the emperor and empress (Caracalla and Julia Domna) and for the entire divine family (Hemelrijk 2006, 110). This example is one of

the more direct instances from this region of a priestess of the imperial cult directly linking her building inscription to the prosperity of the imperial family.

When applying this information to our understanding of the interaction between benefactresses and the imperial cult in this region, a clear takeaway is that the imperial cult was widespread and culturally important in North Africa. As was mentioned in the previous section, benefactresses in North Africa did not have many public roles available to them, and it is not a coincidence that the most commonly held role was priestess of the imperial cult (*flaminica*). This one role allowed benefactresses in the region to access social mobility and legitimacy through tying themselves to a powerful cult which united the empire religiously while also spreading imperial values. The lack of a need to expand beyond this role indicates that benefactresses in North Africa were reaping enough rewards from linking themselves to the imperial cult in their donations and inscriptions that they did not need to create new roles for themselves, even when the tradition of benefaction became more popular.

4.3.4 Women and the Imperial Cult in Roman Asia Minor

4.3.4.1 The Imperial Cult and Its Integration in Asia Minor

The acceptance and embrace of the imperial cult and all that it embodied in the Roman East was a phenomenon which prompts us to consider the nuances of the acceptance of the Roman Empire in the regions outside of Italy. While there was a tradition in the Hellenistic world where leaders and their families were honoured, the acceptance of new Roman leaders and their culture was a more significant transition. Nevertheless, the Roman imperial women were frequently referenced in donations in Asia Minor (Grether 1946, 224). Not only did the residents of the Roman East begin to incorporate the imperial family members into their buildings, they also represented these elites as Greek gods and goddesses, demonstrating a blending of cultures in a visual manner. Augustus would typically be linked to the god Zeus, which led to Livia frequently being depicted as Hera or Demeter (Grether 1946, 224).

In reality, it was uncommon for a Roman emperor to visit some of the provinces, including Asia Minor, so the incorporation of the imperial family into the religion and ceremonies in the region was a development which required years of slow assimilation (Price 1984, 1). In the first century AD, there is no record of any emperor making it to any of the eastern cities where benefactors in Asia Minor were attempting to link themselves to the centre of power in Rome (Price 1984, 1). This did not mean that the imperial family did not have an impact in this century though, as associating oneself with Livia was known to act as a vehicle for

legitimacy throughout the empire (Kearsley 2005, 117). The ways in which Livia was able to portray herself as the embodiment of feminine virtues while also acting as a public benefactress was seen positively by women of Asia Minor, and inspired them to seek a similar public characterisation (Kearsley 2005, 118).

4.3.4.2 Women's Involvement

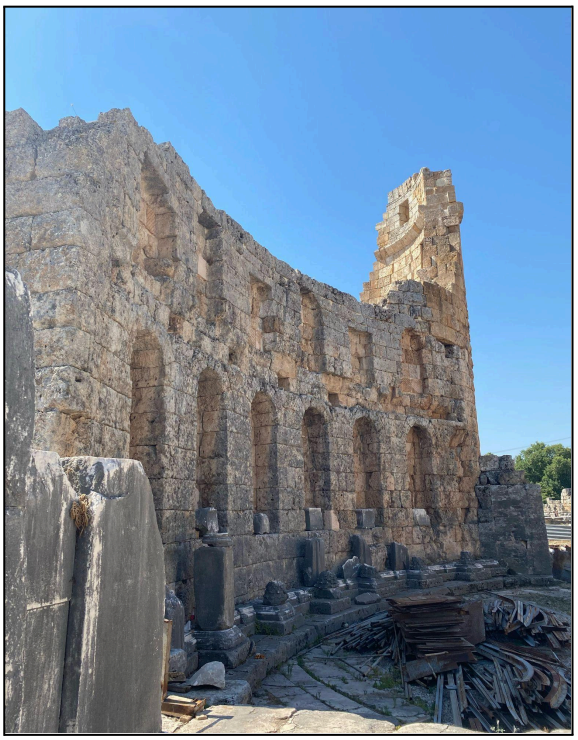
There were a few roles which typically linked leading women with the imperial cult in the Roman East: priestesses, *agonothetai*, or *archiereiai*. Some epigraphic evidence would use priestess as a general term, though other information would specifically indicate that the benefactress was linked to the imperial cult.

Many women would have been *agonothetai*, but this title was not typically used in honorary inscriptions, and thus our understanding of the numbers of *agonothetai* is likely inaccurate (Van Bremen 1996, 73). The role of *agonothetai* arose in the first century AD in the Roman East, and is understood to have been a role where women were responsible for organising and leading festivals within their local communities (Van Bremen 1996, 73). While this was a role frequently performed by priestesses of the imperial cult, they would not have highlighted it as their main responsibility, which impacts the accuracy of the numbers of *agonothetai* in the epigraphic record (Van Bremen 1996, 74). The role of *archiereia* was more likely to be mentioned by the priestesses of the imperial cult, and they also often took on responsibilities of *agonothetai*. These roles were also quite costly to their office-holders (both in terms of finances and time commitment), and so it is worth noting that they were often held jointly by a couple (Van Bremen 1996, 75).

There is an example in Thyateira where three women were definitively identified as *agonothetai*, and they were in charge of one particular festival which honoured Julia Augusta (and thus the imperial cult) (Van Bremen 1996, 74). Each of the *agonothetai* mentioned above donated statues of Julia Augusta, indicating that the deified empress would have been a prominent feature in the city (Van Bremen 1996, 74).

Within this dataset, 13 of the 79 benefactresses acting in Asia Minor were noted for their role as *archiereia*. They tended to be active in the second century AD, and donated a variety of structures in their roles as benefactresses and priestesses of the imperial cult. Three particular women dramatically highlighted the imperial family and the imperial cult within their civic donations: Plancia Magna (***AM 62***) and Aurelia Paulina of Perge (***AM 18***), and Attalis Apphion of Aphrodisias (***AM 12***), in Asia Minor.

Plancia Magna




Figures 4.9 (left) and **4.10** (right). Plancia Magna's gate complex in Perge, Türkiye. (Photos by author.)

Plancia Magna (***AM 62***) was a benefactress active in Perge in the second century AD, and throughout the gate complex she donated there were references to the imperial family, strengthening her position as priestess of the imperial cult and as an elite female leader in her region (Figs. 4.9 and 4.10). Originally from Italy, the Plancii family travelled from Latium to Perge, where they were very successful, and rose to elite social status (McManus, n.d.). This elevated status would have brought the family near to the imperial social circles, and through honouring them in Perge, she ensured that they looked upon her family and city favourably. She commissioned statues of several imperial family members including the deified Nerva, Trajan, Marciana, and Matidia as well as the living emperor and his wife (Hadrian and Sabina) and Trajan's widow Plotina (McManus, n.d.). It is notable that she highlights more female members of the imperial family than she does male members, which further illustrates the independence she had in her own life and in the decision-making process for the construction of her gate complex. The numerous statue niches within the gate complex are shown below.

It is unsurprising that Plancia Magna's monumental donation came during Hadrian's reign, as the emperor was known for his interest in expanding into the Greek East, and likely the elites in these regions were keen to capitalise on this as attention from the seat of power would have brought in increased funds and prestige (Caceres-Cerda 2018, 15). As a result of this

the priestesses of the imperial cult in Asia Minor at this time would have received more influence, which would have led them to donate more notable structures.

*Aurelia Paulina (**AM 18**)*

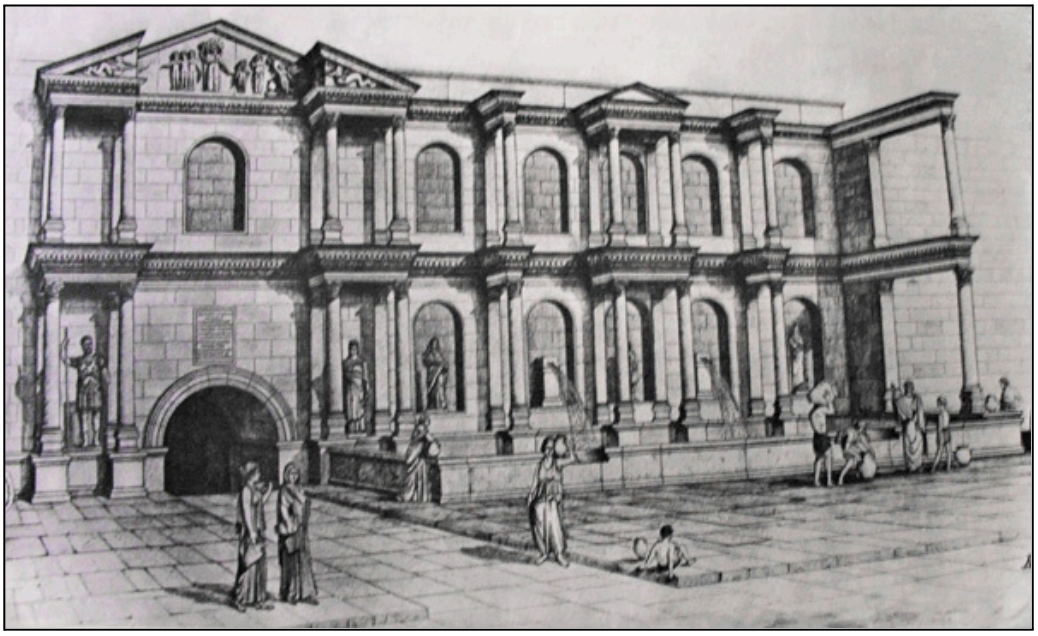


Figure 4.11. Illustration of what Aurelia Paulina's *nymphaeum* may have looked like. (Source: Barbara McManus, VRoma Project, vroma.org/vromans/bmcmanus/women_civicdonors.html)

Similar to Plancia Magna, the remaining structural elements and corresponding depictions from Aurelia Paulina's fountain complex provide ample evidence of how the imperial family and cult would have been honoured by a benefactress. Originally from Syria, Aurelia Paulina received citizen status from Emperor Commodus, which she proudly highlighted within the donation inscription (Longfellow 2011, 186). Within her monumental fountain complex donation, there was a large statue of Aurelia Paulina, dressed in Syrian garb (perhaps a nod to the shared heritage between herself and the empress Julia Domna) (Longfellow 2011, 186; Fejfer 2008, 362). Statues of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna were located at the site, and they likely would have stood alongside other notable imperial family members in the other statue niches of the *nymphaeum* (fountain complex), though remains of these statues are unidentifiable (Fig. 4.11) (Longfellow 2011, 187; Fejfer 2008, 362).

θεᾶι Ἀρτέμιδι Περγαίᾳ
ἀσύλωι· καὶ
Αὐτοκράτορσι Καίσαρσι
Λ. Σεπτιμίωι Σεουήρωι Περ-
τίνακι Σεβαστῶι · καὶ Μάρκῳ
Αὐρ. Ἀντωνίνωι Σεβ. ⟦*[καὶ]*⟧

⟦*[Π. Σεπτιμίωι Γέται Καίσαρι]*⟧
καὶ Ἰουλίᾳ Δόμνῃ · Σεβ.
μητρὶ Κάστρων
καὶ τῶι σύμπαντι οἴκωι
τῶν Σεβαστῶν
καὶ τῇι γλυκυτάτῃ πατρίδι

- *IK Perge* 196

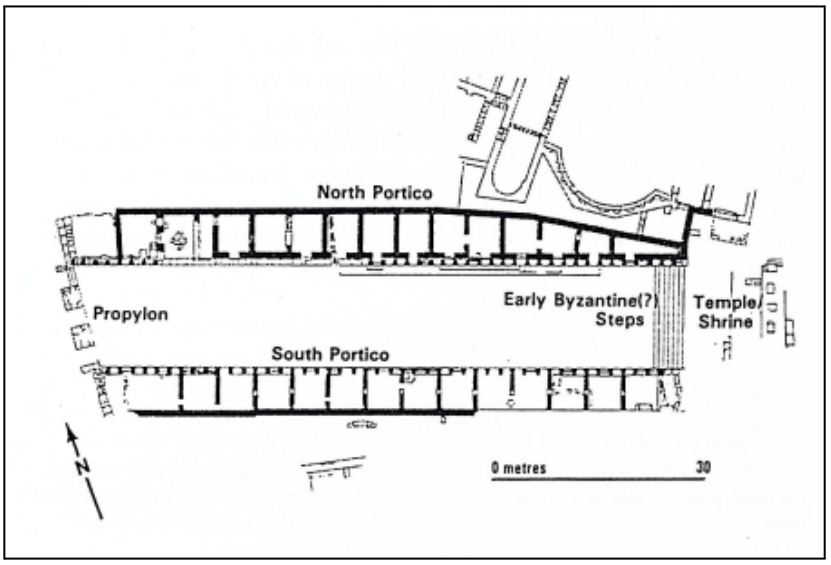
To the goddess Artemis Pergaia
and the Emperors Caesars Lucius Septimius Severus Pertinax Augustus
and Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus
and [Publius Septimius Geta Caesar]
and Julia Domna Augusta, mother of the Camps
and to the entire house of the Augusti
and to the sweetest fatherland.

- Translated by Longfellow 2011, 168

The above inscription in Greek was used to create links between the imperial family and the city of Perge. It reveals that Aurelia Paulina dedicated the fountain structure to the goddess Artemis Pergaia and the presiding imperial family, which was led by Septimius Severus, his wife Julia Domna, and their two sons (Longfellow 2011, 168). The link to the imperial family was intentionally used to elevate Aurelia Paulina's prestige in the eyes of other local and distant elites. This kind of strategic dedication was common, as it meant that the apparent selfless giving of funds for a monumental building could yield benefits for the benefactor in a number of ways.

*Attalis Apphion (**AM 12**)*

Attalis Apphion was a benefactress in the first century AD who contributed a *porticus* to the so-called Sebasteion south building in Aphrodisias, a monumental structure which was adorned with over fifty detailed reliefs (Fig. 4.12 and 4.13). While Plancia Magna (***AM 62***) and Aurelia Paulina (***AM 18***) donated their structures in their own right, Attalis Apphion funded the reconstruction of the south *porticus* with her husband Attalos and his brother Diogenes (Smith 2006, 218). As many of the reliefs survive, the relationships between these benefactors and the imperial family becomes apparent.



Figures 4.12 (top) and **4.13** (bottom)**. Figure 4.12** shows the South Portico of the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias, donated by Attalis Apphion, her husband Attalus, and his brother Diogenes (Reynolds 1981, 317). (Source: Carlos Delgado; CC-BY-SA, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Afrodisias_-_Sebastión_-_Sebasteion.jpg) **Figure 4.13** shows the plan of the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias (Source: McDonagh 1989, 363).

Detailed marble reliefs such as the ones seen on the South Portico of the Sebasteion above tell narratives of Greek mythology, while also incorporating depictions of Roman emperors and their triumphs (Figs 4.12 and 4.13). While other reliefs on the building are traditional Hellenistic scenes, the newfound incorporation of Roman emperors alongside those scenes shows that there was a desire to please the emperor and an acceptance of Roman power. In addition to Claudius, emperors Augustus, Tiberius, and Nero are shown in the reliefs, as well as the imperial women Livia and Agrippina Minor (Long 2013).

Livia's depiction within these reliefs shows her after Augustus' death in her new role as the priestess of the cult of deified Augustus (de Grazia Vanderpool 2005, 104; Winkes 1995, 37).

The attention to her role as priestess shows a direct link between the benefactors and the imperial cult. Agrippina is depicted as either the goddess Ceres or Abundance as well, again linking the imperial cult, imperial women, and religion within the city of Aphrodisias (Long 2013, 89). While it is impossible to know which features of the south building *porticus* Attalis Apphion contributed to, one could apply the knowledge gained from analysis of the benefactresses of Perge and conclude that it is possible that she may have directed the inclusion of the scenes of imperial women in the hope that it would garner her favour with the imperial family.

The examination of benefactresses' engagement with the imperial cult in Asia Minor is complex, and reveals unique patterns regarding regional religious culture and allegiance to historical norms. Through examining the actions of benefactresses in this region, it becomes clear that while the imperial cult was integrated into the daily life of people in Asia Minor, there also was an adherence to honouring historic culture. Attalis Apphion combined figures from Greek mythology alongside Roman emperors and highlighted Livia and Agrippina as ties between her donation and the imperial cult. Aurelia Paulina’s dedication of her fountain complex to the imperial family, along with her depiction linking her to Julia Domna, indiscreetly emphasises the continued application of imperial characteristics to enhance a benefactress’s social prestige. While in other regions, the references to the imperial family and imperial cult are more formulaic or subtle, the actions of benefactresses in Asia Minor were more direct and likely led to more clear associations with the significant cult.

4.3.5 Conclusion

The qualitative analysis of women’s ties to the imperial cult in Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor determines that the key difference is that in the west the imperial cult was a new phenomenon while in the east it was much more a continuation of earlier traditions from the Hellenistic period. Each region integrated the imperial cult differently, though the connotations of associating oneself with the cult were similar across the empire. While benefactresses in North Africa did not have a wide variety of ways to tie themselves to the imperial cult, the limited opportunities may have made the link between the people in the region and the imperial family stronger. On the other hand, while there were a number of religious associations to be made in Asia Minor, the cultural and religious history in the region meant that a shift to include the imperial cult was a notable modification and positioned benefactresses who integrated the customs successfully as mediators in a changing empire.

This cult provided both access to opportunities, as well created restrictive value systems which benefactresses had to navigate. While the imperial women championed a commitment to the home and to family which had to be emulated in some form by those dedicated to the imperial cult, they also were some of the first women to donate monumental structures in Rome. As the empresses were careful to communicate the appropriate virtues with their actions, priestesses of the imperial cult similarly were cautious when honouring the imperial family and cult. These intentional exchanges of traditions and polite references to the imperial cult became a new language which was carefully applied to increase prestige for benefactors and their local communities.

Not only were the individual benefactresses mediators between local cultures and the larger empire, but the entire framework that the imperial cult created served as a bridge as well. The imperial cult provided benefactors across the empire with a shared platform for communicating an acceptance of Roman value while contributing to local infrastructure. The cult formed a new community, which developed into a distinctly Roman experience, unifying participants while also creating a setting for individual expressions of loyalty, identity, and social mobility.

4.4 Gods and Goddesses Revered by Roman Benefactresses

As much of the Findings and Discussion Chapters rely on an established understanding of relevant gods and goddesses, and their relationship within communities and the wider empire, a contextualisation of these key figures is useful. This section will interpret how benefactresses' choices to honour particular religious figures reveal trends such as gendered religion, local identity, and principal values, as well as how these references were able to act as a channel for communication. While there will be a brief description of the deity being examined, this will be followed by a qualitative analysis of what the reference to the god or goddess may have indicated for the benefactress in question.

Chronologically, among early benefactresses, only two goddesses featured in more than one inscription in the pre-first century AD donations. The two deities which are repeated are Bona Dea and Venus. Importantly, these figures are both female gods, and even more fascinating, they are deities who gave power to women through their religious roles, providing an initial insight into the importance of female networks and symbolism accessed through religion (Hänninen 2019, 65-71).

4.4.1 Venus (in Greek depictions - Aphrodite)

4.4.1.1 Context

Salathe explores Venus' depictions from both a Greek and Roman perspective, stating that the goddess' link to the imperial family as well as her embodiment of the history of the Roman Empire elevated the goddess to the highest tier of importance for Romans, especially women (Salathe 1997, 8). While the Roman version of the goddess would have integrated influences from various other iterations of this deity, Venus was equally her own entity and not the same goddess as the Greek Aphrodite (Salathe 1997, 8).

In the legend of Troy, the goddess Aphrodite (and the associated Venus) was a key player, causing the infamous battle between Paris and Menelaos (Salathe 1997, 9). Aphrodite's son Aeneas left the battle to establish the Roman race, and this is where the transformation from Aphrodite to Venus often occurs in Greek myths…but regardless of the version of the goddess, the associated son becomes the founder of the Roman race in the region of Lavinium (Salathe 1997, 10). According to the story, a cult temple for Venus was set up by Aeneas and this began the Roman cult of the goddess (Salathe 1997, 10; Verg. *Aen*. 5.759-760, 5.485-518). A temple was found in the city referring to Venus Frutis from as early as the sixth century BC, cementing the early influence of the Roman goddess (Salathe 1997, 10). Venus has been identified on Roman coins from the second century BC where she was depicted driving a chariot, highlighting her contribution to the Battle of Troy (Fig. 4.14) (Salathe 1997, 12).

Figure 4.14. Silver denarius. Obverse: bust of Venus with diadem and veil. Reverse: Venus as charioteer holding goad and reins. Minted in Rome, 82 B.C. The British Museum. (Source: The British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Asset number 628658001)

Interestingly, according to Varro (116–27 BC), there was no worship of Venus in the early days of the city of Rome, though the information above and the inclusion of benefactresses within this research linked with Venus in the late first century BC indicates otherwise (Kinsey and Bowman 2012, 286).

4.4.1.2 Draw for Women and Cult Participation

There are many reasons why women would want to link themselves to Venus. Both Aphrodite and Venus were always symbolic of beauty and love (Salathe 1997, 26). The feminine characteristics and virtues would have made her an accepted and appropriate goddess to worship, and the widespread nature of the cult would have tied priestesses to a network of other elite women and benefactresses. Roman Venus was also linked to modesty, which contrasts some of her connections with sexuality while opening her cult up to another group of women (Salathe 1997, 33). The connotation of modesty came from the ritual baths given in the cult of Venus Verticordia, where women also bathed themselves privately, hidden by the symbolic myrtle leaves (Salathe 1997, 33). This characteristic of the goddess would have drawn women to seek to emulate her or worship her as it would link them to the virtues associated with modesty as well.

Another attraction for women would have been the role of Venus as the tutelary deity of a town (for example, Pompeii and Urso), so public priestesses of the goddess would have also been able to link themselves both to the city and its people, likely garnering favour and recognition in the region (Hemelrijk 2015, 54; Bolder-Boos 2014, 288).

Nationally, Venus was seen as a goddess who was essential to the imperial family, as she was linked to Aeneas, the forefather of Rome (Brčić 2018, 385). The imperial women were closely tied to Venus, so much so that they frequently were depicted as the goddess in statues and on coins (Brčić 2018, 386). With this link, the cult of Venus benefited from increased financial support and general widespread promotion (Brčić 2018, 385). By associating with the goddess Venus, women would have been able to honour the imperial family, show their loyalty to Rome, and gain imperial favour for their cities.

Figure 4.15. Birth of Aphrodite depiction on the Ludovisi Throne (460-450 BC). Thasian marble relief. From Locri, southern Italy. Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps, Rome. Inv. 85702. Discovered in 1887 in the former Villa Ludovisi grounds; acquired by Italy in 1894. Has been associated with the Ionic temple of Aphrodite at Marasà near Locri; authenticity debated due to the unusual large-scale semi-nude female representation. (Source: Mark Cartwright, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, https://www.worldhistory.org/image/2194/the-birth-of-aphrodite/)

A final draw for Roman women would have been that the cult of Venus was not discriminatory, and was accessible to women of varying social statuses and positions in society. A relief (the Ludovisi triptych) of the fifth century BC found in Rome depicts Venus being birthed from the water, and also features what is interpreted as a priestess and *hetaira* (prostitute) (Fig. 4.15) (Salathe 1997, 30). This image reflected the older formats of the cult where ritual prostitution was integrated into the cult practices, and where prostitutes were an integral part of the cult, which continued in Greece and Italy (De Marre 2002, 279-280; Salathe 1997, 30). The only position that was reserved for the most elite women was that of the *sacerdos publicae*, otherwise the cult was open to those dedicated to the goddess (Hemelrijk 2015, 59).

In terms of cult participation, priestesses of Venus were primarily found within Italy, though there were variations of the cult and corresponding leadership positions identified throughout the empire (Hemelrijk 2015, 59). This is reflected in earlier literature and also confirmed within this research, where all but one of the honorific mentions of Venus came from Italy, and the outlier derived from North Africa (in Thugga) (***NA 40***). There are four mentions of Aphrodite as well, all in Asia Minor. Most iterations of the cult would have seen priestesses at

the helm, but there were instances of male priests allowed in North Africa (Hemelrijk 2015, 59; Cadotte 2007, 239-244, 251-252).

4.4.2 Bona Dea

4.4.2.1 Context

Bona Dea was a goddess associated with chastity and fertility. Rites to worship her allowed women to engage in drinking wine and to perform a blood sacrifice, in which they were otherwise banned from participating (Hallvig 2016, 20-22). Bona Dea was so valuable to women that men were forbidden from knowing her true name, thus restricting male authors from identifying a direct connection between Bona Dea and other named goddesses, though it has been suggested that she could have been linked to Maia, Ops, Fauna, Fatua, Medea or Juno (Hallvig 2016, 9).

Male authors provided a variety of opinions on the cult of Bona Dea, some positive, others neutral, and Juvenal is noted for his negative opinion of the cult (Hallvig 2016, 8; Juv. *Sat. 2.* 6.314–345; Juv. *Sat. 3.9.*115–117). Cicero described the cult as being an essential part of the religious landscape in ancient Rome, praising its traditional values as the cult had been functioning as part of Roman society for centuries (Diluzio 2016, 213; Hallvig 2016, 8; Cic. *Har. Resp*. 17.37). Juvenal's beliefs around the cult were known to be strongly against the exclusive practices, and he even went as far as to describe the behaviour of the cult as being clandestine, which leads to considerations regarding the male view of a cult which was off limits to them (Hallvig 2016, 8; Juv. *Sat.* 2.6.314–345). These beliefs likely come from the fact that women were allowed to drink wine during festivals of Bona Dea, whereas in most other circumstances, women could be severely punished by their fathers or husbands for consuming it (Hallvig 2016, 20; Versnel 1993, 164–167). This is supposedly due to the possibility of wine encouraging women to make unchaste decisions, and potentially adulterous choices, and thus banning the liquid for women was seen as the only option (Hallvig 2016, 21; Val. Max. 2.1.5.).

The cult of Bona Dea existed before the establishment of Rome, and thus carried power in being historically relevant to Roman society (Hallvig 2016, 9). With this knowledge, research can evaluate the impact and importance of precedence in understanding women's roles and access to social mobility. Is it possible that if this cult was established later on in Roman history, it would have been met with greater resistance? Is it because the cult of Bona Dea was so integrated in society that it was accepted? Perhaps the fact that the cult existed before the founding of Rome gave it an alluring secrecy and sense of mystery which made it

untouchable by later community leaders. Hallvig suggests that Roman men wanted their wives and daughters to be involved in the Bona Dea ceremonies, as the goddess represented virtue and chastity, with participation instilling these values in Roman women (Hallvig 2016, 24).

Knowing which goddess Bona Dea is compared to may allow for conclusions about why these goddesses appeared within other inscriptions throughout the empire. Hallvig explores these comparisons, mentioning Maia, Fauna, Ops, Fatua, Medea, Semele, Hecate, and Juno as options that were suggested by Roman authors (Hallvig 2016, 10; Mastrocinque 2014, 24; Macrob. 1.12.20–29). Juno is also mentioned in several inscriptions from Roman Italy, so it will be explored if her proposed relationship with Bona Dea contributed to this popularity.

4.4.2.2 Draw for Women and Cult Participation

In regards to independence and freedom, the cult of Bona Dea expresses these values in a way that no other deity could. This is because women were the only people allowed to attend the rites of Bona Dea and were the only ones who knew her true identity (Hallvig 2016, 9-13). This access to a woman-centric space, which was quite valuable based on the references to Bona Dea within inscriptions, informs researchers that women were actively seeking out spaces where they were not limited by their male peers. Matron cults existed in the Roman Empire, which meant that women were eligible to handle cult administration and management (Hallvig 2016, 19; Scheid 2002, 131–132). Examples of these matron cults include that of Bona Dea, Pudicitia, Juno Caprotina, and Fortuna Mulebris (Scheid 2002, 131–132).

The cult of Bona Dea was a community where women felt comfortable extending themselves outside of the typical social boundaries, which is evidenced by the early timeframe for a donation by a decurial woman, Octavia, in Ostia. Tate (2022) explores the inscription's phrasing, as it is one of three examples in Italy where the benefactresses put both her ancestry, *uxor* (wife), and her husband's name in the genitive format. This variation from the norm demonstrates that the cult of Bona Dea may have drawn women of varying social statuses to confidently contribute to their religious communities through innovative approaches. Another indication that the cult of Bona Dea was seen as welcoming, is the donation by four freedwomen in Aquileia (Hemelrijk 2015, 444). With the knowledge that women who had previously been slaves found it worthwhile to contribute a substantial sum to the cult of Bona Dea, researchers are able to determine that the community of this cult was likely supportive and inclusive, which inspired women (and some men) to join.

4.4.3 Isis (this name is used in both Greek and Roman inscriptions)

4.4.3.1 Context

To simplify how Isis fit into the Roman world, it is important to highlight how she was heralded for serving as a dedicated wife and mother, while also providing protection in varying ways across several regions of the empire (Heyob 1975, 1; Lesko 1999, 187). These virtues were easily implemented into Roman culture and were consistently highlighted by Roman imperial family members, as it is unsurprising that they were happy to unite the North African provinces with the central Roman cities through the inclusion of one of their most sacred deities. While there was a desire to connect Isis to Roman values, she also would have come with a mysterious and exotic background, which was attractive to Roman people (even though this would need to be monitored carefully by the imperial leaders).

Isis has been widely documented as one of the most crucial female figures in the North African region, and was found on the earliest Hellenistic and Egyptian coins, which illustrates the importance of the goddess to the eastern regions of the empire (Lesko 1999, 187). It was not the original embodiment of the Egyptian goddess Isis which spread throughout the Roman Empire though, but rather a Greek iteration of the goddess, who was integrated into cultures across the empire through the exchange of people, goods, and religious ideologies (Linda 2022, 56). While Isis was incorporated into Greek life by taking on characteristics of their religious figures, this evolution also led to a loss of some of her indigenous associations (Heyob 1975, 2-3). Regardless of her new appearance and relationships, the various versions of Isis would emulate each other when mentioned or depicted, while taking on local traditional meaning as well (Heyob 1975, 10; Linda 2022, 56).

This can particularly be seen in Roman Italy, where it is clear from finds in Pompeii that both Isis and Serapis were highly visible in the city, with Isis notably having a temple donated in her honour (Fig. 4.16) (Heyob 1975, 14; Mol 2015, 135). It has been proposed that the cult of Isis struggled to find footing in Roman Italy, but more recent research has emphasised how the inclusion of Egyptian obelisks, as well as the declaration of acceptance of the province in Augustus' *Res Gestae* is evidence of Egyptian integration in Italy (Linda 2022, 56; Petersen 2016, [no pagination]). Roman Isis was adapted not only as a Greco-Roman version of herself, but also as an equivalent of the goddess Ceres (and sometimes Fortuna and Venus), which provided a further connection between Egyptian culture and Roman religion (Linda 2022, 57). An inscription found in Pompeii refers to 'Augustan Isis' linking Isis to the imperial family and further integrating it within the city (Petersen 2016, [no pagination]). This contributes to a deeper understanding of how religion served as an intermediary for the

integration of cultures and traditions across the Roman Empire, and demonstrates how there was an acceptance of new norms which is often overlooked. While there were at times discrepancies in how Isis was represented in comparison to distinctly Roman goddesses, this could have been due to the connection with Isis not being as deeply integrated as it was with a goddess like Venus, indicating that additional exposure to expressions of 'newer' goddesses was often needed to balance their representation in Italian regions (Mol 2015, 136-140).

Figure 4.16. Bust of Isis from the Temple of Isis, Pompeii. Marble. 1st century A.D. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.
(Source: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Head of Isis, Inv. 6290)

4.4.3.2 Draw for Women and Cult Participation

Isis may have been attractive to Roman women due to her image as an ideal woman (Heyob 1975, 53). Part of the rites of the cult of Isis required followers to mimic Isis' despair when she was looking for her husband Osiris and joy when he was found. Ancient authors mocked this tradition, and these texts provide the context of thousands of women gathered at and participating in these events (Heyob 1975, 56). In addition to her display as a symbol of domestic virtue, Isis was seen as a proponent for protecting instances of love among her followers through encouraging chastity, faithfulness, and marital harmony, which often led to Isis' association with the goddess Aphrodite (Venus) (Heyob 1975, 67-69). Other themes linked to Isis include breastfeeding, fertility, and family protection (Giardina 2000, 225-227; Heyob 1975, 76-78).

When looking at participation within the cult, from city to city, there was a large discrepancy between the number of women who participated in the cult of Isis (Heyob 1975, 81-82). In major cult centres, nearly 50% of followers were women, while in other cities, there are no documented female followers of the cult in the region (Heyob 1975, 81-82). Within the cult, women would primarily hold roles as a priestess or *canephor*, a supportive role for the priest or priestess (Heyob 1975, 82). Women rose to the role of priestess in the first century AD, as the cult became more popular in Italy and generally across the empire (Heyob 1975, 90).

There seems to be difficulty ascertaining how frequently women held these upper-level positions, as ancient authors tended to highlight men in the roles rather than women (Heyob 1975, 83-84). This could suggest that there were not many women in these roles, but based on the knowledge that women could hold priesthood positions and that there was a large number of women active within the cult, it would be surprising if there were not more local elite women who took on these higher positions (Heyob 1975, 83-84). Hemelrijk leaves the cult of Isis out of her analysis, partly due to her scope as well as the priestly offices being dominated by men (Hemelrijk 2015, 45-47). While men might have dominated, the opportunities for middle-class women to engage with the cult were numerous, and through symbolism and funerary art, we can conclude that the cult was influential and fundamental to women across social groups (Fantham et al. 1994, 382).

4.4.4 Juno (in Greek depictions - Hera, and North African depictions - Caelestis)

4.4.4.1 Context

While the Roman goddess was Juno, and the Greek equivalent was Hera, there was an additional goddess linked to these two in North Africa named Caelestis who appears within this research dataset. Juno was the chief goddess of the Roman Empire and was often labeled Juno Regina due to this role. With this power, empresses sought to emulate the goddess, with Livia at the forefront of this movement (Newlands 2016, 88). Some denoted this relationship as a controversial choice, as the goddess was known for her tenuous and competitive relationship with her husband Jupiter, which would have gone against the vision of marital harmony that Livia often sought to portray (Newlands 2016, 88).

One of the most notable cult practices in the cult of Juno was the Matronalia festival, where the community would participate in honouring the goddess each year on the first of March (Dolansky 2011, 191). While earlier researchers described the ritual as a woman's or matron's festival, Dolansky (2011) emphasises the importance of the entire *domus* in the

Matronalia and underscores the ritual as a format for expressing gendered roles and social statuses. The Matronalia was given this name due to it being a day for matrons, where husbands would pray for the longevity of their marriages (Schultz 2006, 57). Juno's role as a goddess associated with childbirth was important during the Matronalia festival and allusions to rites that emphasised this link were documented by the author Ovid (*Fast. 2.429-452, 2.437-438, 2.451-452)*, who stated that men would pray to Juno for fertility and ease of delivery as well (Dolansky 2011, 194). Recent work has demonstrated that Juno's key responsibilities were linked to military and political ties, which are often overlooked due to researchers finding common fertility and related organs depicted at temple sites (Carroll 2019, 17; Schultz 2006). In addition to husbands and wives, household slaves would have been a part of the Matronalia as well, as they were supposedly greeted with a feast from their owners at the end of the day of rites (Dolansky 2011, 201). Dolansky (2011) concludes that the Matronalia festival was intended to unite the *domus* and foster deeper relationships which would lead to marital and household harmony.

4.4.4.2 Draw for Women and Cult Participation

As Juno represented the ideal wife, or at least the matron of the gods, married women were drawn to her as a symbol connecting them to these characteristics. Being a dedicated and virtuous wife in the Roman Empire carried a lot of weight in terms of social power and respect in a community. In addition to being matronly, she was often associated with fertility and ease of childbirth, other values that would have made her popular among women (Dolansky 2011, 194).

In the form of Caelestis, women from North Africa honoured the goddess as an important deity in the region, and to request aid regarding children. An example of this is seen from the benefactress Julia Gallitta in the third century AD, who shared the priesthood of Caelestis with her husband (Bertolazzi 2016, 100-103). The two were some of the only priests and priestesses in the city who were married, and thus the couple may have been drawn to highlight their concordance in marriage and asked for aid in terms of fertility or childbirth (Bertolazzi 2016, 101). Another example comes from Aquileia, Italy, where Magia Ilias (***It 58***) and Magia Vera (***It 59***) donated a temple, *porticus*, and *culina* with an associated freedman (Hemelrijk 2015, 452; *CIL* 5.781). A draw for the women may have been because it was a co-donation by two potential matrons, that Aquileia was lacking temples for Juno, or that any of the donors were active within the priesthood of Juno. It is also possible that the donors were seeking Juno's assistance in terms of marital peace, fertility, or childbirth.

Figure 4.17. Sculpture of the Capitoline Triad: Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. Discovered at the Villa of Inviolata, Montecelio, Italy, in 1992. Retrieved in 1994. Rodolfo Lanciani Archaeological Museum, Guidonia Montecelio. (Source: *Recovered Treasures,* n.d.)

Another draw to Juno could be due to her place in the Capitoline Triad, which included Juno, Jupiter, and Minerva (Fig. 4.17) (Nicolae 2011, 291-305). As the Capitoline Triad had religious and spatial ties to the imperial family (particularly due to the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus on Capitoline Hill in Rome), including them alongside one's donation would allow the benefactress to benefit from multiple associations (Thein 2014, 286-287). This draw can be seen exemplified by Julia Faustina's (***NA 36***) temple donation in Lambaesis which honoured the deities Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, and Tanans (Hemelrijk 2015, 399).

4.4.5 Minerva (in Greek depictions - Athena)

4.4.5.1 Context

The goddess Minerva, or her Greek counterpart Athena, held many roles and was worshipped for her interventions in various areas of Roman life. Particularly, she was honoured for her strength and protective qualities, her wisdom, her defense of cities, and her aid in fostering positive outcomes in the marketplace. While sometimes she was respected for her characteristics as the warrior goddess, she also would have been praised as a virtuous and chaste goddess (Lundgreen 2004, 69). She has been studied less than some goddess counterparts such as Artemis and Venus, although she frequently played a role in women's day-to-day lives (Lundgreen 2004, 69). It is notable that Minerva served as part of the Capitoline Triad alongside her parents Jupiter and Juno, which encouraged representations of her within Rome and outside of the capital to link oneself to the empire.

Figure 4.18. Gateway in Pula, Croatia donated by Salvia Postuma and adorned with depictions of Minerva. (Source: Buildings in Pula, CC BY 3.0, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pola,_arco_dei_sergi_o_porta_aurea,_15_ac._ca._04.jpg)

4.4.5.2 Draw for Women and Cult Participation

Minerva's draw for women may have come from multiple motivations, potentially due to the power gained by being associated with the cult of Minerva (Athena in Asia Minor), her role as the tutelary deity of a given city, her military associations, the donation's purpose, and due to her imperial links through the Capitoline Triad.

Benefactresses in this research have exemplified each of these potential draws, as Claudia Parmenis of Ilion (***AM 25***) donated a *porticus* in honour of Athena Ilias, which would have tied her to the powerful *koinon* of Athena Ilias (an alliance of Athena worshippers) and contributed through asking for protection of the city through her honorific inscription (Pillot 2020; Mantas 1994, 362). Salvia Postuma (***It 82***) benefited from associating with Minerva due to her vested interest in supporting her husband and son in their military pursuits, and through donating a structure associated with city protection (a monumental gateway) (Fig. 4.18) (Hemelrijk 2015, 464; *CIL* 5.50). The goddess' role as protector of cities and as the goddess of war made her the perfect choice for the benefactress who directly mentioned honouring the local military within her inscription (Hemelrijk 2015, 464).

4.4.6 Artemis (in Greek depictions - Diana)

4.4.6.1 Context

Artemis is the Greek equivalent of the Roman goddess Diana but will be discussed here as Artemis due to the majority of mentions of the goddess coming from Asia Minor. There was one instance in the dataset where an Italian benefactress honoured the goddess Diana with her donation, which will be discussed below from the Roman perspective.

Figure 4.19. Votive statue dedicated by Nikandre of Naxos to Artemis. Marble. Daedalic style, ca. 650 B.C. National Archaeological Museum, Athens. Discovered by Théophile Homolle during excavations at the sanctuary of Artemis on Delos in 1878.
(Source: National Archeological Museum at Athens, CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_of_Nikandre.jpg)

One of the earliest known dedications from a woman to a religious entity was an offering to Artemis in Delos by a woman named Nicandre in the seventh century BC (Fig. 4.19) (Fantham et. al. 1994, 36). In addition to being the first known religious dedication, the statue was the first example of a monumental structure to be made of stone material (Fantham et. al. 1994, 36). Artemis was said to have been born on the island of Delos, which led to the region being a centre for cult worship of the goddess (Fantham et. al. 1994, 36). The fact that worship of Artemis continued into at least the third century AD confirms that she was a highly revered goddess who played an integral role within many Roman cities.

4.4.6.2 Draw for Women and Cult Participation

When discussing Artemis' draw for benefactresses, one has to appreciate the roles she played as a tutelary deity in cities such as Ephesos and Perge, her regional relationships, her symbolism as a religious figure, and finally her links to the imperial cult, particularly during the reign of Septimius Severus as his wife Julia Domna was worshipped in the form of Artemis and Aphrodite in Asia Minor (Aristodemou 2013, 2; Kays 2024, 479).

Figure 4.20. Depiction of Artemis and Aurelia Paulina from the *nymphaeum* of Aurelia Paulina at Perge. 2nd century A.D. Excavated between 1975 and 1977. Antalya Archaeology Museum. (Photo by author, Antalya Archaeological Museum)

No benefactress exemplifies the complexity of the draws of Artemis more than Aurelia Paulina, a priestess active in Perge, Asia Minor, in the second century AD, who honoured Artemis with her *nymphaeum* donation (Fig. 4.20) (McManus n.d). Aurelia Paulina moved to the city later in her life, and saw the opportunity to link herself to the cult of Artemis to establish herself within the city (McManus, n.d.). Artemis was the tutelary deity of the city of Perge, and thus Aurelia Paulina (and the earlier Pergaian benefactress Plancia Magna) both served as priestesses of the imperial cult and the cult of Artemis Pergaia, leading to their inspiration to honour her with monumental structures (Longfellow 2011, 186). The power of deities as tutelary figures is demonstrated here, as Artemis Pergaia was notable across the city of Perge, and provided a platform for priestesses to become engaged with public giving within their religious roles.

4.4.7 Jupiter (in Greek depictions - Zeus)

While the previous deities discussed in this section have been goddesses, there were several mentions within this corpus of a particular god as well, Jupiter (the Roman equivalent of Greek Zeus). While it is clear that women showed a preference for honouring, worshipping, and depicting female deities, gods were cleverly integrated into women's honorary depictions to enhance their social roles and achieve their goals as well.

4.4.7.1 Context

In understanding women's link to Jupiter, one should note the god's association with highly revered Roman goddesses. Jupiter (Zeus) was the husband of Juno (Hera), and father to Minerva (Athena), Venus (Aphrodite), and Diana (Artemis) (along with many other gods and goddesses). With this information in mind, it is clear that Jupiter was associated with many of the goddesses who were mentioned frequently by Roman women.

Other historic associations with Jupiter include Alexander the Great's venture to the Oracle of Zeus Ammon in modern-day Libya (Salathe 1997, 330). Following this visit, he asserted that he was declared as a son of the god Zeus (Jupiter) by the Oracle, and initiated the tradition of the ruler cult, where leaders would assume divine roles through their associations with the gods (Salathe 1997, 330). If Romans were to believe that their leaders were linked to gods, then Jupiter (Zeus) was a powerful figure for emperors to claim an association with, and thus honouring the figure was inadvertently honouring the emperor, his claim to power, and solidifying his influence within a city or region. As Jupiter was the leader of the gods, when emperors sought power through divinity, they would frequently have found a way to declare a connection to him.

4.4.7.2 Draw for Women and Cult Participation

As mentioned, Jupiter was one of the three deities of the Capitoline Triad, and was frequently found honoured alongside the other two members - Juno and Minerva (Fig. 4.17). As Juno and Minerva were deities who were particularly important to benefactresses, it becomes clear that part of Jupiter's draw for women was his association with these goddesses. These coupled donations can be seen exemplified by the benefactresses Julia Victoria (***NA 39***), Julia Faustina (***NA 36***), and Postimia Lucilla Postimiana (***NA 50***) who all honoured either Jupiter and Juno or Jupiter and Minerva with their donations.

Women may have sought to utilise Jupiter and Juno as a pair to symbolise marital happiness, or in order to request a blessing or express gratitude in terms of fertility. Another draw for women to highlight Jupiter is due to his role as leader of the gods, as emperors

would have wanted to emulate this kind of power and would have appreciated being linked to this deity.

4.4.8 Infrequently Mentioned Deities

There are a few deities who were not prominently represented in the donations in this research dataset, but still need to be defined to grasp a fuller understanding of the motivations and intentions of these benefactresses. These include Mercury, Saturnus and Ops, Ceres, Magna Mater, and Frugifer. Women who co-donated with men were more likely to highlight the figures of Mercury as he represented wealth and was frequently mentioned by male benefactors (De Marre 2002, 22). On the other hand, Saturnus and Ops were frequently mentioned in tandem, as they were described as the god of heaven and goddess of earth, a symbol for marital concordance (Miano 2015, 4). Ceres is mentioned twice in the first century AD in North Africa, and is similarly related to the goddess Ops, as they potentially were deities who symbolised Mother Earth in a much older cult (Miano 2015, 32; Le Bonniec 1958, 193-195).

Magna Mater appears in both Italy and North Africa and was associated with the goddess Cybele in 204 BC (Spickermann 2013, 148; Livy 29.14.5–14; Ov. *Fast*. 4.258). The cult was tied to the imperial cult through sacrifices and honours, adding to the draw for women who wanted to elevate their status through imperial connections (Spickermann 2013, 154).

Finally, Frugifer has been described as either a characteristic of the gods Saturn and Pluto, or potentially has a minor deity status (Dana and Deac 2020, 117). Originally from North African religion, likely Berber, Frugifer tied more notable deities to agriculture and fertility, and was often associated with 'fruit bearing' (Dana and Deac 2020, 117-118; Mastino 2018, 7).

4.4.9 Conclusion

Applying qualitative analysis to understanding benefactresses' choices to honour particular deities has provided background evidence which will aid in understanding the Findings and Discussion Chapters, while also providing an appreciation of the levels of community access women had through religious roles. While some women may have been encouraged to link themselves to the imperial cult, others found a relationship with deities or cults which best fit their personal interest, either at the time or for the long term. Benefactresses sought to associate with deities due to their virtuous characteristics, the power they represented in the wider Roman world, their fabled histories, and their cult practices. Regardless of what drew them to honour a religious figure with their donations, these women shared communities and networks which were powerful enough to inspire giving large sums to their cities.

4.5 Self-Presentation of Benefactresses

4.5.1 Introduction

Extensive work has been done on understanding the public presentation of Roman women, which will be reviewed and discussed here. This qualitative research explores motivation of benefactresses in the empire, and self-presentation is an excellent avenue to create a more accurate understanding of incentive and drive for these women.

This contextualisation will not focus on the imperial women as they do not fit within the scope of this research, though their influence on elite benefactresses will be discussed. The trends and evolution of the Roman benefactress and her presentation in society would not exist as they did without the impact of the imperial women, and it would be remiss to imply that linking oneself to the imperial elite was not a key goal for the women discussed here.

4.5.2 Being Mindful of Association

Association played a major role in benefaction decisions, and similarly in deciding where one's statue should be placed. This suggests that the association with a particular area of town or adjacent statue depiction could lead to honour and prestige, or, the very opposite.

A safe option for benefactors and benefactresses was to place themselves among family members in statue donations, as this would convey a commitment to the family, home, and tradition. Plancia Magna, benefactress of Perge in Asia Minor (***AM 62***), took advantage of architectural niches in her monumental gate complex to highlight her own family line, which originated from central Italy before immigration to Perge, and placed them alongside the imperial family to force an association between the two families for anyone passing through the structure (Boatwright 1991, 251). A large family was a valued virtue within the Roman Empire, and demonstrating that her family had an extended and notable history within Perge and the empire was an intentionally powerful move by Plancia Magna (Boatwright 1991, 252-255). Aurelia Paulina, who came after Plancia Magna in the city of Perge, placed her own building donation (a *nymphaeum*) spatially near to the gate complex, to further form connections with the powerful woman who came before her as well as with the imperial family (Kays 2024, 472; Longfellow 2012, 133). Aurelia Paulina imitated the imperial family statue associations within her structure, paying homage to Plancia Magna's earlier honorific choices and adding her family links as well (Aristodemou 2013). This pattern reveals that buildings which would have had locations for displaying statues to create visual connections to the reigning leaders (such as theatres, *porticus*, circuses, and arenas) were an important part of the local benefaction environment. In the Roman East, the buildings which frequently

contained statue depictions included baths, gardens, sanctuaries and temples (Fejfer 2008, 60).

Another way to demonstrate association with the imperial family was through mimicking their building donations. Male benefactors would frequently recreate architectural choices made by the reigning emperor, and once they were publicly involved in euergetism, benefactresses would do the same through mirroring choices made by imperial women (Sheard 2022, 33).

Eumachia, a benefactress active in Pompeii (***It 35***), donated a central building on the forum which linked itself to the imperial family through allusions to the Porticus of Livia and Forum of Augustus (Fig. 2.2) (Sheard 2022, 33-34; Longfellow 2014, 92). The architecture of Eumachia's building, references to her son in the inscription, and honours for Augustan Concord and Piety would have all created beneficial links between the benefactress and the empress Livia (Sheard 2022, 33; Longfellow 2014, 93). The porch of Eumachia's building was outfitted with sixteen statues and columns, which also reflected architecture of the Forum of Augustus (Longfellow 2014, 93). These statues likely would have displayed Eumachia's family members, alongside the imperial family, and selected deities, serving as inspiration for future benefactresses (such as Plancia Magna and Aurelia Paulina) to associate their donations with the reigning emperor and his family (Longfellow 2014, 94). A statue of Eumachia herself was found within the building, which would have added to the visual and spatial ties between her building and the imperial family, as researchers believe at least one statue of Livia along with her sons were present in the building as well (Longfellow 2014, 94; Bernstein 2007, 531; Zanker 1988, 322). The statue of Eumachia was centrally placed within the structure, where it could be seen from the main windows and strategically between two depictions of *Concordia Augusta*, again emphasising the association between the benefactress and the imperial family (Longfellow 2014, 94-95).

While Eumachia may have received a statue donation which was displayed within her building, the ability for women to be displayed publicly, especially in frequently visited locations such as the forum, was often restricted. The Roman Forum for example, was a highly masculine site; even the layout was phallic (Sheard 2022, 36-37). Aside from the depictions of the Vestal Virgins, no woman outside of the imperial family is known to have been commemorated within the forum (Boatwright 1974, 127). Sanctuaries and temples were often known to be locations where women who may not have been approved for a public-facing statue in the city, were more likely to be represented, depending on their role of priestess and the cult they led (Fejfer 2008, 61). Potentially these statues could have been

incorporated as an offering, reiterating the religious association and local representation (Fejfer 2008, 61).

Figure 4.21. Detailed relief from the *nymphaeum* of Aurelia Paulina at Perge illustrating the visual impact of figures placed at height versus eye level. Depictions include Aurelia Paulina, Apollo, Aphrodite, and Eros. 2nd century A.D. Antalya Archaeology Museum. (Photo by author.)

Trimble (2017, 347) reflects on the meaning behind statues which were displayed outside and in public places in comparison to those which were held within buildings. While today we are able to view ancient statues which are held in collections or documented in images online, the original artists would have had only the chosen location of the particular statue in mind when creating it (Duncan 2009, 12, 19-20; Trimble 2017, 348). This is obvious when statues which are placed in niches are less detailed or uncarved in the back, and perspective plays a role as well when statues which were going to be displayed at a great height were produced (Lebensztejn 1994, 118; Trimble 2017, 320). The Small Herculaneum Woman style was frequently seen in public spaces, often at a height above the walkways, which could be why this form has a slightly less dominating presence in comparison to the Large Herculaneum Woman statues (see Fig. 4.21) (Trimble 2013, 20). A statue of a woman found in Ephesos would have been a piece of the architectural landscape at the entrance to the agora, where she would have been seen by many but examined by few (Trimble 2017, 348-349). Trimble highlights the importance of repetition, as the statue would have unconsciously had an impact on the people who passed through the area frequently (Trimble 2011, 193-194; Trimble 2017, 349). Even if viewers were not able to read the inscription to know the details about the woman's status, they would have been able to compare her

depiction with others in the city and concluded she was elite based on her visual association with other honorific statues (Trimble 2017, 349). On the other hand, statues that were made for a select audience, such as those to be displayed in a building with exclusive membership, would have been created with the knowledge that the viewers would have more space, time, and focus to give to the statue depictions they were viewing (Trimble 2013, 19, 22).

4.5.3 Identity through Inscriptions

While much of this chapter looks at visual depictions of Roman benefactresses, there are textual references to these women which also aid in our understanding of their lives and how they sought to be portrayed. Examples which link achievements of women to masculine characteristics are particularly worth exploring, as are linguistic choices which put the power into the hands of the benefactress herself. Both of these situations will be explored below, which will aid in understanding the conclusions revealed in the Discussion Chapter.

4.5.3.1 Emphasis on masculinity

The emphasis of the heroine Cloelia's 'masculine qualities' were what aided her in receiving public recognition and honour. Perhaps this was the first example where a woman could receive equivalent praise if she was able to prove that she was not a 'typical feminine woman' in the eyes of the public. This evidence highlights how women throughout the empire would tie themselves to masculine roles, qualities, or positions in order to claim greater power or respect in their communities.

One example of a title which clearly demonstrates attributing a masculine role to a notable woman comes from Egypt, where a woman was deemed 'Father of the City' (De Marre 2002, 18; Sijpestein 1987, 141-142). There are a number of examples where women would be named 'Mother of the City' or 'Daughter of the City', roles which emulate their masculine equivalents, but it was highly uncommon for women to receive the masculine honour outright. Separating these women from their maternal or feminine roles can be interpreted as a change of the narrative and perspective of the public from seeing them as women in powerful roles to seeing them more generally as local leaders separate from their gender identity.

Another way women were able to be seen through a masculine lens was through intentional language which likened their accomplishments to those of their male counterparts using distinct vocabulary. When Livia's son Drusus died, there was a debate around whether she should receive state-commissioned statues rather than a family statue which celebrated her matronly virtues (Flory 1993, 300). State statues had previously been reserved for men who

had done some heroic deed, and thus the state needed to shape Livia's role to fit the mould (Flory 1993, 300). Ancient authors quickly took on this challenge, and Pliny described Livia's motherhood and achievements as her contribution to the state (Flory 1993, 300). Cicero reinforces this argument by saying that Livia had done 'much good' for the state through her sons Drusus and Tiberius (Flory 1993, 300). Through these means, motherhood and the expression of grief over the loss of a child, became something that the state could honour in the same manner that it would honour a political or militaristic leader. This depiction is seen again in a eulogy to a woman named Cornelia by the Roman writer Propertius, where he describes her successful motherhood to three children as her 'deeds' and likens her role as a mother to accomplishments by men in war (Flory 1993, 300; Prop. 4.11).

4.5.3.2 Refocusing the Epigraphic Message

We would not be able to scrutinise the motivations and outcomes of public benefaction without the phenomenon described as the epigraphic habit (MacMullen 1982, 233). The Romans, as did the Greeks, placed a significant power in the idea of memory and being memorialised for future generations, which is why they documented their lives meticulously, though with a bit of intentional editing (MacMullen 1982, 233-234). The epigraphic habit allowed people to arrange their social, cultural, and political identities in order to make a statement or commemorate a loved one (Hedrick 1999, 389, 395, 408; Meyer 1990, 83, 88). There were endless opportunities for benefactors to use this tradition to influence their local and wider-reaching communities (Caceres-Cerda 2018, 2; Hemelrijk 2006, 88; Meyer 1990, 91).

When examining the regions of Roman Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor, through both qualitative and quantitative means, several patterns occur which allow us to better understand how the epigraphic habit was applied by female donors. As Italy was the initial region where female benefaction became widespread, the earlier timeline and influence of the imperial men and women meant that the phrasing was often more conservative and women were frequently placed in a subservient role to their corresponding male family members (Hemelrijk 2013, 77; Hemelrijk 2015, 1, 20-24; Plin. *Ep*. 1.14.4-6; Sen. *Helv*. 17.3). Italian benefactresses may not have typically expanded beyond these traditional inscriptions, but their epigraphy does provide a baseline for comparison with North Africa and Asia Minor, which reached the peak of female benefaction in the following centuries (Hemelrijk 2015, 20). Interestingly, examples of North African donation epigraphy closely adhere to the traditional phrasing set by Italian benefactresses in the first century AD (Meyer 1990, 74, 91). As there was a shift to 'Roman life' in the region, there was a gradual inclusion of the Roman-style epigraphic habit and other traditional norms, though sometimes epigraphs were

written in the native Punic or Libyan (Meyer 1990, 77-79, 86). While benefactresses in Italy and North Africa were more similar in application of the epigraphic habit, the benefactresses in Asia Minor employed a notable flexibility within their donation and commemoration inscriptions, applying multiple languages to their structures, adjusting formulas to emphasise independence, and highlighting religious figures in unique ways from the western regions (Meyer 1990, 75, 92-93).

Regional differences regarding the epigraphic habit decide what is important to stress in inscriptions, how identity is reflected through epigraphy, and where women are placed in their communities based on phrasing and commemoration practices, while emphasising deviations from this norm to highlight unique and powerful benefaction choices (MacMullen 1982, 238, 246). This is briefly explored below through the case of Plancia Magna.

When scrutinising the intricacies of donations and their corresponding inscriptions, a shift in grammatical structure is obvious and warrants deeper exploration. In the case of Plancia Magna (***AM 62***), not only did she orchestrate the monumental gate complex, configure the included statues of her own relatives, the imperial family, and local deities, but she also reworked the traditional format of inscriptions to further emphasise her independent power and influence throughout the project (see inscriptions below).

[κτίστη]ς
[M.] Πλάνκιος Ούδρος
[πα]τήρ Πλανκίας Μάγνης
Περγαίος
- *IK Perge* 108

[The founder], M. Plancius Varus, father of Plancia Magna, from Perge.
- *IK Perge* 108, *translated by author*

κτίστης
Γ. Πλάνκιος Ούδρος
άδελφός Πλανκίας Μάγνης
Περγαίος
- *IK Perge* 109

The founder, C. Plancius Varus, brother of Plancia Magna, from Perge.
- *IK Perge* 109, *translated by author*

In inscriptions that come from the gate complex, Plancia Magna is clearly identified as the donor, and mention of relationships with her husband and son are absent (Boatwright 1991, 255). As Plancia and Iulius Cornutus married in approximately 100-110 AD, it seems strange that his name would be missing from the structure, even if he had died before the construction of the gateway (Boatwright 1991, 255). Even more puzzling is the lack of mention of her son, Iulius Plancius Cornutus Tertullus, who was rising in politics and publicly known at the time (Boatwright 1991, 255). The other males in her life, her father and brother, are described by their relationship to Plancia Magna, rather than her relationship to them, again centring Plancia Magna as the lead role in the donation of the gate complex (see above inscriptions) (Boatwright 1991, 255).

Typically women would be placed through their relationship with male relatives, even if the woman was the lead benefactor for a project. This would look like 'Plancia Magna, sister of Plancius Varus' or something similar, but in this donation, Placius Varus was named as 'brother of Plancia Magna', centring the benefactress as the key person to focus upon. The same was done for Plancia Magna's father, which further emphasises the power Plancia Magna had in her family life and larger community (Boatwright 1991, 255). By deviating from the norm, Plancia's inscription would have stood out to the local audience, who would have been used to the inverse formatting (Caceres-Cerda 2018, 45-46). This formula choice was not seen in Italy or North Africa, further emphasising how Planca Magna applied the epigraphic habit in a way which would have made her stand out.

From this inscription we can conclude that Plancia Magna had her own wealth that she chose to spend however she wanted, and that this example of benefaction did not occur to elevate the political standing of the male family members (Boatwright 1991, 256). If anything, these inscriptions and alignment of male relatives are placed in order to elevate Plancia Magna's standing and prestige.

Aside from the gate complex, the perception of Plancia Magna can be analysed through honorary inscriptions mentioning her name. The phrase *eusebe kai philopatrin*, or 'pious and loving her country', was used in inscriptions around the gate (Caceres 2015, 13). While it highlights piety and patriotism, this phrase is used in similar inscriptions depicting male citizens and is ultimately gender neutral (Trimble 2011, 194). In much of the epigraphic evidence, Plancia Magna was noted for her priesthoods and other public positions, which leaves little room to subject her to phrases that emphasised her domestic roles (Boatwright

1991, 250). These choices indicate an amount of adherence to traditional language in that civic virtues were often highlighted, but there were phrases which reflected more individual power and intention than in most inscriptions from regions such as Italy and North Africa (Meyer 1990, 92-93).

Something that is clear when examining how women used the epigraphic habit within their inscriptions is that by using a prescribed formulae of disclosure, benefactresses demonstrated a desire to maintain the status quo and elevate oneself as an upholder of the traditional social and cultural norms (Hedrick 1999, 409-410, 420-421). This approach could indicate that while benefactresses were able to elevate their profile and contribute to their communities through powerful donation practices, they avoided potentially overstepping by using traditional phrasing. Utilising the traditional formulas and phrasing would also place benefactresses into a lineage of other donors, creating a linked network which may have produced further opportunities (Meyer 1990, 81-94; Trimble 2013, 15). This should not necessarily be seen as the less intentional choice, because adherence to the traditional epigraphic choices would have benefitted women in several ways. That being said, choices which are more individualistic do spotlight the benefactresses being discussed in different ways, which could lead one to argue that these women made more of a visible impact in the epigraphic record.

Analysing the epigraphic habit allows researchers to better understand why certain inscription choices were possible and meaningful to these women, their families, and wider networks (MacMullen 1982, 246). When reflecting on the tradition of epigraphy and Plancia Magna's substantial donation and associated inscriptions, researchers are forced to examine the wider context to understand her potential motivations and the resulting interpretations.

4.5.3.3 At Her Own Expense - '*sua pecunia*'

While the previous two examples illustrate specific cases, the phrase *sua pecunia* and similar iterations were used by many of the benefactresses represented in this research to indicate that the buildings associated with them were donated at their own expense (and not the expense of anyone else). This small phrase confirms that the donation was the project of the benefactress on her own, without influence from male relatives who may have sought to be linked with the donation for their own political gain or social influence.

Figure 4.22. Temple of the Genius of Augustus, donated by Mamia in Pompeii in the first century AD. (Photo by author.)

An example of this language is seen in Pompeii:

> *M [a] mia P(ublii) f(ilia) sacerdos public(a) / Geni[o Augusti / coloniae s]olo et pec [unia sua].*
>
> Mamia, daughter of Publius, public priestess, [built this] to the genius [of Augustus/of the colony] on her own land and at her own expense.
>
> -*CIL* 10.816; translated by Longfellow 2014, 85; Gradel 1992, 49

With this inscription, Mamia (***It 60***) shared her family connection and public role, while honouring the imperial family, and insisting that she was the owner of the land and benefactress responsible for the donation (Longfellow 2014, 85; Deforest and King 1993, 283). Though brief, the inscription covers all of the essential information needed to elevate her personal social status and cement her as a notable benefactress in the city of Pompeii (Fig. 4.22).

Examples of benefactresses who utilised this phrase can be found below in Table 4.1. Inscriptions which highlight that the donations were at the expense of the benefactress were frequently seen in the western regions of the Roman Empire, but less so in the eastern empire. Work by Mantas and Sitz indicate that there were benefactresses in the Greek East who would state that the donations were self-funded, but the standardisation of the practice and terminology is difficult to ascertain, especially when compared to the established phrases used in the Roman West (Sitz 2017; Mantas 1994).

Name	City	Inscription
Ummidia Quadratilla (***It 103***)	Casinum, Italy	donated a temple *de sua pecunia*
Lucceia Polla with her sister Lucceia Tertulla Pia (***It 54*** and ***It 55***)	Cumae, Italy	restored a temple *portico de pecunia sua*
Suphinibal (***NA 53***)	Leptis Magna, North Africa	donated a temple for *Ceres Augusta de sua pecunia*
Julia Victoria (***NA 39***)	Thagaste, North Africa	donated a temple *liberalitate et pecunia sua*

Table 4.1 Selected examples of benefactresses' whose inscriptions used the phrase *pecunia sua*.

4.6 Intraregional Variation and Female-specific Actions

4.6.1 Introduction

While much of this chapter has focused on broad regional trends, it is important to shift the analytical scale to highlight the individual cities and their leading families in order to understand how female benefaction was integrated on a local level. One of the limitations of prior research is that the focus on solely benefactresses and their actions obscures the wider narrative and setting where women were a facet of a fuller picture. Benefaction is a relational process, and with this research, the goal is to focus on benefactresses while providing a solid foundation for understanding how they were acting within a larger setting, how their actions compared to male benefactors, and how their individual motivations and reciprocal interactions within their cities played a role in decision-making.

Within earlier research, which has contributed greatly to the formation of this dataset, a few cities stand out as being locations where benefactresses heavily engaged with public benefaction, and those will be highlighted as case studies below. Within Italy, these cities are Pompeii and Aquileia, which bring distinct settings into the qualitative analysis as well as detailed family relationship mapping from recent research. In North Africa, the cities are

Leptis Magna and Thugga, which similarly have been explored in depth, providing insight into two notable municipalities within the large North African region. Finally, in Asia Minor, the two cities examined here are Perge and Aphrodisias, which offer varying depictions of benefaction within cities which retained Hellenistic tradition alongside newfound Roman culture. These cities were selected due to a large epigraphic collection from each location, for their regional variation, and for the rich visibility of benefactresses within their history. With a detailed investigation into these cities, the regions and individuals examined within this research become more reachable and understandable in terms of their choices, their available support, and relevant family power.

4.6.2 Pompeii, Italy

Research on Pompeii is incredibly rich due to the preservation of the city following the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD, allowing for an investigation into the lives of those participating in public benefaction in an incomparable way to any other city in this corpus (Longfellow 2024, 153). It should be clearly acknowledged that the amount of epigraphy retained in excellent condition found in Pompeii is not the norm, and thus this section will be able to have details which are not currently possible in other cities or regions. While this is primarily due to the volcanic preservation properties, there is ample information to be preserved because of Pompeii's existence as a settlement from the 6th or 7th century BC, which contrasts greatly from some of the 'newer' cities discussed (Zanker 1998, 3-5, 28-32). That being said, beginning with Pompeii provides a methodological anchor for this section and allows for a mental vision of what in-depth excavations and centuries of research can reveal. Recent findings have indicated that the population of Pompeii was around 30,000 people at the time of the eruption, which provides an idea of the setting examined as a case study here (Longfellow 2024, 153). Within this community of 30,000, women were acting as landholders, political advocates, and benefactresses, employing personal agency within a larger setting (Bowden and Mummery 2009, 124; Longfellow 2024, 154). Longfellow's investigation into the funerary monuments just outside of Pompeii demonstrates that women and their contributions were represented on half of the tombs in this location, further emphasising that women were visible across the city and in the moments of everyday life (Campbell 2015, 74-75; Longfellow 2024, 155). A further point made in this research is that of the tombs where women were noted as the patron of the structure, half were by freedwomen and half were by freeborn women, again providing insight into the visibility of varying social classes within the city and corresponding *necropolis* (Longfellow 2024, 156). While not the same as monumental public buildings, the indication from research by McDonnell (2005) and Emmerson (2013) that there is not noticeable difference in tomb architecture by Roman men and women suggests that public buildings may have followed a

similar trend, and that women's contributions were indeterminable from men's (Emmerson 2013, 104, 137; McDonnell 2005, 3-4).

With the setting for women in Pompeii briefly established, an investigation into two well-known benefactresses in the city will clarify the interactions between notable benefactresses, their families, and the community. Eumachia (***It 35***) and Mamia (***It 60***) both donated structures on the forum in Pompeii during the reign of Augustus, both of which would have made an impact and statement within the city (Dobbins 1992, 251-263; Fishwick 1995, 17). Beginning with Mamia, detailed accounts of her donations and public honours have been published, and they provide answers into her connections and potential motivations that are not often available for the benefactresses within this corpus (Fishwick 1995). Mamia is known to have donated a temple on the forum in Pompeii, which honoured either the genius of Augustus or the genius of the colony of Pompeii, both of which would have shown respect for Augustus (*CIL* 10.816; Longfellow 2015, 82).

In this inscription on the temple (*see section 4.5.3.3 At Her Own Expense - 'sua pecunia'*), Mamia is described by her role as daughter of Publius, which was typical epigraphic behaviour (Longfellow 2015, 84-85). While there is no evidence of further family members in Pompeii, scholars have linked Mamia to a prominent decurial family in nearby Herculaneum who had a long history of involvement in politics and leadership in the region (Castren 1975, 188; Reinfjord 2011, 18). This may have prepared Mamia for a role in the public eye, where she connected the city of Pompeii to the emperor and the imperial cult through her donation of a temple on the forum in his honour (Reinfjord 2011, 18).

Mamia was provided a *schola* tomb by the community of Pompeii, which was built near to the city walls, an honour reserved for the most important burials (Longfellow 2015, 86). This lends to conversations around the benefits which benefactresses were provided, as soft social power and longevity of memory were both appealing rewards for those participating in public benefaction. Knowing that *schola* tombs were confined to Pompeii, and only eight have been discovered, this erection of a bench tomb for Mamia must have been quite significant (Longfellow 2015, 86). Previously described as being a benefit for male magistrates in Pompeii, Mamia's tomb inscription which does not describe her by a relationship to a male family member suggests that she received the honour for her own accomplishments and that she would have held significant social power in the city (Longfellow 2015, 86). As three of the eight *schola* tombs were in honour of women, this adds evidence to Longfellow's conclusion that women's acts as benefactresses and the benefits they received were no different from their male counterparts (Longfellow 2015, 86).

Hemelrijk comes to the same conclusion after compiling the dataset which inspired much of this research, and states that “with the exception of political rewards, which fell only to men, civic munificence prompted the same public honour for women as for men” (Hemelrijk 2015, 172).

While Mamia’s family history is more difficult to follow, Eumachia was well-documented as being the daughter of Lucius Eumachius, a notable businessman in the wine industry, who provided Eumachia with a sizable fortune following his death (Bezeczky 2010, 86). This wealthy family background is likely what led her to marry into the wealthy Numistrii Frontones family, who were similarly prominent in Pompeii (Lott 2015, 141). With wealth came opportunities, as Eumachia was able to hold priesthoods and donate the temple structure on the forum in Pompeii, which she donated alongside her son Marcus Numistrius Fronto, likely to elevate his name before the *duumvir* election in the following year (Lott 2015, 141).

> *Eumachia L. f(ilia) sacerd(os) publ(ica) nomine suo et | M. Numistri Frontonis fili chalcidicum cryptam porticus Concordiae | Augustae Pietati sua pequnia fecit eademque dedicavit.*
> - *ILS* 3785
>
> Eumachia, daughter of Lucius, public priestess, built this porch, gallery, and colonnade for Concordia Augusta and Pietas with her own money and dedicated them in her own name and that of her son M. Numistrius Fronto.
> - *ILS* 3785, translated by Lott 2015, 141

What is interesting about this family line is that Eumachia’s father is noted for his business, but not for a history of participation in benefaction. Eumachia may have noticed how others in Pompeii were elevating their status through public beneficence, and with her financial power and family connections, saw the realm of benefaction as a place where she would exhibit her influence on the Pompeiian community. Through providing a platform for her son to also have his name publicly on the forum, she was likely seeking to establish a family tradition which would further their prominence in Pompeii.

Eumachia and Mamia’s building, tomb, and notable status in Pompeii contributes to conversations around visibility in the Roman world, both during life and after death. Zanker emphasises how Eumachia’s building was decorated ‘immodestly,’ and that the letters used were significant in size, which would be noted by passersby (Zanker 1998, 104). Mamia’s funerary tomb is repeatedly highlighted as a place in clear view of the road and the city walls,

with bench characteristics which invite people to spend additional time at the site (Longfellow 2015, 86; Zanker 1998, 122-123). In Pompeii, public visibility appears to have been the key to power, and an extension of life was provided to those who were able to maintain a place in the public's memory (Carroll 2011, 86). The statues which both corresponded with their building donations and which were provided by the council as a thanks for their donations also contribute to this visibility, as complex negotiations are referenced both in the statue depictions themselves as well as in the formulaic inscriptions (Hemelrijk 2015, 174). Male donors would have similarly engaged in this process, though with variation regarding which phrases and depictions were most honourable for their positions (Hemelrijk 2015, 120, 130).

Before examining Aquileia and the behaviours of benefactresses in that Italian city, a review of a local male benefactor's actions in Pompeii provides comparative evidence for consideration throughout this research. Marcus Holconius Rufus, of the wealthy local Holconii family, donated a theatre with his brother Marcus Holconius Celer in Pompeii (Reinfjord 2011, 20). Marcus Holconius Rufus held several positions including being elected *duovir* (four times), *quinquennalis*, and *augusti sacerdos*, while also acting as a direct ambassador between Pompeii and Rome after being granted the position of *tribuni militum a populo* (Reinfjord 2011, 20). It is possible that the donation of this theatre would have resulted in Rufus receiving the honour of being *patronus coloniae* of Pompeii, which would provide a clear motivation for this endeavour (Reinfjord 2011, 20). This instance provides confirmation that many of the behaviours of benefactors remain consistent across male and female donors, as familial co-donations, seeking titles and public recognition, and the donation of theatres, among other donation types, occurred several times within the dataset of this research. Regarding the portion of male and female benefactors, it can often be quite difficult to know, though several authors have attempted to calculate this percentage (Buonocore 2005; Frézouls 1990; Mrozek 1987; Wesch-Klein 1990). Across these publications, the conclusion appears to be that benefactresses made up anywhere from between 10-20% of donors in a community, with the majority of studies indicating a number closer to 20% (Buonocore 2005, 537; Eck 1990; Frézouls 1990, 186; Mrozek 1987, 63, 74-76). This hypothesis, coupled with evidence that local councils honoured women with statues similarly to their male counterparts, adds to the conclusion that men and women involved in public munificence in Italy exhibited and received many of the same behaviours (Hemelrijk 2015, 164). This will be examined further in the community of Aquileia, where the donation patterns appear to be rather different from Pompeii according to the information in this dataset.

4.6.3 Aquileia, Italy

While Pompeii is well-documented due to its preservation and henceforth the amount of research which has come from the city, Aquileia is less explored and thus provides a more balanced view of benefaction in Italy in comparison. Aquileia was selected because 14 benefactresses within this dataset were active in the region, across individual donations and co-donations. They contributed temples, kitchens, statues, as well as a road and a schola. This variety, almost confined to the 2nd century AD, provides an excellent diversity of information for a deeper dive into the local aspects of benefaction in Italy. Described by some modern scholars as a frontier town in Italy, Aquileia was neither foreign nor adjacent to Rome, as it was around 450 miles from central Rome (Hillard and Beness 2016, 119; Pavan 1987, 17). As this distance was seen as a disadvantage to colonists who may have considered moving, the plots of land provided were likely significant in size to encourage people to transplant their life to a region which did not have the modern city amenities (Hillard and Beness 2016, 120). Land ownership, especially at a significant level, was often a characteristic which allowed Romans to gain financial and social power, and would have been tempting for those who were looking to change their status (Hillard and Beness 2016, 120). The colony was founded in 181 BC, and three thousand men signed up to establish the new cosmopolitan city, which provides a background useful for understanding the time that had passed before this research timeframe begins in the first century AD, as well as the history of the area which would have inspired behaviours of both male and female benefactors (Hillard and Beness 2016, 127). It is known that in 169 BC, an additional 1,500 colonists signed up to join the community in Aquileia, adding significantly to the population (Hillard and Beness 2016, 147; Livy 43.17.1).

Aquileia was selected due to the variety of donations which occurred there, but applying the historical knowledge that the population was quite varied due to its location and draw for social climbers seeking land, it could be deduced that the attitudes and setting found in Aquileia would have been one of diversity (Bandelli 1983, 175-203; Verzár Bass 1983, 205-215; Hillard and Beness 2016, 142). This would have benefitted benefactresses looking to donate toward public munificence, as the colony needed further development, but also would have meant that the city leaders would be less discriminatory toward whose money they accepted. Aquileia was designed to have an urban centre from the outset, which similarly would have provided opportunities for male and female benefactors alike (Hillard and Beness 2016, 143). One of the earliest examples of benefaction in Aquileia comes from a notable Annius Luscus, who had served as *triumvir* in 169 BC, and who donated a temple

in the city centre (Hillard and Beness 2016, 148-150). This early and notable donation would have served as a template and inspiration for future acts of beneficence.

> *T(itus) Annius T(iti) f(ilius) tri(um)vir/Is Hance aedem / faciundam dedit/dedicavitque, legesq(ue)/composivit deditque/senatum ter co(o)ptavit.*
> - *AE 1996: 685*

> Titus Annius, son of Titus, triumvir. He had this temple constructed and dedicated it; he composed and handed down laws; he selected the senate three times.
> - *AE 1996: 685,* translated by Hillard and Beness 2016

Titus Annius is one of the most clearly influential figures from Aquileia whose inscriptions have been found throughout the colony, and thus his focus on building a road which connected Aquileia to the Via Annia in 153 BC becomes important in this research as the benefactress Aratria Galla (***It 18***) also funded a road in the second century AD (Hemelrijk 2015, 462; Hillard and Beness 2016, 153; *InscrAqu* 3, 3495). This type of connection provides context for why a benefactress would have donated a road, because while unglamorous, this contribution tied her to a city founder and provided a crucial element of infrastructure to the community (Hemelrijk 2015, 462; *InscrAqu* 3, 3495). Additional details known about Aratria Galla's donation include that the road she donated connected the forum to the port, providing aid to local business and tradesmen, and visibility for her name in some of the most public places (Gregoratti 2020, 172-173; Hemelrijk 2015, 462; *InscrAqu* 3, 3495). As in Pompeii, this example demonstrates that there was not necessarily male or female practices when it came to benefaction, but rather that leading individuals or families chose to donate structures which would positively impact their reputation and establish their place within a community's current and future memory.

This example highlights the importance of qualitative analysis, because while the authors researching the establishment of Aquileia did not have a lens addressing on benefaction, the insight provided around Titus Annius and his donation of a road to the colony adds to our understanding of Aratria Galla's decision to do the same. Additionally, knowing how the colony of Aquileia needed to increase the size of the plots of land to incentivise colonists to move to the distant region provides an awareness that the need for public infrastructure and funding would have been great, and less discrimination would have been applied when negotiating who would be permitted to donate (Hillard and Beness 2016, 120). These circumstances would not have been found in larger and more central cities, so when

discussing opportunities for both male and female benefaction, a frontier-like colony would have likely offered more social freedom based on this evidence.

Unfortunately, based on the frequent movement of people in and out of Aquileia, it becomes quite difficult to follow family lines in the same ways as Pompeii (Gregoratti 2020, 177-178). It can be determined that many of the notable families in Aquileia came from the first group of colonists who established themselves in the area, but over time, ex-military personnel and traders also would have settled in Aquileia, adding to the diversity of the colony (Gregoratti 2020, 179-180; Tassaux 2004, 176). Gregoratti highlights the family Cania or Kania, which is known from several references in the region, but there are not any epigraphic references to donations by women within the known inscriptions (*CIL* 5.992, *CIL* 5.1270, *CIL* 5.8420, and *CIL* 5.8353; Gregoratti 2020, 182). This does not mean that there was an absence of female participation in benefaction, as is clear from the number of benefactresses from Aquileia in this research dataset, but that the evidence is more irregular and less lineage-based like in Pompeii. This sample investigation illustrates the difficulty regarding understanding the full complexity of benefaction behaviours, as deciphering the complicated interactions between donors, regional history, family connections, and community attitudes from limited epigraphic evidence is likely to be impossible. What is known from the benefactresses within this research is that there was a strong community of followers of the cult of Bona Dea within Aquileia in the second century AD, providing insight that there would have been extensive female networks supporting each other within the region, and that religious community would have been a notable factor as well (Hemelrijk 2015, 438-471). Whether these inscriptions are seen by the public on the road built by Aratria Galla, or within a temple built or supplemented by any of the eleven benefactresses in this corpus who contributed to a local temple structure, there is no doubt that female actions were visible in this Italian community distant from Rome and that these women would have benefited through increased social power, honour, and lasting civic memory.

4.6.4 Leptis Magna, North Africa

While Aquileia and Pompeii greatly differed from each other, they had in common that they were contained within the region of Italy. The experiences of both Italian women and men who moved to the provinces, or of the local people who were forced to acknowledge new Roman traditions to triumph in a changing world, were both vastly different from those discussed above, as well as comparable in regards to the relevant factors which influenced their engagement with their community and local benefaction. What is important to know about Leptis Magna is that it was a coastal colony originally developed around the 4th century BC, where olive oil and wine production were the main sources of wealth, which

does allow for some family tracking through amphorae stamps (Mattingly 1988, 31-36; Mattingly 2023, 456-458). Knowing both this timeline and of the economic power in the region allows for a better understanding of the benefactors active in Leptis Magna. There was also ample engagement with religion at Leptis Magna, as Mattingly describes it as having a rich ‘epigraphic haul’ and an ‘atypical urban profile’ which will be explored further in this section (Mattingly 2023, 407).

It is known that Leptis Magna had a large population (around 90,000 people), only exceeded in North Africa by Carthage (around 300,000), and was thus diverse in culture (Mattingly 2023, 343-345; Wilson 2011, 183-184). When examining religious trends, Phoenician cults were worshiped alongside Roman cults, demonstrating transitional culture as well as traditional beliefs (Mattingly 2023, 408). Regarding benefaction, Leptis Magna achieved colony status under Emperor Trajan, and a significant factor in Leptis Magna being elevated above neighboring towns was its commitment to Roman building projects from the first century AD (Cooley 2012, 250-285; Mattingly 2023, 346). Mattingly (2023) summarises previous work highlighting building donations and corresponding inscriptions in a table which covers a few pages, and this can be used to grasp the background of benefaction in Leptis Magna (Mattingly 2023, 390-395; Wilson 2012, 272-382).

While this research, and many of the publications which it heavily relies on, focus on the acts of benefaction made by Roman women, the table in Mattingly’s research allows for donations by both men and women to be laid out beside each other (Mattingly 2023, 390-395). While this method would not have applied to this work, it does perform an interesting role in demonstrating how donations by men and women are not that different, and may actually be indistinguishable from each other if the donor’s name was obscured. While the corpora by Hemelrijk and Van Bremen provide detailed analysis into female benefaction, when this is not the aim of the project, a methodology such as Mattingly’s balances the conversations by aligning all donations in one table (Hemelrijk 2015; Mattingly 2023, 390-395; Van Bremen 1996).

What is immediately clear from the table in Mattingly (2023) is that the types of donations by both men and women are indeterminable from each other. In Leptis Magna, from the first century AD, male benefactors are noted for donating markets, theatres, temples, streets, arches, aqueducts, fountains, and baths, all of which the female donors in this corpus also donate (Mattingly 2023, 390-395). What is also clear is that religious behaviours are similar, as male donors honour Magna Mater, Phoenician tutelary deity Shadrapa (Roman Liber Pater), and the imperial family, (*AE* 1967, 536; *IPT* 22; *IRT* 273; *IRT* 275; *IRT* 294; *IRT* 300;

IRT 481). In the late first century AD, benefactor Ytnbal donated a building in honour of his maternal aunt, reinforcing his family connections and providing a platform for himself and a female family member in the notable colony (*IPT* 23). An unknown benefactor donated the Hadrianic baths in Leptis Magna in the second century AD, and a known benefactress (Aemilia Iou[ina]) built a building across from the notable chalcidicum, further creating an idea of the public spaces of this colony and how benefactors created memory and familiarity by adding their names to them through public munificence (*IRT* 361, 545; *IRT* 363).

When it comes to family naming and corresponding social power, it seems obvious to examine mentions of family members of the emperor Septimius Severus as they are well-documented and provide a direct understanding of using family relationships and history to increase contemporary prestige. The first to use a connection to Leptis Magna to heighten his power was the emperor himself, as an involved building campaign in Leptis Magna allowed him to connect himself to the tutelary deities Hercules and Liber Pater, solidifying his right to succession and noble power (Cordovana 2012, 70-73). Through applying these ties to supposed mythological ancestors, Septimius Severus spread propaganda through Leptis Magna on inscriptions, coins, as well as a basilica, a shrine, and a porticus (Cordovana 2012, 72-73). These actions would have both served as a template for benefactors to emphasise their family ties to form a unified image in Leptis Magna, while also directly elevating living and future members of Septimius Severus' family line at the time. Twenty years before his reign but while the family demonstrated significant prestige, his father P. Septimius Geta was responsible for executing his sister Septimia Polla's will and donated a silver statue of her which was worth over 100,000 sesterces (*IRT* 607). The timing of this donation, the value of the statue, and the relevance of the family in Leptis Magna would have made this contribution one which was highly visible, and demonstrates that women were similarly used within a family line to maintain their relevance in the community (*IRT* 607). Prior to Septimius Severus' birth and eventual imperial role, his family is noted from inscriptions sponsoring the old iteration of the forum (before Septimius Severus rebuilt it) and colonnade (*IRT* 338), a porticus on the forum (*IRT* 338), an Arch of Marcus Aurelius (*AE* 1967, 536), the silver statue and pedestal (*IRT* 607), a marble statue base of his mother in the Temple of Liber Pater (*IRT* 415), and a statue base for the brother of Septimius Severus, Publius Septimius Geta (*IRT* 541). While the family line of an emperor is more diligently examined and documented than other donors, this example demonstrates the impact of a family line maintaining their significance in a city over hundreds of years.

4.6.5 Thugga, North Africa

A really excellent comparison is possible when examining Leptis Magna alongside Thugga, as it provides insight into the environments where female benefaction appears more frequently. Despite the population of Leptis Magna being around 90,000 people, and Thugga being at least 5,000 people, the representation of benefactresses within this database is greater for Thugga (11 individual benefactresses) despite it representing a small portion of the massive Leptis Magna site (5 individual benefactresses) (Mattingly 2023, 343-345; Wilson 2011, 183-184). This could suggest that much like Aquileia, Thugga was a more welcoming environment for the participation of benefactresses due to a need for infrastructure, public financing, and community engagement. When compared to other Roman North African sites such as Tripolitania, the application of the epigraphic habit displayed in Thugga is considerably greater and more varied, which corresponds with the tendency to adhere to Roman norms in this particular city during the Principate period (Mattingly 2023, 484-485). Before investigating these donation trends in more depth, a brief investigation into the city of Thugga is required to better understand the setting.

According to Diodorus Siculus, Thugga already was a small town by the 4th century BC (Diod. Sic., *Bib. hist.* 20.57.4). While Leptis Magna was a port city, Thugga was inland and on a hill, meaning that the economic setting would have been quite different in comparison (Belkahia and di Vita-Evrard 1995, 271; Mattingly 2023, 132-133, 143). Fortunately, the city has been a focus for international research groups, and documentation of epigraphic records and landscape data has been published (Aounallah and Golvin 2016; Aounallah and Maurin 2013; Mattingly 2023, 331; Ritter and Von Rummel 2015; and Stutz 2007 to name a few). An important piece of this record preservation has been through detailed efforts documenting the funerary monuments from Thugga's cemeteries (1,525 tombstones recorded) (Khanoussi and Maurin 2002; Mattingly 2023, 412). While this is a tremendous asset to Roman North African researchers, applying the findings from Thugga to other localities in the region may be difficult due to how the inscriptions directly reflect life in Thugga (Khanoussi and Maurin 2002, 84-90; Mattingly 2023, 412). As was the case in Pompeii, of the 1000 Roman citizens named within these inscriptions just over half of the citizens were men (63%), and amongst the indigenous names, 54% were male (Campbell 2015, 74-75; Khanoussi and Maurin 2002, 7-78; Longfellow 2024, 155; Mattingly 2023, 412-413). This data reinforces that women were actively represented in funerary inscriptions, suggesting that representation in inscriptions during their lifetimes would not have been surprising.

As expected, several of the eleven women who appear in this corpus also appear in the table of Thugga building donations in Mattingly (2023, 401-404). Similarly to the data from this publication described for Leptis Magna, when the donations are laid out side-by-side, it is difficult to determine any trends which would indicate whether the donor was male or female, as instances of land for a circus donation by Gabinia Hermiona (***NA 28***) is a row above the donation of the circus structure by Severus Alexander (*DFH* 39; *CIL* 8.26549-50, *DFH* 15; Mattingly 2023, 403). The donations of temples, arches, markets, theatres, porticus, aqueducts, baths, and fountain complexes all are reminiscent of the building types contributed by the benefactresses within this research dataset (*DFH* 24, 27-28, 30, 33, 34, 36, 42, 43, 69, and 136). The titles highlighted by male donors, such as *flamen perpetuus, patron,* citizen, and freedman status, indicate that these trends highlighted in the Quantitative Findings chapter below are not female-specific and were the common characteristics for benefactors alike (Mattingly 2023, 401-404).

The magnitude of the inscriptions from Thugga allows for detailed family analysis, but as this section is only meant to provide a basis for understanding key questions around benefaction, (such as the comparability around male and female donations, intraregional variation, and variance of concentration of epigraphic evidence) only one extended line of family references will be reviewed here. One of the benefactresses, Gabinia Hermiona, has already been mentioned in this section as she donated land for the circus as well as a Temple of Victory of Caracalla in the third century AD, costing around 100,000 sesterces (*DFH* 39 = *CIL* 8.1483). She was one of many benefactors in the Gabinii family, as three flamines have also been linked to the lineage: A. Gabinius Datus (father), M. Gabinius Bassus, and A. Gabinius Datus (son) (*AE* 1997, 1663a-b; *CIL* 8.1493; *CIL* 8.26468; *CIL* 8.26470). While they highlighted their *flamen* status alongside their construction and decoration of the temples of Concordia, Frugifer, and Liber Pater, the Gabinii benefactresses interestingly did not mention any *flaminica* status with their donations. Regardless, the donations by or naming Gabinia Hermiona, Gabinia Felicula (with her husband and son) (***NA 27***), Gabinia Beata, A. Gabinius Felix, and Gabinius Rufus (with wife Iulia Gallitta) demonstrate the power this family would have had, and the ways individuals or nuclear family groups utilised it to further the Gabinii name (*DFH* 39; *CIL* 8.26517; *ILTun* 1511; *CIL* 8.26524; *CIL* 8.26458).

Before reflecting on the two case studies within Asia Minor, a few points can be made regarding the information presented for Italy and North Africa. When it comes to larger cities, family tradition and less variation is seen in the benefaction record, while the smaller or newer cities such as Thugga and Aquileia indicate more opportunities for those participating in public munificence. Regardless of the size of the cities, the trends seen concerning

donation type or public role are fairly similar for both male and female donors, dispelling ideas around specifically female donation behaviours both in these cities and in the wider Roman Empire. While there are likely to be trends which are perhaps more prominent among men or women at a certain site, there generally are similarities between these two groups. A key takeaway is that without well-documented epigraphy, it is very difficult to draw conclusions around donor behaviours, motivations, and family lineages. Both Pompeii and Thugga demonstrate the importance of this type of research, which must continue at varying sites to better understand Roman benefaction.

4.6.6 Perge, Asia Minor

The traditions and cultural norms demonstrated in the four case studies analysed above have in common that they are from western regions of the Roman Empire, which both provides a basis for similarities but also makes differences between them stand out. This is also the benefit of this research being cross-regional, as it allows for trends which occur across the Roman Empire to be highlighted, while also cultural and indigenous behaviours which were important to varying groups of people in the empire and which shaped the multifaceted identities found throughout the empire. Within Asia Minor, the focus will be on the cities of Perge and Ephesos, as both are documented well in terms of epigraphic evidence, while also serving as a representation of variation in size and location in the Asia Minor region. Perge was a medium-sized city adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea, but fairly inland in comparison to Ephesos, which was more reliant on export activities (Kraft et. al. 1999, 91-100; Öztürk 2013, 135). Ephesos in comparison would have had a significant population of at least 200,000 according to modern scholars, making it the largest city analysed in this section (Duncan-Jones 1982, 259-262; White 1995, 27-79). With these notable differences, well-documented epigraphic records, and known evidence of widespread benefaction, these cities will effectively provide a background for regional variation in Asia Minor, and add to this synthesis of localised experiences of public munificence.

While Perge was an important regional hub during both Roman and Hellenistic times, research indicates its occupation extends to the Early Bronze Age (Abbasoğlu 2004, 46). Surrendered to the Romans in 133 BC, the region experienced political instability as it was passed between kingdoms, split up between allies, and abandoned before being re-established as the province of Galatia by Augustus in the late first century BC (Gruen 2004, 261; Özdizbay 2008a, 849-858; Pekman 1973, 81; Sherwin-White 1976, 1-3). This uncertainty would have contributed to residents perhaps feeling a lack of safety, which makes some of the motivations behind the donation of a gate complex by benefactress

Plancia Magna, such as stabilisation and protection, more clear and influential. This particular donation will be examined following a background on benefaction in Perge below.

Euergetism in Asia Minor had a long history before the expansion of the Roman Empire to this region in the first century BC, which indicates that the 'rise of benefaction' as is described in this research and in the other relevant regions is more of a continuation of a tradition, especially in the Greek East (Veyne 1990, 11, 72). Nevertheless, the influence of the Roman version of benefaction and urbanisation practices would have looked different from the Hellenistic iterations, and this is what will be reviewed in this section. One of the earlier Roman buildings noted in Perge is a theatre either constructed or repaired by a political leader named Marcus Plancius Rutilius Varus in the first century AD (Şahin 1999, 62). This is potentially the beginning of a long line of benefactors of the Plancii family line, as a bath complex from a similar timeline was constructed by a C. Plancius Varus (Abbasoğlu 2001, 181; Şahin 1999, 71-72). The bath complex honoured the emperor Vespasian at the time of its construction, demonstrating a desire to connect the city with the imperial family, a tradition which continued in future donations, particularly the gate complex by Plancia Magna (***AM 62***), the daughter of Marcus Plancius Varus, the likely donor of the theatre mentioned previously, and the sister of C. Plancius Varus (Şahin 1999, 116-119, 160-161). Coupled with her marriage to the influential C. Iulius Cornutus Tertullus of the powerful Cornutii family, Plancia Magna was an integral member of the elite in Perge, with a clearly defined pattern of benefaction activities (Özdizbay 2008b, 189; Jameson 1965, 190; Şahin 1999, 31, 55-60, 112-113).

One takeaway from this case study is the visibility of female donations alongside male family member donations, as it is clear that Plancia Magna's monumental gate complex is comparable to the donations made by male relations in terms of architectural and ideological frameworks, and emphasises the result that there is not a defined female form of benefaction (Şahin 1999, 31, 55-62, 71-72, 112-113). Through this network analysis, Plancia Magna's monumental gate complex donation exemplifies family strategy rather than isolated efforts, a pattern often seen though less frequently verifiable to this degree. The ability to follow the activities of this family of benefactors is only possible due to carefully documented epigraphy research efforts in Perge, particularly led by Sencer Şahin who published multiple volumes of the corpus *Die Inschriften von Perge,* while new inscriptions from the Perge excavations are today published by leading scholar Aşkım Özdizbay (Özdizbay 2008a, 2008b, 2025; Şahin 1996, 1999, 2004).

Despite a publicly male-dominated family line, Plancia Magna's donation of the monumental gate complex in Perge indicates an acceptance and encouragement of euergetic contributions by leading figures in the city, male or female. What should be noted is that Plancia Magna differs from many of the benefactresses in this corpus by being from an elite family, with powerful connections, political ties, and ample financial resources. While social status was not documented in Asia Minor in the same ways it was in Italy or North Africa, it would be unsurprising if the extended history of benefaction and family lineage in the region meant that benefactors (male or female) needed to have this kind of influential background in order to participate in city infrastructure projects. While the case of the Plancii demonstrates this likely result in Perge, an examination of actions in the immense city of Ephesos will provide additional insight into a setting where competition for benefaction activities would have been exceptional.

4.6.7 Ephesos, Asia Minor

The epigraphic evidence from Ephesos indicates a flourishing programme of euergetism between the first and second centuries AD (*IEphesos* 424, 427, 3004). Being a city with over 200,000 residents, including an estimated 40,000 male citizens, indicates that Ephesos would have required ongoing benefaction projects to sustain itself and its reputation (Duncan-Jones 1982, 259-262; White 1995, 27-79). Restoration, adornment, and new construction projects would have presented both the elite and lower classes opportunities to become involved in the fabric of the city, and the inscriptions across the setting confirm that they took advantage of the possibilities (Rogers 1991; Rogers 1992, 216).

Ephesos is known to have existed as an urban centre since the sixth century BC, particularly as the site of the Temple of Artemis, which brought many travelers to the site (Biguzzi 1998, 279; Scherrer 2001, 57-8). The goddess had a vast following, specifically as Ephesian Artemis, and the attention brought economic success to many of the business owners in Ephesos (Biguzzi 1998, 279-280). While in other cities, the competition for benefaction opportunities may have been restricted by size, remains of at least five bath complexes suggested that Ephesos had the space, population, and finances for duplicates of key city structures (White 1995, 27-79). Once the city was allowed to create a temple for the Cult of Divine Emperors, its fame only grew and its ties directly to the emperor were strengthened, and public donors would have been incentivised to similarly link themselves to Ephesos (Öztürk 2013, 136-137).

While Ephesos enjoyed a lot of fortunate circumstances as a city, the infrastructure which allowed it to be prosperous was often donated by members of the public (Rogers 1992, 216).

A notable couple, M. Claudius Publius Vedius Antoninus Phaedrus Sabinianus III (from now referred to as Vedius Antoninus III) and his wife Flavia Papiane (***AM 37***), contributed the *bouleuterion* and one of the bath complexes of the city (Kalinowski 2002, 109). This initial inscription found at the *bouleuterion* led to the discovery of over 55 other inscriptions by the Vedii family, shared over by six generations (Kalinowski 2002, 109). Nearly half were attributed to Vedius Antoninus III, as he ran several successful political campaigns, likely culminating in being the first Ephesian senator (*IEphesos* 4110). One such donation, of the *bouleuterion,* led to a city-wide dispute which was resolved by Emperor Antoninus Pius himself, and which demonstrated the delicacy of benefaction agreements with local councils (*IEphesos* 1491; Kalinowski 2002, 111-113). This instance also potentially illustrates how benefaction was expected to be an interaction where the benefactor acts selflessly toward their grateful community members, but in this case, Vedius Antoninus III was critiqued for his ostentatious display of wealth and overzealous approach to decorating the *bouleuterion* (Campanile 1994, 220; Kalinowski 2002, 113*).* This showy presentation of wealth likely came from his father being a high priest, his wife being the daughter of a high priest and also having the support to become high priestess herself, as well as connections with the emperor and high priest of Asia (*IEphesos* 729, 732, 1491; Kalinowski 2002, 111-113, 116-117). This case demonstrates how a donor with notable connections may not be favoured if the community feels they have gone against the expectations of a traditional benefactor, an occurrence infrequently seen epigraphically. It further solidifies the notion that donations by benefactresses were desired by the local council, or else there would be more evidence of the council refusing a donation. A successful donation project paired with an expression of gratitude from the council would have only occurred following careful negotiation and strategy, particularly in a city as large as Ephesos.

A final example where a woman from Ephesos plays a role is the donations of Claudia Metrodora (***AM 23***), one of which occurred in Ephesos while the others are found on the nearby island of Chios. She is highlighted here as a direct representative of the result that women in smaller communities had more opportunities for public roles or benefaction. In Ephesos, she is known as being a co-donor of a building with her husband (whose name does not survive), which Van Bremen suggests scholars may have interpreted as her personally lacking individual wealth prior to the connection with her Chios donations (*IEphesos* 3003; Van Bremen 1996, 291). This evidence of Claudia Metrodora in Ephesos is very limited, especially when compared to her roles of '*stephanephoros* (twice), *gymnasiarchos* (four times), *agonothetes*, priestess for life of Livia Aphrodite' while also building a bath complex, providing oil, and hosting public banquets (Robert 1938, 128-134; Robert and Robert 1956, 152-153; Van Bremen 1996, 291). It is unknown whether the

donation in Ephesos came before or after those in Chios, which would illuminate her financial standing and whether she was able to serve in the several roles in Chios with or without an inheritance from her husband, but it is noted that her husband is not mentioned in any of the Chios epigraphy (Robert 1938, 128-134; Robert and Robert 1956, 152-153; Van Bremen 1996, 291-292). This research into an individual who can be found in inscriptions from two separate locations where she held very different roles further emphasises the variety in local opportunities and norms, providing much to think about while concluding this synthesis of intraregional variation.

Competition is a theme which is shown within the roles held by women in Ephesos as well, as none of the priestesses of Artemis or prytaneis held the position more than once, indicating a sufficient contender pool from which to choose (Van Bremen 1996, 89). This wide supply of candidates for religious and political roles would have likely affected men in the city as well, and provides a contrast to smaller settlements where the elite population able to uphold the requirements of a position would have been much smaller. Another city in Asia Minor, Kolophon, demonstrates the opposite end of the spectrum from the setting in Ephesos where they were unable to find someone to hold the role of prytanis and thus elected the god Apollo over a hundred times (Van Bremen 1996, 89; *ZPE* 96, 291). Cities likely would have varied their required roles to fill based on the ability to fill them, while also providing responsibilities of known roles in other cities as additional requirements to their existing roster of roles (Van Bremen 1996, 90). In some ways this limitation would have allowed men and women to be able to contribute to their city in a notable form without being required to take on the responsibilities of the role year after year, but on the other hand, they would have lost their position in the public spotlight once their year in the role ended, which may mean they had to find other ways to participate to maintain their social identity, likely through benefaction. This conflict is not seen within smaller communities, and thus Ephesos is a unique example of a city where competition forced benefactors, particularly the elite, to negotiate their roles and contributions rather than assume that they would be welcomed.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter examines the qualitative findings which contribute to our understanding of the women represented within this research dataset. It both encompasses regional insights, as well as localised examples, which provide a more holistic understanding of the provinces discussed in this research as well as situates women within their larger environments. Researchers in this field are fortunate to have epigraphy and historical information which allows for an entrance into the ancient Roman world, and providing this context enables us to

dig deeper and think both more broadly about the motivations and social settings which enabled and restricted these women. The ample public roles available, the influence of the imperial cult, the religious authority, the use of self-depiction as a tool, and intraregional comparison are all characteristics which have been highlighted individually on this topic for years, and fortunately have aligned in this research to provide new insights and reduce limitations in this field. The six case studies discussed above particularly contribute grounded examples of local benefaction, adding a more narrow perspective to a topic which is often discussed on a broader scale.

The takeaway from this section of the qualitative analysis is that while across the regions being examined, there were unique ways in which benefactors employed architecture, physical depictions, and inscriptions to convey what was important to them. There was a flexibility in the manner of application across Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor, but the core messaging remained similar across the empire. When compared to male benefactors, women and their donation behaviours were clearly comparable to men based on the case studies examined, and the differences came more from the context of the community than the gender of the donor. Adherence to themes such as piety, ancestry, family lineage, and imperial loyalty consistently emerged in each region, even though the channels for evoking these values differed. Taken together, the qualitative patterns which emerged here indicate that benefaction created a strategic framework for expression, preservation of memory, and the creation of a personal identity for benefactresses active in their communities.

CHAPTER 5: QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In previous research, the relevant regions for this thesis were simply separated into the Roman West and the Roman East, but it has become clear that these more generalised delineations took away from detailed regional insight. Thus, for this research, the regions have been kept separate, and were defined to include Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor. These regions are broken down in detail to investigate interregional and intraregional trends more thoroughly, and it is within this framework that the unique characteristics of each region are analysed. For the scope of this research, why and how these Roman identities overlapped as well as diverged from each other is explored to further add to our understanding of the lives of ancient Roman benefactresses in the first to third centuries.

5.2 Instances of Female Benefaction

The first measurement within the core dataset is the recorded date of benefaction, which is separated between the first to third centuries AD, with several instances where the date of benefaction is unknown. Once we acknowledge the basic temporal trends of the data, we can delve into the reasoning and motivations behind these trends. With this in mind, a brief overview of the participation trends is provided below before more detailed results are revealed in the following sections.

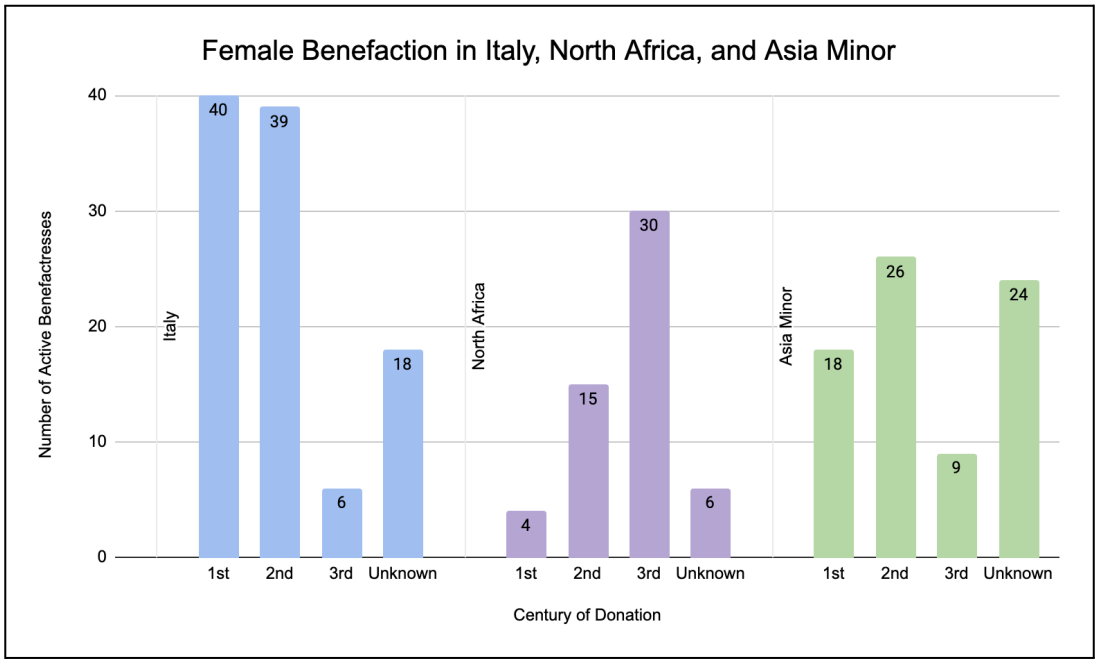


Figure 5.1 Graph showing the instances of female benefaction found within this dataset, delineated by regional and temporal information.

5.2.1 First Century AD

As seen in Fig. 5.1, female benefaction was already being actively participated in across the Roman Empire in the first century AD. It should be no surprise that it first rose to significant prominence in Italy, as it is well-known that behaviours in Rome frequently were catalysts for trends which the rest of the empire soon emulated (Cooley 2013, 24). Particularly, the influence of the Roman elite and the imperial family in Italy would have encouraged engagement with benefaction, particularly after imperial women such as Livia demonstrated how to publicly participate while also exemplifying feminine values important to imperial leadership (Cooley 2013, 33-36; Longfellow 2021, 123; Morrell 2020). Within Italy, a few cities were the locations for multiple benefactresses to participate in public benefaction, specifically Pompeii (3 separate donations, by ***It 29***, ***It 35***, and ***It 60***) and Verona (also 3 separate donations, by ***It 5***, ***It 42***, and ***It 50***). Several other cities were occupied by two competing benefactresses, or more than two instances if there was a co-donation involved within this corpus, but Pompeii and Verona were the only cities with three non-related donations by women in the first century AD.

The evidence of activity by female benefactors differs greatly over the first to third centuries AD in North Africa in comparison to both Italy and Asia Minor. As it has been noted in previous chapters, benefaction in North Africa saw a great deal of growth in the second and third centuries, with little engagement with the practice in the first century AD (Hemelrijk 2015, 126-130; Mattingly 2023, 405). This provides insight that the women donating in North Africa were able to make note of trends which had been prominent in the first century across the empire, while integrating local cultural traditions into their donations as the practice rose in prominence with increased populations, funds, and popularity of public giving. There are only four benefactresses in this dataset who were active in the first century AD, but two of them were active in the city of Thugga (***NA 55*** and ***NA 38***), which continues to be a hub of female benefaction activity throughout the following centuries as well.

The act of donating a public building or architectural feature had long existed in the Greek East regions of the Roman Empire, though the manners of participation changed over time and with Roman influence (Veyne 1990, 11, 72). There is evidence extending to the second century BC of women donating monumental buildings to their local communities, explaining why there is not the same gap in adherence to the trend of euergetism which is seen in North Africa (Dmitriev 2005, 53-56). There is evidence of 18 benefactresses in Asia Minor in the first century AD, and no more than two of them donating in a city indicates how widespread participation was in the region. The only cities with two active donors in this time period are

Aphrodisias (***AM 3*** and ***AM 12***) and Akmonia (***AM 42*** and ***AM 47***). While the number of active benefactresses appears significantly lower in Asia Minor in comparison to Italy, there are both more donations with unknown date information, as well as a discrepancy in excavations across all three regions examined here. Because of this, investigating the characteristics of donations across the regions, as is done within this chapter and in the Discussion Chapter, allows for a better grasp of the significance of certain details and donation choices.

5.2.2 Second Century AD

The second century is where benefaction was at its peak across two of the three regions in this research, suggesting an increase in civic opportunities for Roman women (Hemelrijk 2015, 126-130). While in Italy, there was one additional benefactress noted as donating in the first century AD in comparison to the second, this is a factor which could have easily been the other way around based on the preservation of date information and the location of epigraphic evidence of female benefaction. In fact, a key takeaway from these initial results is that participation in Italy was fairly similar across the first and second centuries AD, suggesting notable consistency during this 200 year period. What is notable within the second century AD is the prominence of donations by eleven women in Aquileia, which includes three co-donations between a pair or a group, and two individual donations. In comparison to Pompeii and Verona donations in the first century AD, this flurry of activity in Aquileia shows a distinct appreciation for public giving by women in this region. Aside from Aquileia, there are only cities with two active benefactresses in the 2nd century rather than the three active benefactresses mentioned in Pompeii and Verona.

The consistency in Asia Minor is less pronounced, but still visible between the first to second centuries AD, where donations in this corpus increased from 18 to 26 over this timeframe. This more gradual increase in participation may explain why the decrease in the third century in Asia Minor appears to be less dramatic. Considering the ample excavations and research projects based in Italy, as well as the larger sample size of benefactresses in the region within this corpus, it is surprising that there are only 13 fewer women donating in the second century in Asia Minor than Italy. When it comes to hubs of activity in the region in the second century AD, there is one city which stands out with four examples of female benefaction, and that is the city of Ephesos. These four women were donating large community structures such as an aqueduct (***AM 53***), porticus (***AM 64***), gymnasium (***AM 37***), lavatory, and a brothel (both by ***AM 77***) during this century, which indicates that there was healthy competition to support the local community through public giving by both men and women in the city (White

1995, 27-79). The city of Perge was the only other example where more than one woman was active during this century in the region (***AM 18*** and ***AM 62***).

The region where donations increased, but had not reached their peak, was in North Africa in the second century AD. While women in both Italy and Asia Minor were already active in the tradition of public giving in the first century, North Africa had only begun to participate, and thus there was plenty of opportunity for growth in donations and engagement with the practice (Hemelrijk 2015, 128-129). In the second century AD, the number of benefactresses donating in North Africa in this dataset increased from 4 to 15, which then doubled to 30 donations in the third century AD. This increase in evidence provides an opportunity to share more trends and hypotheses than in the previous century. What can be determined is that while women were participating in public giving across the region, a few notable cities stand out for being hubs for activity. In both Leptis Magna and Thugga, at least three individual women were actively donating in the second century AD, contributing mainly temple structures, related buildings, or private land where the temples were built. Considering how there are ongoing excavations and future work to be done across North Africa, these initial findings of a minimum of three competing benefactresses in these cities is notable.

5.2.3 Third Century AD

While women in both Italy and Asia Minor were at their peak in participation in benefaction in the second century AD, the third century saw a steep decline across both regions (Hemelrijk 2015, 126-130). In Italy, the number of active benefactresses dropped from 39 to just 6 examples of women donating, only two of which were active in the same city (Ostia, ***It 19*** and ***It 26***). In Asia Minor, the decrease is less drastic but still defined with a decline of 7 donations, from 26 to 9 in the third century AD. Similarly there are not any cities where several benefactresses were active based on the data in this corpus, though both Ephesos (***AM 41*** and ***AM 65***) and Termessos (***AM 15*** and ***AM 17***) each retain evidence of at least two benefactresses active in this century. These results indicate a large change in attitudes toward euergetism, and leaves North Africa the only regions where women were actively participating in benefaction with enthusiasm.

When examining Fig. 5.1, the region of North Africa shows trends later than Italy and Asia Minor, a theme which should be noted throughout this chapter. This would mean that benefactresses were observing trends and behaviours from other Roman provinces for years before acting on them themselves, which could explain how the trajectory of practices grew into the third century for these women. The regional reach of benefaction is clear from the variety of cities where women were actively involved in public giving, and Thugga is noted in

this dataset as being the only location where at least four known benefactresses were donating in the third century AD (***NA 14***, ***NA 16***, ***NA 28***, and ***NA 31***).

5.2.4 Unknown Date

While there is little to take away from the donations with unknown associated dates, it is worth noting that there are a sizable number of donations which fall into this category, and thus note that key data is obscured from the numbers distributed throughout the first to third centuries AD. This lack of preservation of the date for nearly 50 donations is certainly a limitation, but where these donations lack temporal information, they contain other details which provide answers in this Quantitative Findings Chapter and the following Discussion Chapter. What can be briefly noted is that amongst the Unknown Date benefactresses, there were five women active in Stratonikeia for four donations (there was one co-donation between a mother and daughter pair, ***AM 73*** and ***AM 74***). While it is unknown in which century these donations occurred, Stratonikeia was not previously noted as a hub for female donation activity and should be highlighted for hosting these five benefactresses.

5.3 Prominent Donation Types

A valuable and varied strand of the evidence studied here relates to the types of benefaction donated by Roman benefactresses. Religious donations inform our understanding of social status and power within the benefactresses' communities, infrastructure donations provide a knowledge of what communal environments benefactresses favoured, and alternative structures provide an understanding of masculine and feminine spaces and whether benefactresses adhered to or fought the norm of these environments (Hemelrijk 2015, 121-123; Ng 2015). Below, we will explore the regional circumstances to further gain an understanding of customary and distinctive choices.

5.3.1 Italy

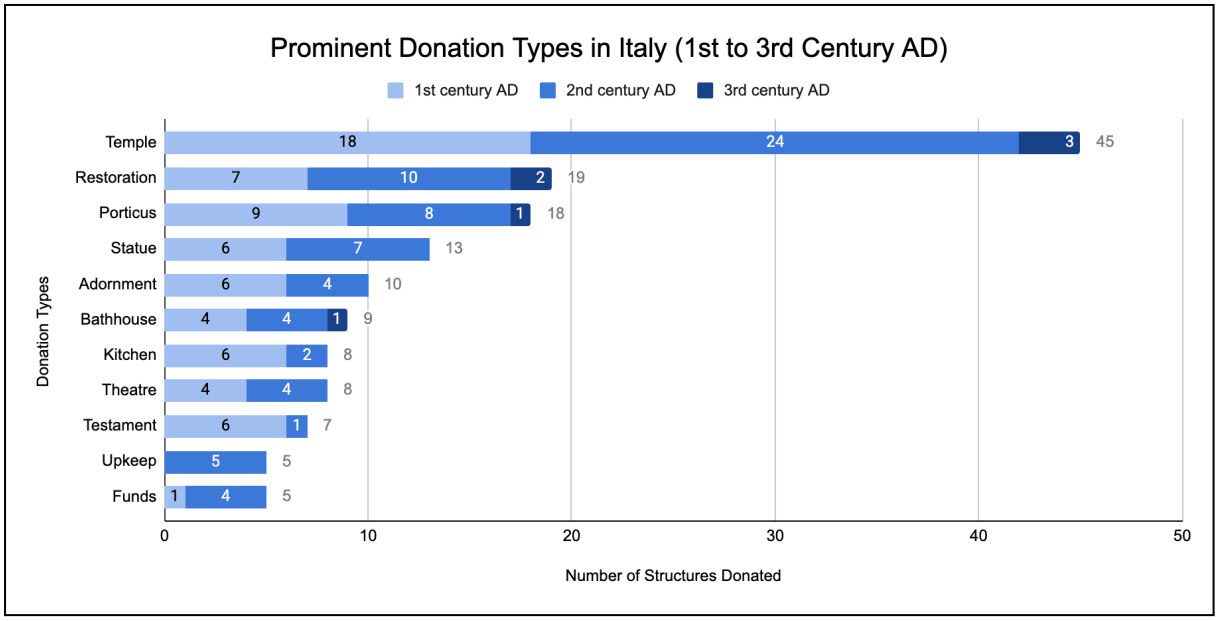


Figure 5.2. Graph showing the primary benefaction types donated by women in the region of Italy across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

5.3.1.1 Temples

The temple is one of the most frequently donated structures throughout the Roman Empire and Fig. 5.3 investigates this donation type further, demonstrating which structures were donated in tandem with temples in Italy. There is an emphasis on the restoration of temples and donations of temple kitchens, which will be discussed later in this section. Co-donations of temples occurred throughout Italy, in cities such as Aquileia (evidence of 3 separate co-donations) and Casinum (one co-donation amongst four women), as well as Cumae, Ficulea, Ostia, Tuficum, and Ulubrae where one co-donation was shared by a benefactress pair. In addition to the co-donations in Aquileia, there were two individual donations of temples in the city, further emphasising its notability for female benefaction activity.

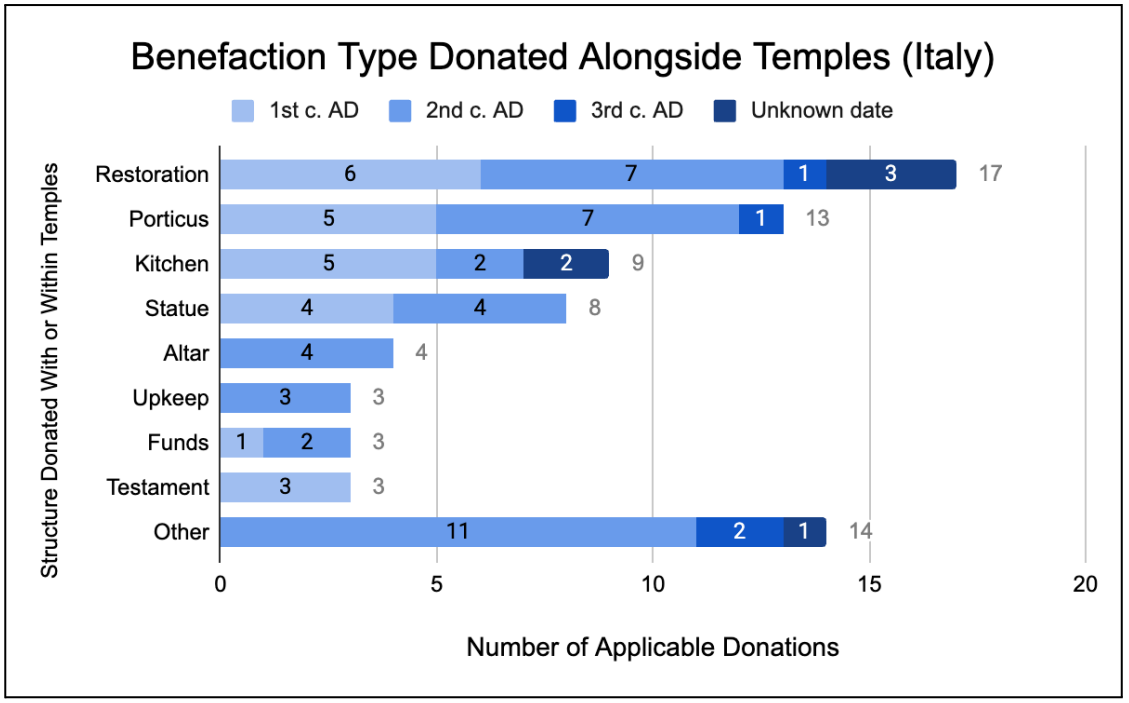


Figure 5.3 Graph showing the frequency of a given benefaction type being donated alongside a temple in Italy across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

Not only were women actively donating these buildings, they were also using them to highlight female deities and religious cults. In Fig. 5.4, the first male deity mentioned is Jupiter, who was honoured within the same number of inscriptions as his consort, the goddess Juno (though they were not mentioned in the same inscriptions). Beyond Jupiter, there is the male god Fonio, who is not well-known but was associated with the goddess Bona Dea. Fonio is possibly a variant of the name Faunus, who has been partnered with Bona Dea in writings by Plutarch (Lott 2015, 154-155; Brouwer 1989, 113). Gatto refers to Fonio as Bona Dea's 'marido-padre' or husband-father, suggesting it is unclear exactly what the relationship between Bona Dea and the god was, but they were linked in several donations (Gatto 2016, 295).

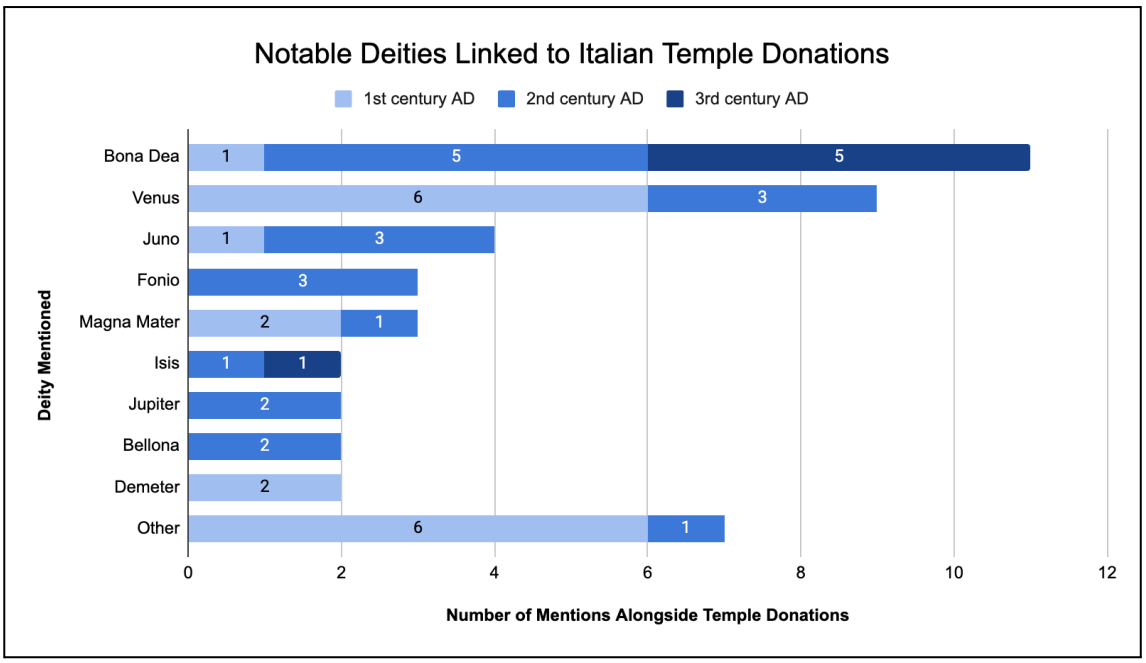


Figure 5.4 Graph showing the notable deities who are mentioned alongside temple donations in the region of Italy across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

Some of the most prominent public roles of benefactresses who donated temples are *sacerdos* or *flaminica,* which makes sense as the temple is a religious donation (4 mentions of *sacerdotes*, 2 of *sacerdotes divae*, 1 of *flaminica*). The term *magistra* is also used several times (9 instances), sometimes alongside the title *ministra* but also sometimes used alone. This indicates that women did not have to be priestesses to donate to a temple, but that women in civic roles could also participate in this type of donation. The most prevalent social status mentioned alongside temple donations was that of a freedwoman, with 23 mentions. Following freedwomen were women of equestrian status and decurial status (each with 4 mentions).

When discussing epigraphic commonalities, the one trend that is obvious from temple-donating benefactresses is that they wanted to emphasise that the donation came from their own funds. This is shown by 29 of the 36 applicable benefactresses using terms such as *sua pecunia*, *solo*, or other phrases that indicated they acted on their own financially. Even though they may have used their own money for their portions of the donation, many of these women also co-donated with another person, typically their husbands (9 times). There are also singular mentions of a co-donation with the benefactress's son (***It 108***) and an example where a freedwoman co-donated with fellow freedmen (***It 46***). Aside from co-donations, women highlighted their relationship with their husbands (3 mentions), fathers (2 mentions), grandson, and granddaughter (each with 1 mention from ***It 103***).

5.3.1.2 Statues

While statues are not the focus of this thesis, they do play a role as an accessory to many donations. Benefactresses often donated statues of imperial family members to further display and reinforce their elite status and to garner favour with the emperor and empress (Hemelrijk 2015, 134-136). In Italy, there was a strong preference to incorporate statues as a part of larger donations, either of the benefactress herself, of the imperial family, or of notable deities, providing a physical representation of their association to the city and empire (Cassiod. *Var.* 7.13.).

The structure most often associated with a statue donation was the temple, followed by the *porticus*. It is possible they are often linked with statue donations because there are specific spaces within *porticus* that allow for statue installations. This is true for theatre donations as well, because the large buildings often had statue niches or alcoves in which the imperial family or notable family members of the benefactress were erected.

The dataset columns 'Non-Religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction' and 'Religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction' are particularly useful in statuary analysis as they provide insight into the people or figures who were important to benefactresses. There are only a few characters who appeared in the ‘Non-Religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction’ segment. The statues (or associated building donations) in this column honoured either the benefactress herself (***It 35***), the imperial family/government, or the benefactress’ son in one case (***It 50***). In terms of gods, there is more variety around the deities highlighted with statue depictions. Primarily Juno and Venus were honoured (4 mentions each), reinforcing the belief that female benefactors sought to highlight their veneration of female deities. The four public roles mentioned by these benefactresses were all priestess-related, as they noted their roles as *sacerdotes* (***It 6*** and ***It 35***), *sacerdotes divae* (***It 15***), and *flaminica* (***It 108***).

5.3.1.3 *Porticus*

Another prominent donation was the *porticus*, which was represented in 20 inscriptions in Roman Italy. The Roman *porticus* was a covered, colonnaded walkway surrounding a courtyard, enclosing a temple precinct, or bordering a street as a walkway for the public (Platner and Ashby 1929, 419-431).

Porticus donations are fairly evenly distributed in Italy between the first century AD (9 mentions) and second century AD (8) in this dataset, much like statue donations. There is one example of a *porticus* donation in the first century BC (***It 68***) as well as one example in

the third century AD (***It 49***). There is not much information regarding individuals who were honoured by the *porticus* donations, but the gods associated with the *porticus* donations include Juno (4 mentions), Fonio (3), Venus (2), and Demeter (2).

Freedwomen are the most frequent donors of *porticus* in Italy, with there being six donors in this role. The other benefactresses in this segment were of equestrian and decurial status (2 mentions each) and senatorial status (1 mention, ***It 68***). This suggests that *porticus* were accessible donation types for all social statuses.

5.3.1.4 Kitchen or Cooking Facilities

A unique donation which appears in Italy is that of a *culina*, which translates as a kitchen or cooking facility. Typically donated in the first century AD (though occasionally donated in the late first century BC or early second century AD), these cooking facilities were almost entirely linked to a temple donation (10 of 11 *culina* inscriptions mention a temple as well). *Culina* donations appear most frequently in Casinum in the dataset due to a co-donation between four benefactresses in the region, but in terms of physical structures donated, there are no cities with duplicate *culinae* in this corpus. They were housed within temples or temple precincts, most often of Venus (5 mentions), Juno and Bona Dea (2 mentions each); there were singular mentions of Copia and Jupiter. Copia was the Roman goddess of abundance, which corresponds well with the donation of a temple kitchen which honoured her (Boon 2013, 41). Presumably these facilities were designed to cater to religious festivities during which meals might be prepared for cult personnel and/or worshippers.

Seven of the eight *culina* donations with social status information were linked to freedwomen, and one was fulfilled by a woman of equestrian status (***It 104***) (the remaining three donations did not have social status indicated). This suggests this donation type was most popular among the lower class, perhaps alluding to a lower cost or providing insight around social norms. There was a tendency to highlight the donation as coming from the benefactresses' own funds, again indicating a desire to display independence (noted by 5 benefactresses). Among these women, there is a mother and daughter pair (***It 58*** and ***It 59***) who donated alongside the husband (father in the case of the daughter).

5.3.1.5 Theatres

There are eight instances where benefactresses donated significant and costly theatres in Roman Italy. These were built during the first and second centuries AD (there were four mentions for each century). There are theatre donations in other regions, but they are not mentioned in inscriptions as frequently as they are in Italy.

Two of the eight theatre donations were provided by women of senatorial status. This contrasts greatly from the much more modest kitchen donations which women of lesser financial means could afford.

5.3.1.6 Other

Within the 'Other' category for benefaction types in Italy, there are 17 benefaction types which were mentioned in less than five inscriptions. Regardless of their frequency, there are some very interesting benefaction types here, including donations of roads, markets, *scholae*, assembly houses, fountain complexes, gates, gardens, and even a library.

5.3.2 North Africa

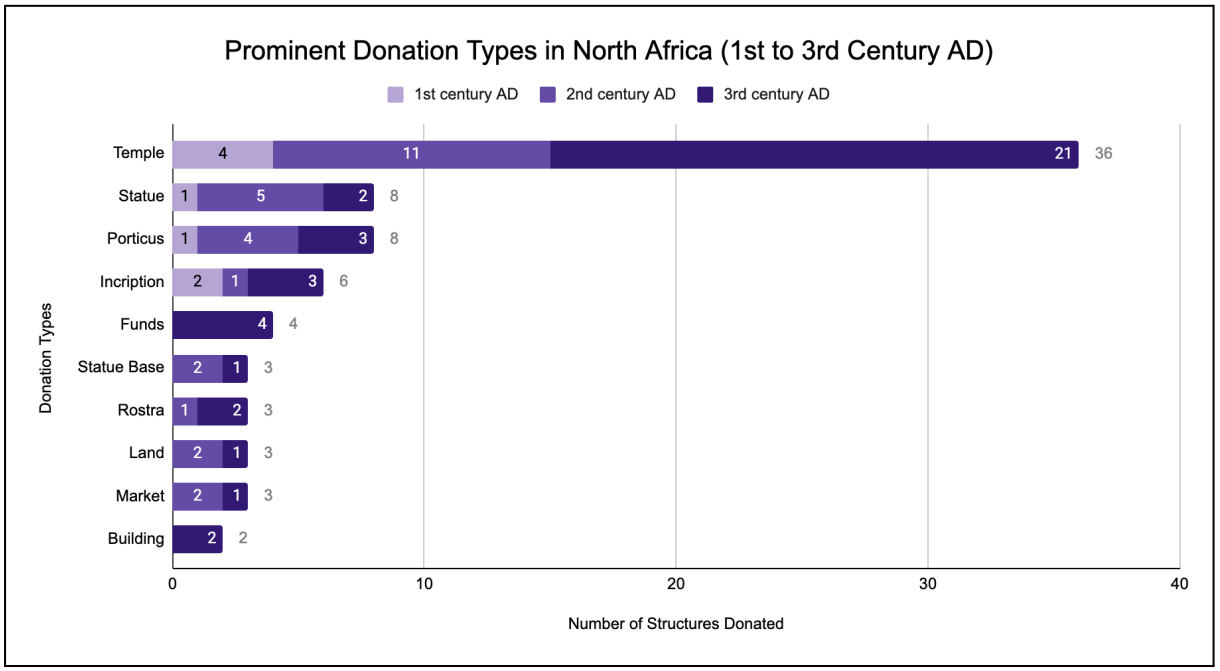


Figure 5.5 Graph showing the primary benefaction types donated by women in the region of North Africa across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

5.3.2.1 Temples

Temples again are shown to be the most prominent benefaction type in the region of North Africa, with the majority of temples being donated in the third century AD (21 donations). Notable cities where at least three benefactresses donated a temple or related structure include Lambaesis (3 temple donations), Leptis Magna (4), and Thugga (7). While there was a large proportion of benefactresses who solely donated temples (14 of the 37 benefactresses who donated temples in North Africa), there were also several combinations of structures which accompanied a temple donation. As seen in Fig. 5.6, *porticus* and

inscriptions are both frequently associated with temple donations.

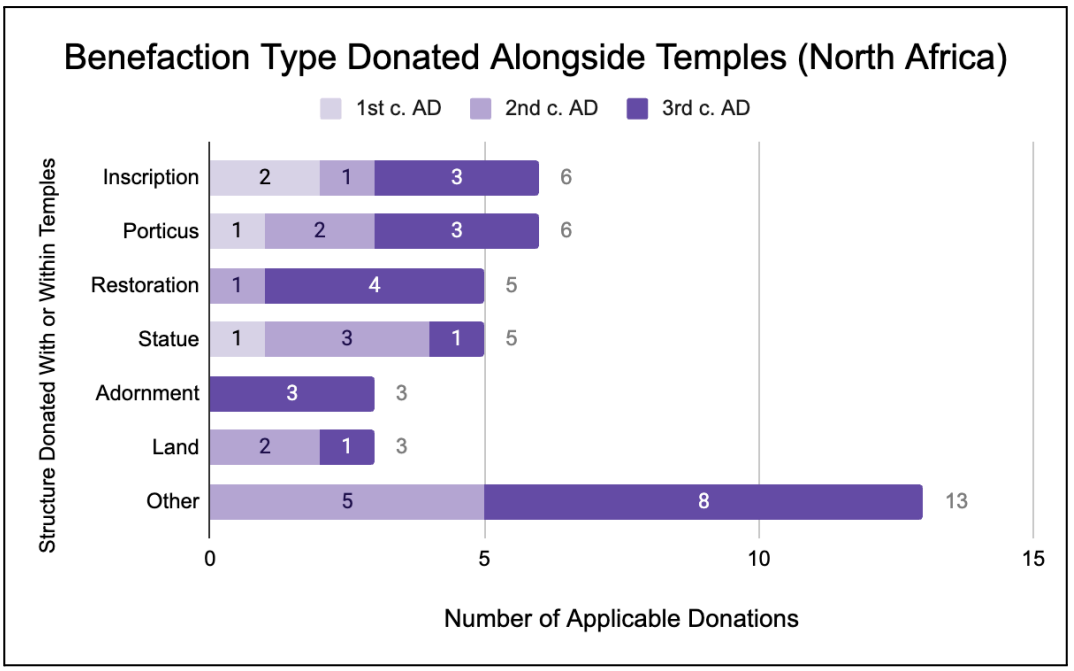


Figure 5.6 Graph showing the frequency of a given benefaction type being donated alongside a temple in North Africa across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

The few mentions of non-religious figures or groups linked to temple donations in North Africa are typically honouring the emperor or imperial family. On the other hand, 27 of the benefactresses who donated temples included texts or depictions which honoured a religious figure. As temples were religious structures, this is not surprising, though it is interesting to examine which deities were most frequently mentioned.

Before comparing Fig. 5.7 to the one created on the same topic for Italian benefactresses (Fig. 5.4), there are a few points to highlight individually. Minerva would share the top of the graph alongside deities linked to the emperor if they were grouped together, including *Fortuna Augusta* (prosperity of the emperor), *Ceres Augusta* (imperial prosperity), *Victoria Augusta* (victory of the emperor), as both had four mentions. This reflects an emphasis on imperial power, which is not seen in the figures from Italy or Asia Minor.

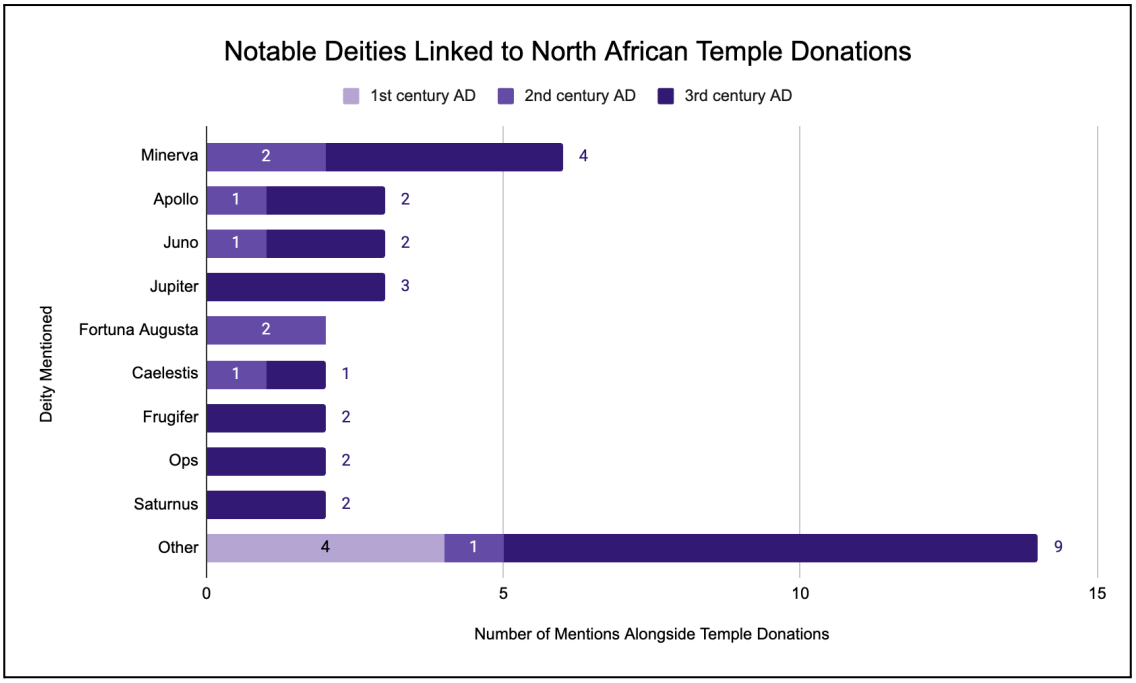


Figure 5.7 Graph showing the notable deities who are mentioned alongside temple donations in the region of North Africa across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

Other comparisons between North Africa and Italy illustrate less of an emphasis on female deities being associated with temple donations. In the Italian graph (Fig. 5.4), the leading figures were goddesses or gods who were closely linked to prominent goddesses. While Minerva and Juno rank highly in the North African graph (Fig. 5.7), there is more of an emphasis on the emperor and increased representation for male deities, Apollo and Jupiter. Apollo did not even appear listed on the Italian benefactresses' figure, which makes his prominent representation in association with North African temples more intriguing.

Thirteen North African temple benefactresses indicated their public roles, though there is a notable lack in variety. All of the public roles mentioned were *flaminica* (4), *flaminica perpetua* (7), or *flaminica divae* (2), which could lead to questions regarding if other roles were available for women in this region.

These unique circumstances flow into the social status segment of this group of benefactresses, as there is a considerable increase in donations from women of decurial status (7), and a decrease in donations from freedwomen (3) when this region is compared to Italy. Historically, the Romans expanded into North Africa seeking fertile land and outposts for the military, which could explain this trend of decurial prominence.

In terms of notable family members associated with temple donations in North Africa, there is a clear preference for co-donations with husbands. Nineteen of the 37 benefactresses

mentioned a family member, and ten of those mentions are 'co-donated with husband' along with three references to the husband without mention of a co-donation. There are mentions of father (4) and son (3), though there are no 'co-donated with father' references and only one 'co-donated with son' reference.

5.3.2.2 Statues

There is only one mention of a statue donation in North Africa in the first century AD, five mentions of statues donations in the second century AD, and three references in the third century AD. The donations are scattered across the region, with the most occurring in Thugga (3) in the first, second, and third centuries AD, showing consistency in donation type as well as a local commitment to public giving.

Nine of the benefactresses in North Africa donated a statue or statue base as part of their benefaction. Alongside statues and statue bases, five of these benefactresses also donated temples, which were likely where the statue(s) were found. *Porticus*, adornments, and inscriptions all are mentioned twice out of the nine relevant benefactresses, though only *porticus* are physical structures linked to the statues.

In terms of the religious entities honoured by these statue donations, there are not any clear trends. The three deities who are named are *Fortuna Augusta*, Mercury, and Minerva, which does correspond with the deities mentioned alongside temple donations in the region. Additionally, out of the nine benefactresses associated with statue donations, seven of them highlighted a public role of *flaminica* or *flaminica perpetua*. Of these benefactresses, women of decurial status were the most frequently represented (2 mentions by ***NA 5*** and ***NA 55***). This indicates that it is not just large, costly structures, such as the temples, that women of this social standing favoured.

5.3.2.3 *Porticus*

There are eight donations of *porticus* in the North African segment of this corpus, four of which occurred in Thugga. There was a singular reference to a *porticus* donation in the first century AD (***NA 38***), four references in the second century AD, and three in the third century AD. This aligns with the typical trajectory of female benefaction in the region.

Nearly all the donations of *porticus* in North Africa were accompanied by the donation of a temple (6 of the 8 donations). The only two instances where a *porticus* was donated separately from a temple in North Africa were the donation by Gabinia Processa where she

only highlighted the *porticus* (***NA 29***) and Modia Quintia's (***NA 45***) *porticus* donation which was accompanied by an aqueduct, statue, and additional adornment for these structures.

The deities highlighted in the temple and *porticus* donations include: Frugifer, Mercury, Minerva, Saturnus, Ops, Venus, and Ceres, with only Frugifer being mentioned more than once (mentioned twice). There were four benefactresses who highlighted their public role, and unsurprisingly they all were a *flaminica perpetua*. This priestess position aligns with the donation of a temple, and perhaps indicates these women were donating in order to pay for or supplement their *summa honoraria*. Half of the benefactresses who donated *porticus* in North Africa included references to family members, some highlighting co-donations with husbands (2), with a father (1), and with a brother (1). Others mentioned their son (1), father (1), and husband (1), but not as part of a co-donation. While this information is not representative of North African donations, it is interesting to note the lack of references to female family members.

5.3.2.4 Bathhouses

A notable difference between Italy and North Africa is the distinct lack of bathhouses in North Africa. Only one donation by a benefactress mentioned a bathhouse, donated by Julia Memmia (Pris)ca Rufa Aemiliana Fidiana in Bulla Regia in the third century AD (***NA 35***) (Hemelrijk 2015, 475; *ILA* 454). Not only did Julia Memmia donate the public bathhouse, but she also set up a cash fund to provide upkeep services, cementing this as a unique circumstance in the province (Hemelrijk 2015, 475, 538). There are several inscriptions in this research where bathhouse donations are noted (26 in total), so there seems to be a distinct lack of this benefaction type within this region.

5.3.2.5 Friezes and *Rostra*

Only two types of benefaction are attested solely in North Africa (they were absent in the data from Italy and Asia Minor). The two types of benefaction were 'friezes' and *'rostra'*, which were mentioned two and three times respectively within the North African section of the dataset, in the cities of Thugga (3) and Thignica (1). As these occur between four benefactresses, there is not enough information to draw clear conclusions, but it can be noted that the rostra donations were all by women who were *flaminicae perpetuae*, and two of those women also noted their decurial status (**NA 17** and **NA 30**).

5.3.2.6 Other

The 'Other' category includes benefaction types which were mentioned less than three times, and features structures such as arches, altars, walls, a bathhouse, an aqueduct, and a

theatre. Unique donations can provide information on the special nature of some buildings and show which structures required a significant expenditure that was not within everyone's means.

5.3.3 Asia Minor

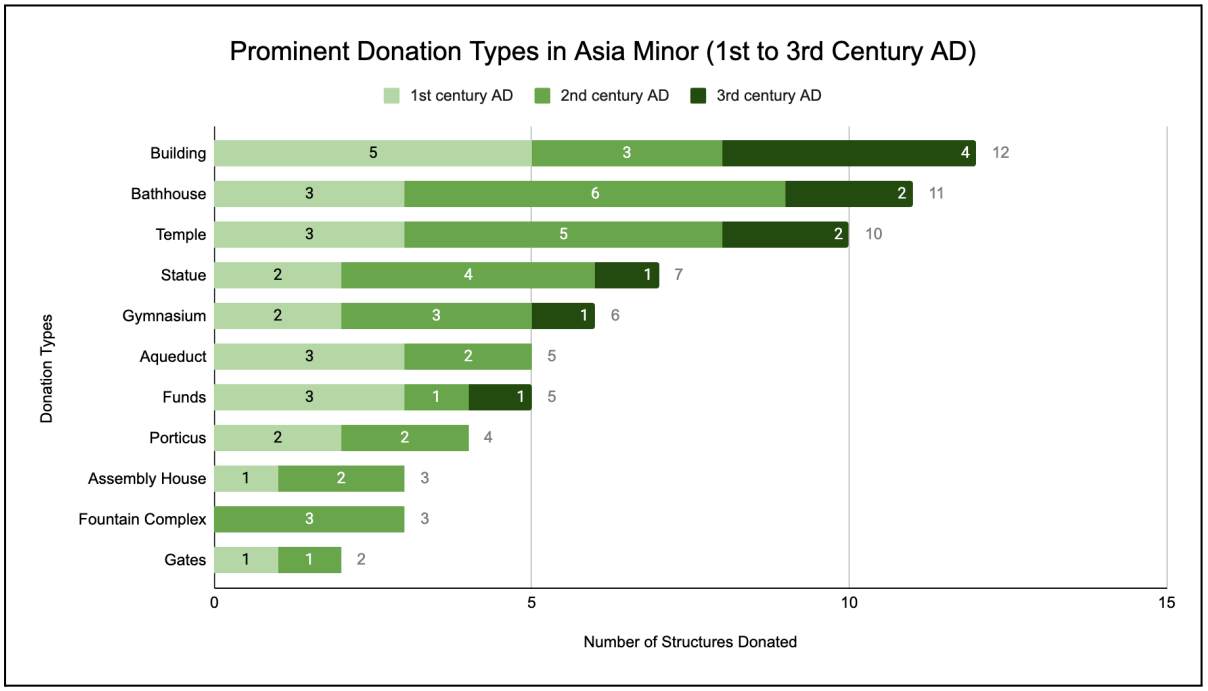


Figure 5.8 Graph showing the primary benefaction types donated by women in the region of Asia Minor across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

5.3.3.1 Initial Interpretations

What is interesting about the benefaction types in Asia Minor is the great variety compared to Italy and North Africa. This makes sense due to the distinct cultural norms experienced in the Roman East, but nevertheless, it is fascinating to see this displayed through data. As one can see in Fig. 5.8, not only are the most prominent benefaction types often different from those displayed in Figs. 5.2 and 5.5, but there is also a large variety of benefaction types represented within the 'Other' segment. This segment captures any benefaction type which occurred less than four times within the dataset, including donations such as *basilicae*, fountain complexes, libraries, synagogues, and more. These distinct donations and more prominent trends will be discussed below, highlighting the similarities and differences between benefactresses in these regions.

5.3.3.2 Temples

The donation of a temple was the most common donation in Asia Minor, where they make up 19 of the donations in this region (though they may have been donated in tandem with other

structures). They are found throughout the region of Asia Minor, and two temples are only noted for the city of Stratonikeia in this corpus.

In terms of timeline, temple donations in Asia Minor were most prominent in the second century AD, with there being three instances in the first century AD, five in the second century AD, and two in the third century AD. There are eight donations which do not retain date information, and thus cannot be placed into any particular century with certainty.

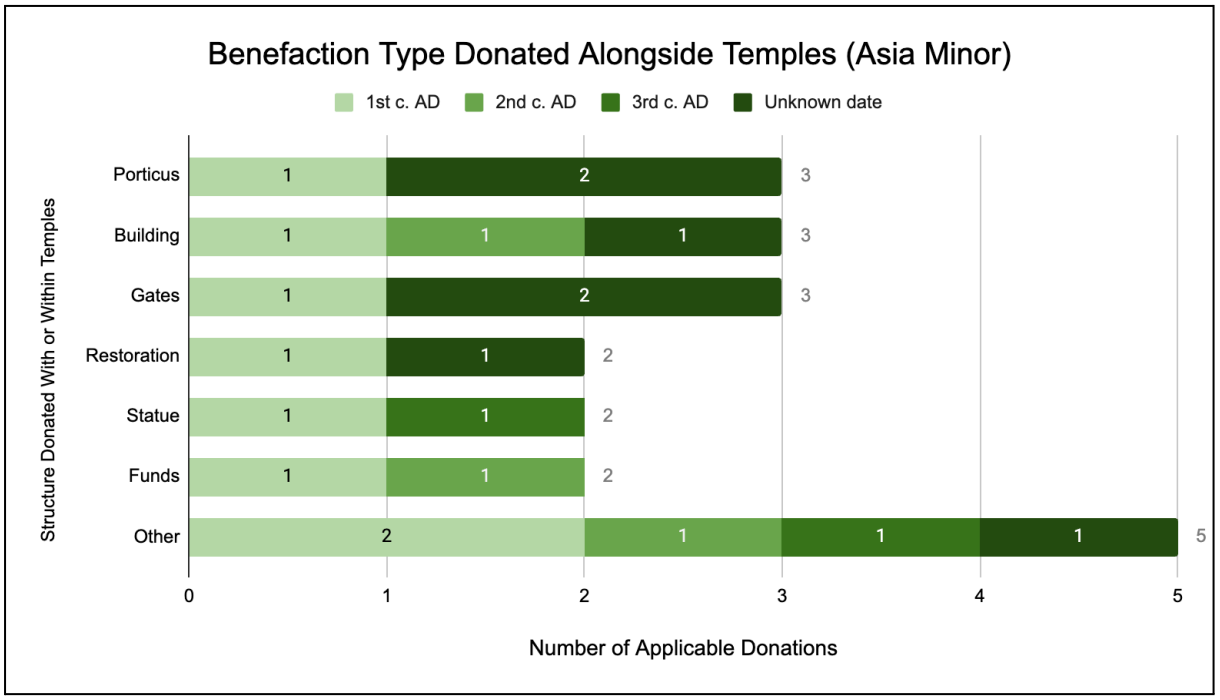


Figure 5.9 Graph showing the frequency of a given benefaction type being donated alongside a temple in Asia Minor across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

When analysing benefaction types which accompanied temple donations, there are three types which rank at the top of the table: buildings, gates, and *porticus* (Fig. 5.9). Likely these were part of the temple precinct, and were not separate benefactions which occurred at a distinct time from the larger temple donation.

When examining temples in Italy and North Africa, figures were added to show the notable deities associated with temple donations, but in Asia Minor there are only three repeated mentions of the goddess Artemis, in addition to singular mentions of Aphrodite, Hera, Hermes, Homonoia, Moira, Tyche, and Zeus. As this information is not well-represented in a figure, especially as three of the mentions do not have associated date information, a chart for this region has not been created.

5.3.3.3 Bathhouses, Aqueducts, and Fountain Complexes

One category that stands out in Asia Minor are benefactions related to water features. There are quite a few structures in this category, including: bathhouses, aqueducts, fountain complexes, drains, and wells. Each of these subcategories bring additional understanding to the overall connection between benefactresses and water features.

Bathhouses

While at least one example of a bathhouse is found in each region, there is a clear preference for bathhouses as donation types in Asia Minor which is not seen in Italy or North Africa. Bathhouse donations by benefactresses are found throughout the Roman East, and two bathhouses are only found in two of the represented cities in this research, Keramos and Stratonikeia. In examining the dates of benefaction, there is a slight preference for the second century AD, as six of the thirteen bathhouse donations fall within this century. This is followed by the first century AD with three bathhouse donations, and then the third century AD with two donations; two donations are undated. When comparing these dates of prominence to Italy, there was an even distribution of bathhouse donations in the first and second centuries (4 each), before dropping significantly in the third century AD (1), and the remainder have unknown dates (3). The only evidence of a bathhouse donation in North Africa comes from the third century AD (***NA 35***). As the preference for bathhouse donations grew in Asia Minor in the second century AD, a connection could be drawn which suggests women's financial freedom also increased during this time period (Morrell 2020).

The only deity mentioned among the bathhouse donations in Asia Minor is Aphrodite, which is unsurprising due to the donation occurring in Aphrodisias where Aphrodite was the tutelary goddess. No other deities are mentioned alongside bathhouse donations in any of the regions in this research, so it would appear that religious symbolism was not emphasised within bathhouse donations. Interestingly, 5 of bathhouse donors listed *stephanephoros* as part of their social roles, which provides evidence for bathhouse donations occurring as a non-religious structure.

Aqueducts

The Roman aqueduct was often the only structure associated with a given benefactress, though there were a few occasions where aqueducts were donated in combination with other water features such as a fountain complex, bathhouse, drain, or well (Mantas 1994, 352, 364). There is no evidence of aqueducts being donated in the third century AD, which correlates with the declining popularity of public benefaction in Asia Minor in this century.

Aqueducts were not linked to religious figures, aside from one example which was again linked to the goddess Aphrodite in the city of Aphrodisias (*MAMA VIII*, no 449; Mantas 1994, 351).

All but one of the aqueduct donations with family information correlated with co-donations with male relatives, primarily husbands (3 mentions), then sons (2 mentions), and finally one co-donation with a benefactress' father. The one woman who did not highlight her relatives as co-donors did mention her father and husband within the inscription (***AM 60***). One can hypothesise that these were sizable financial commitments, as nearly all of them required multiple contributors (Hemelrijk 2015, 122). The two benefactresses who did not highlight co-donors have in common the role of *stephanephoros*, again emphasising the social and financial power which was held by women in this role (***AM 60*** and ***AM 79***) (Mantas 1994, 342; Van Bremen 1996, 309). None of the other aqueduct donors in this research dataset shared that they held this role, reinforcing that this correlation could be important in understanding larger donations in conjunction with social roles.

When comparing the prominence of aqueduct donations to the other regions in this research, there are a few direct conclusions which can be drawn. There are seven examples of aqueduct donations in Asia Minor, five in Italy, and only one in North Africa. While not enough information to provide definitive answers, this information does provide a general idea of the regional popularity of this type of benefaction. None of these donations occurred during the third century AD, although there are three which do not have date information. The lack of religious connections associated with aqueducts existed throughout the Roman Empire, and there is one additional reference to a deity in the regions outside of Asia Minor. Lucretia Sabina in Italy (***It 57***) linked her donation to the goddess Isis, which appears to be an individual circumstance, as it is not repeated in any other donations (Hemelrijk 2015, 451).

Fountain Complexes

Three of the four fountain complexes donated in Asia Minor included date information, and they all were dated to the second century AD. Of this sample, it can also be noted that only one of these complexes was donated on its own, as the three other donations were donated alongside other structures. One woman in Colonia Augusta Trajana, in Dacia, named Valeria Frontilla (***AM 76***) donated a fountain complex, bathhouse, and aqueduct, which must have been quite costly.

In terms of those honoured by the fountain complex donations, there is some indication that these benefactresses honoured the imperial family and their own family. This could be done through assembling a collection of statues of imperial family members next to statues of the donor's family members, but epigraphic evidence is also revealing. Deities honoured by fountain-donating benefactresses include Artemis (mentioned twice), Eros, Dionysus, Aphrodite, Demeter, Zeus, Hera, and the Great Mother Goddess (often linked to Cybele). While these are mostly singular references, it is unique that they are all Greek deities, which again alludes to the cultural differences and background which strongly influenced society in Asia Minor. Three of the four women in this segment were denoted as priestesses, with one woman highlighting her role as a *hydrophoros (**AM 71**)*, while another noted her ties to the imperial cult and role of *archiereia* alongside her priestess position (***AM 18***).

Among the three benefactresses with family associations, relatives such as fathers (2) and a husband (1) are included, and as co-donors these benefactresses named a brother, nephew, and husband. Such a small sample does not indicate a trend, but the occurrence of multiple co-donations among this group suggests that these large structures often needed a group of funders to complete the costly projects.

Drains and wells

One benefactress chose to donate a drain, a well, and an aqueduct, and thus donated nearly all of the water features discussed in this section (though they were likely all part of a singular project rather than separate ventures). Mnemosyne in Didyma (***AM 57***) co-donated with both her husband and son to honour Mnemosyne's daughter's position as *hydrophoros* in the city (Mantas 1994, 352; *IDidyma*, no 140).

5.3.3.4 Gymnasia and Stadiums

Once we navigate away from the notable water features donated in Asia Minor, there are numerous other examples from the region which stand apart from the donations in Italy and North Africa. Asia Minor was the only region where entertainment or training buildings such as *gymnasia* and stadiums were donated by benefactresses. *Gymnasia* were more significant in the record in this region, but there was one reference to a stadium in Ephesos, which is similar enough in purpose to fit alongside the more popular *gymnasia* (Mantas 1994, 349; *IEphesos* no. 411). Out of the seven references to athletic centres, three were donated in the first century AD, three were donated in the second century AD, and one was donated in the third century AD. This corresponds with the general trend of benefaction within Asia Minor.

Most of the women who donated these structures highlighted their public roles, which included *agonothetes, stephanephoros*, Daughter of the City, *prytanis, archiereia, gymnasiarch* and priestess, with a slight preference for the title *archiereia* (3 mentions) which was closely followed by 'Daughter of the City' (2 mentions). Since athletic structures are not particularly known for their connections to religious entities, it makes sense that the public roles highlighted by the benefactresses did not tend to emphasise their religious roles, but rather their administrative positions within their cities (Morgan 2014, 164).

There were two instances of athletic structure donations which were co-donations (***AM 37*** and ***AM 66***), but the rest instead celebrated connections to family members without implying they aided in funding the structures (Mantas 1994, 349; *IEphesos* no. 411, no 440, no 460). This information allows us to draw conclusions pertaining to the cost of these buildings, as they did not require donors to act as co-donors to be able to afford them. Overall these entertainment structures are fascinating given the fact that the women in Asia Minor were the only ones in the research to donate them.

5.3.3.5 Libraries

There are only three mentions of library donations in the entire dataset, and two of them were located in Asia Minor (the other is in Italy, ***It 66***). It should be noted that the library donation in Italy came from Matidia Minor, who was the great-niece of the emperor Trajan and, therefore, belonged to the imperial family (Hemelrijk 2015, 463). This is to say that her donations cannot be taken as the norm for Italian elites, and must be seen in a different light. This knowledge makes the library donations in Asia Minor all the more interesting.

The first library donation in Asia Minor was commissioned by Flavia Melitine (***AM 36***), who was actively participating in euergetism in Pergamon in the second century AD (Fejfer 2008, 61; Van Bremen 1996, 195). Her donation of a library was placed within the city's Asklepieion (temple of Asklepios), where she honoured the emperor Hadrian and as well as the deity Asklepios (Fejfer 2008, 61; Van Bremen 1996, 195). Asklepios is often linked with medicine as a son of Apollo, thus the library within this temple and the honorific inscriptions are all compatible (Yiannaki et al., 2020, 41-43, 46).

The other benefactress in Asia Minor noted for her library donation was Julia Paula in Aphrodisias (***AM 46***). This library was a co-donation with her husband Jason Prabreus, one of several donations undertaken by the couple (library, *porticus*, *stoa*, and archive) (Morgan 2014, 212).

5.3.3.6 Other

There was one donation type which occurred more than once in the 'Other' category which has not been addressed in this Quantitative Findings Chapter; the donation of two synagogues. These donations occurred in the first and second centuries AD, and the benefactresses were located in ancient Akmonia and Phocaea. In investigating the Jewish populations in Asia Minor, it was noted that the only Hebrew inscriptions in the wider region come from a few cities (including Akmonia), though they were from Late Antiquity, after the time of these two benefactresses (Trebilco 1991, 44; *MAMA VI*, 334).

The synagogues were the only noted donation from either one of these benefactresses, named Julia Severa and Tation. Julia Severa (***AM 42***) noted her public role as an *agonothetes* and *archiereia*, while Tation (***AM 69***) specifically mentioned her status as a Roman citizen as well as her role as a *stephanephoros*. Both benefactresses highlighted male family members alongside their synagogue donations, with Julia Severa noting her husband and son, and Tation sharing her links to her father and grandfather. The behaviour of both benefactresses is in line with other women from the region, even though their religious beliefs, or at least ties, were different.

There are several donations which only appeared once in the data for this region. These include an agora, arch, basilica, *paediskeion* (brothel), bull statue, drain, land, lavatory, propylon, shrine, stadium, temple pillars, wall, and a well. The *agora* is notable as it must have been a massive financial commitment, but aside from epigraphic evidence, there have not been any buildings linked to the benefactress Theodosia's donation as no excavations have taken place in Arkesine (***AM 70***) (Le Quéré 2011, 333). Some of these singular donations were quite significant in size and cost, while others were a part of a larger structure.

5.4 Religious Entities Honoured by the Donations

5.4.1 Introduction

Understanding the relationships between religious ties and benefactresses' motivations is crucial for a holistic view and understanding of Roman women's roles in the first to third centuries AD. Religion provides appreciation of who was influential in a region, the characteristics which were valued, and creates a link between benefactresses across regions and timeframes. When an unexpected deity appears in this section, this should lead

to deeper investigations into the setting where the religious figure was valued and honoured by these women.

5.4.2 Italy

When evaluating this information on deities mentioned within inscriptions in Roman Italy, it is clear that there was an explicit preference for honoring religious entities who were female. This trend suggests a desire for benefactresses to link female virtues and symbolism with their donations. The gods who are mentioned frequently have a direct link to the female deities as their partner or sibling, which may explain why some benefactresses elected to honour these gods within their inscriptions and monumental structures. Figure 5.10 presents the most frequently represented deities, followed by a brief discussion on the other gods and goddesses who are recorded in donations.

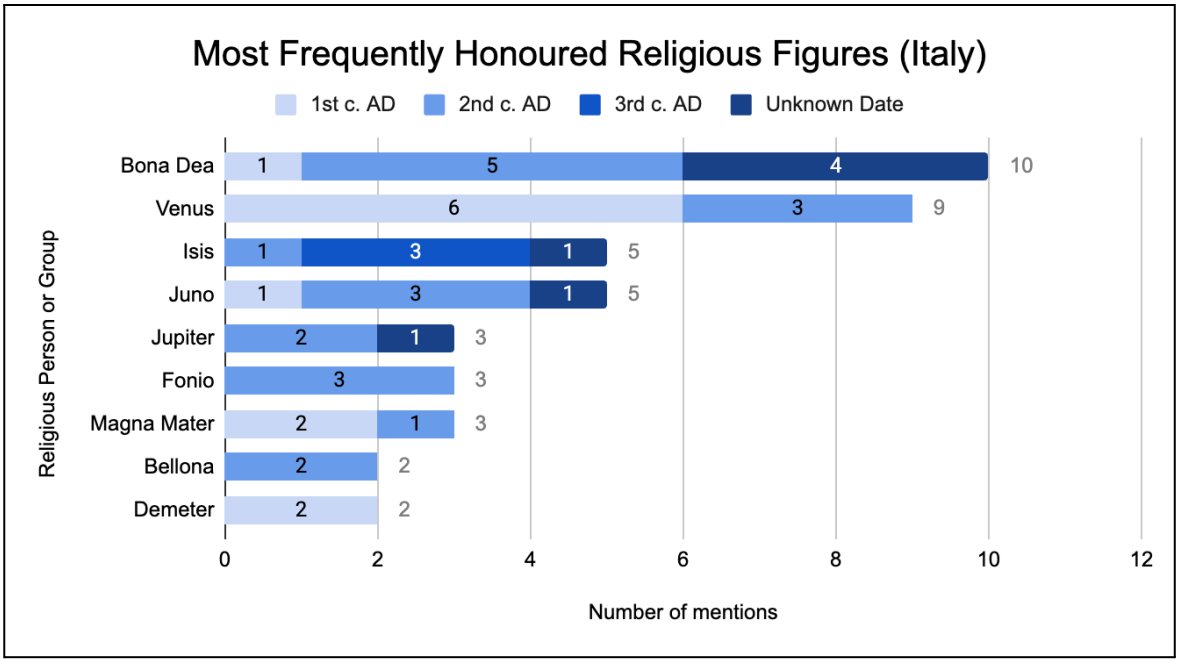


Figure 5.10. Graph showing the religious entities honoured by benefactresses in the region of Italy across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

5.4.2.1 Bona Dea

In investigating the women who mentioned Bona Dea in their inscriptions, whether that be a one-off instance or an entire donation in her honour, there are a few trends which are worth discussing. As one can see from Fig. 5.10, 10 of benefactresses donating in Italy between the first to third centuries mentioned Bona Dea, plus there were two who donated in the first century BC. Every one of these women was noted for their donation of a temple, which is not surprising as we discuss religious figures alongside benefaction.

This research dataset supports this hypothesis, as eight of the 12 benefactresses were identified as freedwomen, in addition to one woman of decurial status, and three women with unknown social status. This means that 8 of the women who are linked to the goddess Bona Dea within this corpus were freedwomen, a significant amount.

All 12 of these donations occurred before the 3rd century AD. This aligns with the heights of beneficence for women in Roman Italy (Hemelrijk 2015, 20). Eight of the 12 women in this section highlighted in inscriptions that the donation took place thanks to their own funds, by themselves, or on their own accord.

There is an example of two female co-donors Marcia Pri(...) with Marcia Nomas (***It 63*** and ***It 64***), who donated a temple in honour of Bona Dea in Ficulea along with one of their husbands, which is one of the most interesting cases out of this group because of the decisions made around co-donating (Hemelrijk 2015, 452; *CIL* 14.4001). The husband was included as a co-donor of the larger temple structure, but only the women were a part of the donation of the sanctuary of Bona Dea, noted by the phrase '*solo*' in connection to this room (*CIL* 14.4001).

5.4.2.2 Venus

Closely following Bona Dea in number of honorary mentions in Italy was the goddess Venus. Upon first glance, an interesting commonality between the benefactresses who highlighted Venus is that they only mentioned her within their inscriptions, and no other deities alongside her. This implies a certain significance to the goddess, which will be explored through additional data points.

In terms of timeline, mentions of the goddess Venus occurred from the first century BC to the second century AD. This aligns with the peak of benefaction in Roman Italy, though it is interesting to note how the earliest benefactresses were linking themselves to Venus. When discussing the benefaction types which coincide with mentions of Venus, aside from temples (which is linked for every benefactress in this section of the dataset), there are mentions of kitchens (inside the temples), *porticus*, altars, statues, and other singular associated donations. Four women in this segment co-donated a temple kitchen together, which explains why the data shows this association as the most frequently occurring.

When examining the public roles of the benefactress who honoured Venus with their donations in Italy, we are hampered by the lack of data. On the other hand, when moving to

the social status of these women, there is clearly a preference for freedwomen associating themselves with Venus (5), although they are closely followed by women of equestrian status (3). This variety in social status shows that association with the goddess was not limited to one social class.

Six of the ten women in this segment of the data highlighted that the donation was *de suo* or from their own funds. This statement paired with the power of associating with Venus suggests an amount of independence among these donors.

There are a few co-donations in this segment, the aforementioned temple kitchen which honoured Venus (***It 28***, ***It 38***, ***It 71***, and ***It 106***), and two women with unknown social status who co-donated a statue base and altar within a temple of Venus (***It 61*** and ***It 100***). The only co-donation with a male relative among this segment of benefactresses, was one in Herculaneum where the woman Vibidia Saturnina (***It 108***) donated a temple, statue, *porticus*, and corresponding funds for restoration with her son. This could be understood as her elevating her young son's social status for the future, and thus was still a decision made primarily by the benefactress. Aside from these instances, in terms of family members mentioned alongside the donations, only one benefactress chose to mention her husband, as well as her father (***It 104***).

5.4.2.3 Isis

Isis is mentioned five times among the 53 benefactions in Italy which were linked with a religious figure and among the 111 benefactresses who were active in Roman Italy. Unlike Bona Dea and Venus, these donations occurred later in the record, primarily in the second and third centuries AD. Two of the five women co-donated their temple and building structures together, one woman co-donated a temple with her husband, and the remaining two benefactresses appear to have donated alone. There is limited information on public roles and social status for these women who honoured Isis, but it is worth noting that the only woman who mentioned her freedwoman status is the woman who co-donated the temple with her husband (***It 89***).

5.4.2.4 Juno

Juno was associated with five of the 53 benefactresses in Italy who had inscription information honouring a deity, which continues the trend of Italian benefactresses linking themselves to female deities. Three of the five benefactresses who associated their donations with Juno were active in Aquileia, although two of these women were co-donors. This could imply that this city had a particular history with the goddess or that there was a

prominent temple in Aquileia which linked the region to Juno. Donations primarily occurred in the first and second centuries AD, which is a bit earlier than donations associated with Isis, but this makes sense as Isis grew in importance throughout the expansion of the empire, particularly once there was power in Egypt (Gasparini and Veymiers 2018, 1-60).

Benefaction types which were commissioned alongside temples honouring Juno include statues, *porticus*, walls, kitchens, land, and a *schola*. Aside from temples and corresponding statues, the most frequently mentioned benefaction type by women who honoured Isis were *porticus*, which likely were attached to the aforementioned temples.

5.4.2.5 Jupiter

Jupiter is the most prominently mentioned male deity honoured by benefactress in Roman Italy. There were four mentions of Jupiter from Italian benefactresses, and the majority of them came from the second century AD (2), one was linked to the first century BC, and another did not retain date information.

All four women who honoured Jupiter donated a temple, or part of a temple in the case of Allia Sat(..) (***It 9***) who donated a temple kitchen. This indicates that Jupiter was a worthwhile deity for women to associate with, or perhaps that these women were renovating or rebuilding an existing temple which had been built in Jupiter's honour.

A mother-daughter pair (***It 10*** and ***It 43***) donated a temple in Ulubrae, Italy, not only to honour Jupiter, but also the imperial cult. Perhaps they believed that the emperor would prefer to be linked to Jupiter rather than a female deity such as Venus. That being said, these two benefactresses honoured both Jupiter and Bellona, so perhaps the presence of Jupiter is amplified due to his link to other female deities.

5.4.2.6 Fonio

The god Fonio appears three times among benefactresses donating in Italy due to the co-donation between Aninia Magna, Cornelia Ephyre, and Seia Ionis (***It 11***, ***It 30***, and ***It 86***) who all took part in a temple donation honouring Fonio. These three freedwomen held the role of *magistrae* of Bona Dea in their city of Aquileia, and participated in the restoration of a temple and its connecting *porticus*. This link to Bona Dea may explain the benefactresses' choice to renovate a temple of Fonio, as this god was sometimes linked to Bona Dea, especially in regional depictions of the goddess (Lott 2014, 154-155).

5.4.2.7 Magna Mater

Magna Mater was mentioned by three benefactresses in Roman Italy between the first and second centuries AD, and for two separate temple donations (one of them was a co-donation shared by two women). The two women in Forum Sempronii, Italy (***It 21*** and ***It 76***) restored a temple honouring Magna Mater in the first century AD, an early example of restoration by benefactresses in the region.

The other temple donation does not appear to be a restoration, and occurred in the second century AD in Cales. The benefactress Vitrasia Faustina (***It 109***) highlights that she paid for this temple from her own funds, and the knowledge that she was a daughter of a consul potentially illustrates how she was able to commission this structure (Richlin 2011, 189).

5.4.2.8 Other

Religious deities mentioned just once in Roman Italy, which were left out of Fig. 5.10 include Copia, Castor and Pollux, *Concordia and Pietas Augusta*, the deified empress, Diana, *Genius Coloniae*, Hercules, Minerva, Silvanus, Spes, and *Genius Augusti*. There is not much to be drawn from these cases, though with additional research and newer findings, perhaps their relevance will be found to be greater.

5.4.2.9 In summary

Several trends emerge when examining the benefactresses who were active in Roman Italy who honoured religious figures with their donations. These associations were mostly made in the first and second centuries AD, with few occurring outside of those centuries. This could be a trend indicating something about peak religiosity, or this could be due to the prominence of female benefaction during those time periods. There are not one or two cities which stand out in terms of religious honours, but rather the practice is spread throughout the region.

In terms of benefaction types which most frequently coincided with donations to a deity, there were five which stood out: temples, statues, restorations, *porticus*, and kitchens. Forty-eight of the 53 donations included temples, 18 of them mentioned restorations, 14 of them refer to *porticus*, 13 of them included statues, and 10 of them mention kitchens. In examining this information, all of these features could be associated with a larger temple structure so it is likely that these benefaction types were somehow linked to temple donations. In the five examples which did not mention a temple donation, the predominant benefaction types were statues, *porticus* and then some unique structures such as a theatre, *schola*, garden, crypt and basilica.

Fourteen of these benefactresses have associated public role information, and there is a strong predominance of roles of a *sacerdos* or *magistra*. In addition, 28 of these women noted their social status, and the vast majority of donations were contributed by freedwomen (20), followed by women of decurial and equestrian status (4 each). While it is highly possible that there are some other benefactresses whose mention of a deity is lost, the frequency of freedwomen donations is significant. This adds further weight to the hypothesis that freedwomen or women of lower social classes were able to gain additional respect and commendation for their donations if they were to link their donations with a god.

5.4.3 North Africa

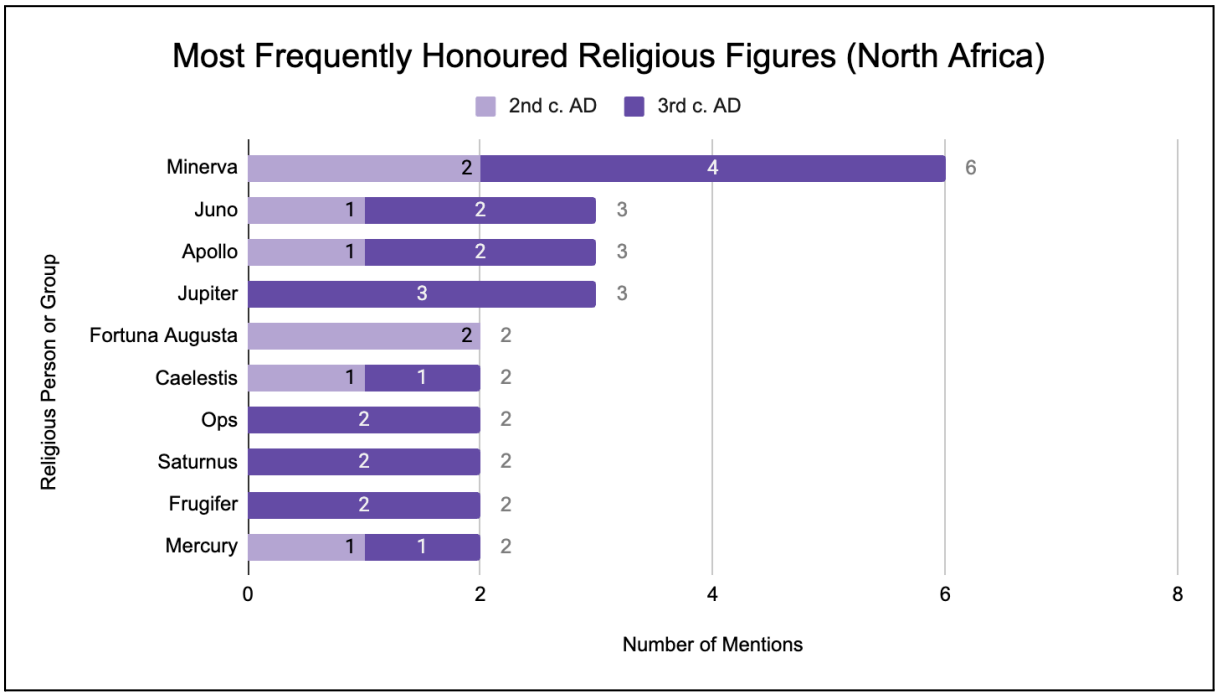


Figure 5.11. Graph showing the religious entities most frequently honoured by benefactresses in the region of North Africa across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

5.4.3.1 Minerva

Minerva is mentioned by six of the 55 benefactresses donating in North Africa, though only 30 of these benefactresses are known to have highlighted any religious deity. When comparing influences, Minerva's presence in North Africa is more comparable to Venus, who ranked second in mentions in the Roman Italy section of the dataset. This only affirms Bona Dea's influence in Roman Italy. Regionally, only two of these women's donations and corresponding inscriptions were found in the same city, Lambaesis in Numidia (***NA 34*** and ***NA 52***). The other four cities where these benefactresses were active were Derirat, Leptis Magna, Thugga, and Zaruria.

All of the benefactresses were active in the second or third centuries AD. This aligns with the peak of benefaction in Roman North Africa. Nearly all of these women are associated with a part of a temple donation, except for Aquilia Blaesilla, who donated a *schola* in Leptis Magna (***NA 11***). There is not much additional information on Aquilia, but it is recorded that she mentioned the name of her son alongside the donation, but not as a co-donor. Aside from the temples and the *schola*, women associated with Minerva were part of donations including a frieze, *rostra*, *porticus*, land, restorations, statues, statue bases, a wall, and an inscription.

Two of the women who donated a temple for Minerva also highlighted their roles as *flaminica perpetua* or as a priestess of the imperial cult (***NA 30*** and ***NA 34***). The only co-donations mentioned were by two of the benefactresses who specified that their contributions were part of a co-donation with their husbands (***NA 34*** and ***NA 48***).

5.4.3.2 Juno

Juno is the first deity to be highlighted in two of the three regions, which allows for some initial comparisons. In North Africa, Juno was mentioned by three of the 30 women who had recorded religious affiliations in their donations. This is similar to the five women who linked themselves to the goddess in Italy. In regard to time frame, Juno was primarily mentioned by benefactresses in the third century AD, although one of the women (Sittia Julla, ***NA 50***) was active in the second century AD.

All three of the benefactresses in this section were involved in a temple donation. While one benefactress solely mentioned Juno alongside her donation, the other two women in this segment also mentioned Jupiter. One of these women mentioned Juno, Jupiter, Minerva, and Tanans, which does dilute the focus on Juno in this donation. Two of the three benefactresses did mention that their contributions were a co-donation with their husbands (***NA 34*** and ***NA 37***). Interestingly, these two women who co-donated with their husbands were also the two women who mentioned Juno alongside Jupiter, which indicates a desire to represent marital concordance with deity choices.

5.4.3.3 Apollo

While some benefactresses honoured Juno and Jupiter alongside each other, only singular mentions of Apollo were found, meaning that he was not coupled with other deities in the honorific inscriptions. Three North African benefactresses highlighted Apollo, and their donations occurred in both the second and third centuries AD. The donations took place in three separate cities (Muzuc, Leptis Magna, and Calama), and were all temple-related with associated contributions such as adornment, funds, land, and plans for upkeep.

The benefactress with the most associated information was Clodia Macrina of Muzuc (***NA 22***), who indicated that she was of senatorial status and was active during the third century AD. She built and furnished a temple for Apollo with a combination of her own funds and those promised by her grandfather. Despite technically co-donating with her grandfather, her inscription indicates that she freely donated her own money (*a solo*) as an additional contribution to the original promised sum (Hemelrijk 2015, 443).

5.4.3.4 Jupiter

While Juno has already been discussed, her partner Jupiter has not been addressed in his own realm. There is only one woman who just honoured Jupiter without Juno, though Jupiter did also appear linked with Minerva in the temple donation of Postimia Lucilla Postimiana in Deirat (***NA 48***).

Julia Faustina of Lambaesis, a *flaminica perpetua*, also donated a temple, a wall and a further inscription (***NA 34***). She honoured her husband, several deities (Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, and Tanans), as well as the emperor and further imperial figures, linking her religious role with the imperial family.

Interestingly, all three women who honoured Jupiter with their donations co-donated with their husbands. As there are only three women in this section, no significant trend can be determined, but this is valuable information when considering whether women showed a preference for honouring female deities with their donations.

5.4.3.5 Imperial Deities and Imperial Cult

In North Africa, there are several mentions of deities which embody some aspect of life which was linked to the imperial family. These include: *Ceres Augusta* (fertility/grain provision), *Fortuna Augusta* (prosperity), *Genius Augusti* (life spirit), and *Victoria Augusta* (victory). These deities are not absent from Italy, but they appear more frequently in North Africa, and do not appear in this research data for the benefactresses in Asia Minor. Five of 30 benefactresses in North Africa with religious links mention at least one of these figures, while only two of the 53 women with associated religious information in Italy do the same.

The most frequently mentioned within this segment of the relevant data is *Fortuna Augusta* (2 mentions), followed by singular mentions of *Ceres Augusta*, *Genius Augusti*, and *Victoria Augusta*. The donations which honoured these deities primarily occurred in the second century AD (2 mentions) with singular outliers occurring in the first and third centuries AD.

The donations which honour these deities were typically temples, temple additions, or statues. Only one of these donations actively honoured the emperor as well as the imperial deity (in this case, *Victoria Augusta*) (***NA 28***).

A clear trend is that the majority of the benefactresses in this segment of the dataset were freedwomen serving as *flaminicae*. While many assume that priesthoods were positions for the elite, there were several instances where inscriptions from freedmen would denote their roles as *seviri Augustales* (priests of the imperial cult), while freedwomen are found acting as *flaminicae* as far back as the first century AD (Hemelrijk 2005b, 159-160). Two of these benefactresses indicate that the donation was a 'decree of the decurions', which suggests that the contributions were in addition to or as an alternative to the *summa honoraria*. Three women also declared that the donations came from their own money, although each of these women also highlight their relationship with their fathers in the inscription.

5.4.3.6 Other

Any deities which were only mentioned once were left out of Fig. 5.11, and while there are not enough mentions of any of them to conclude direct trends, it is worth noting that there were very similar numbers of deities in the ‘Other’ category across all three regions discussed here. The deities listed under the 'Other' category in North Africa were: Ceres, *Ceres Augusta*, *Genius Augusti*, Mars, the deified empress, Tanans, Magna Mater, Mercurius Sobrius, Neptunus, Tellus, Venus, and *Victoria Augusta*.

5.4.3.7 In summary

In comparison with the deities mentioned in Roman Italy, there is a clear difference in the number of references to female deities depicted in the graphs. In Italy, the four most frequently mentioned deities were female, while in North Africa only the top two slots were held by female deities. There is a much greater emphasis on what have been referred to as the imperial deities in this thesis, which indicates a greater reverence for the connection between the region and the imperial family.

5.4.4 Asia Minor

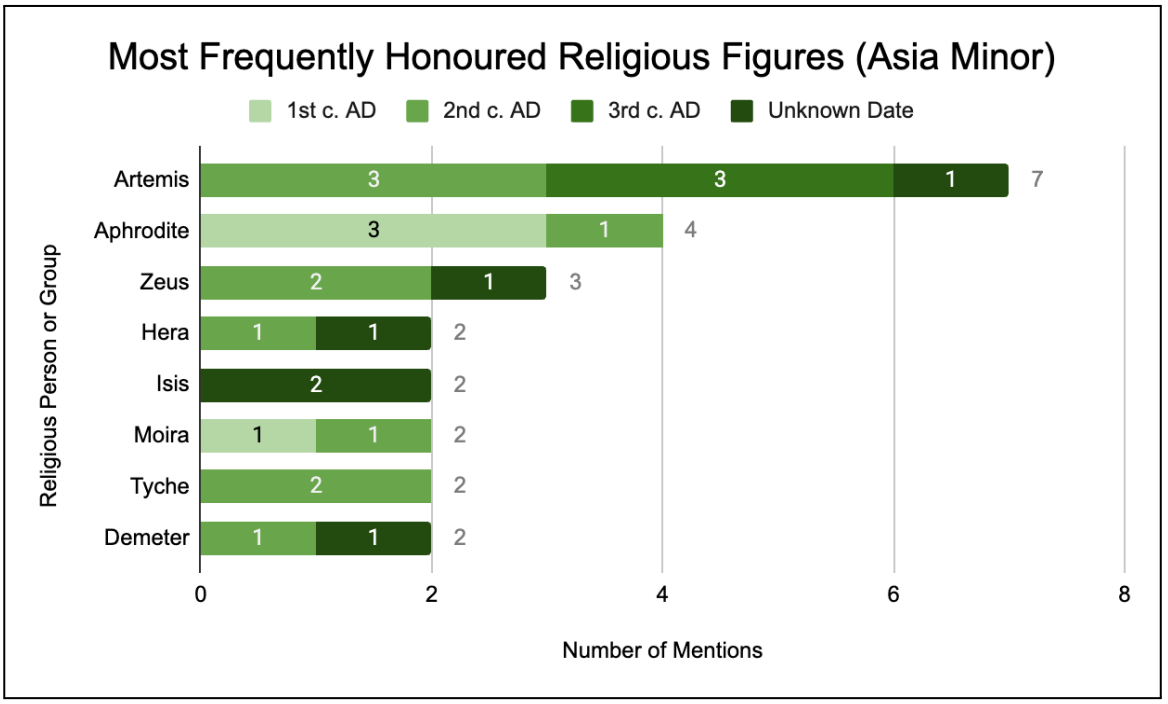


Figure 5.12. Graph showing the religious entities honoured by benefactresses in the region of Asia Minor across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

As Fig. 5.12 shows, there is substantially less variety among the deities mentioned in benefactresses' inscriptions in Roman Asia Minor. There was a strong focus on the goddesses Artemis and Aphrodite, and the remainder of the religious entities were only mentioned a few times. Additionally, there were much fewer instances where a religious entity was mentioned at all, whereas in Roman Italy and North Africa, religious connections and symbolism appeared to have been quite important for donors. This allows us to gauge what were the priorities for benefactresses and their families, and further investigate why these would have varied between regions. A similar trend to the previously mentioned regions is that benefactresses highlighted goddesses in their inscriptions and sometimes visually in their donations.

5.4.4.1 Artemis

There is a clear preference for honouring the goddess Artemis, as seven out of the 24 benefactresses who mentioned a religious deity highlighted Artemis. As Artemis is a Greek goddess, she was not referenced by the benefactresses in Italy or North Africa. This being said, her Roman equivalent Diana was only mentioned once in the other regions, in Verona, Italy (***It 50***).

Mentions of Artemis in Asia Minor occurred between the second and third centuries AD, with two donations which were unable to be dated. The cities where Artemis is named are confined to Bonitai (2 donations), Ionia (1), Perge (2), and Termessos (1 co-donation by a pair of benefactresses). The building types are similar to religious structures discussed in the other regions, except that in addition to temples and statues, women in Asia Minor donated fountain complexes when honouring Artemis. This will be analysed further in the Discussion Chapter.

Two notable benefactresses highlighted their relationship with the emperor, the imperial family, and their own family alongside references to the goddess Artemis (***AM 18*** and ***AM 62***). This practice was uncommon in Italy and North Africa, but appeared in two of the seven donations discussed here. Additionally, these were the only two women out of the seven being discussed here who highlighted their roles as priestess of the imperial cult. These same two women were the only ones among this group of benefactresses who mentioned other deities alongside Artemis. One of these, Aurelia Paulina from Perge (***AM 18***), also included Eros, Dionysus, and Aphrodite in her fountain complex donation, whilst Plancia Magna (***AM 62***), also from Perge, mentioned the goddess Tyche in her gate complex.

In terms of public roles held by benefactresses linked to Artemis, six of the seven benefactresses held a role as a priestess, though some specifically mentioned that they were a high priestess or priestess of the imperial cult. Additionally one woman was denoted as being a *hydrophoros* (***AM 71***), while another was a *gymnasiarch* (***AM 14***). Plancia Magna held the most roles, as she was documented as being a Daughter of the City, an *archiereia*, a *magistra*, a *demiourgos*, a priestess of the imperial cult, and a *gymnasiarch*.

While there is public role information for these women, there is no social status information associated with any of them. Only a mother and daughter pair specified that they co-donated the temple from their own funds (***AM 15*** and ***AM 17***). When it comes to familial relationships mentioned by women who revered Artemis, four referenced their fathers and three referred to their husbands, although none of these were co-donations.

5.4.4.2 Zeus

Zeus, linked to three benefactresses in Asia Minor, is an interesting occurrence compared to donations honouring Artemis. Two of the three donations occurred in the second century AD, and the third donation was undated. The structures which were donated by these benefactresses were a temple and *peristoon* on their own, and a fountain complex with accompanying adornment, statues, inscriptions, and a central bull statue.

Two of the three benefactresses linked their donations not only to Zeus but also to the imperial family (***AM 6*** and ***AM 67***), similarly to the benefactresses who honoured Artemis within their donations. Only one of the donations was listed as a co-donation, as Tata of Ilyas co-donated with her husband and mentioned her father-in-law (but not as a co-donor) (***AM 67***).

5.4.4.3 Other

While Hera and Isis were discussed earlier, Moira and Tyche were mentioned less frequently by benefactresses. Moira is one of the Fates, who were believed to have controlled the destiny of humans, making her a unique choice for a benefactress to honour (Dietrich 1965, 60-65, 72-75). Tyche is a goddess associated with the Roman deity Fortuna, and was associated with a cornucopia for prosperity and oar to steer the lives of humans (Edwards 1990, 532-534). Each of these goddesses were represented by two mentions within this corpus. The remaining deities grouped into the 'Other' category include Aesculapius, Athena, Core, Deified Livia, Great Mother Goddess, Hermes, Homonoia, Serapis, Eros, and Dionysus.

5.4.4.4 In summary

In Italy, 53 of 111 Italian benefactresses in the dataset mentioned or depicted a deity in their donations. In North Africa, this number was 30 of 55 total North African benefactresses. In Asia Minor, only 24 of the 79 benefactresses highlighted a deity. This could be due to fewer sites being excavated, reduced religiosity in Asia Minor, a difficulty blending Greek and Roman religions, or occurred by chance based on the benefactresses which were included in this research data

In this segment of the dataset, five women were donating in the first century AD, eight were active in the second century AD, and three were active in the third century AD. Aside from these women, there was one woman who was documented to be active in the second century BC, and seven women who did not have date information available. In terms of the types of benefaction which were associated with a religious donation, the most prominent structures were: temples (mentioned by 10 benefactresses with religious figure information), statues (6), buildings (5), and fountain complexes (3). In comparison to Italy (48 temples of 53 donations linked to a religious figure) and North Africa (27 of 30), while temples are still the most frequently associated with religious donations, they are significantly less frequently linked in Asia Minor.

Eleven of the benefactresses whose donations referred to a deity also included information honouring an individual or group. Primarily, the focus was on the imperial family as a whole (6 mentions), although there were also mentions of the emperor (4), emperors (3), or an empress (2). Similarly, the family of the benefactress was honoured with three mentions, and 'the people' (a grouping which is general but likely means the people of the city of the donation or the people of the Roman Empire) is noted by two benefactresses.

Ten of the 24 benefactresses also had corresponding public role information. The most frequently mentioned role was that of priestess (9), while also holding roles such as *archiereia* (6), *gymnasiarch* (3), and *demiourgos* (2).

Seventeen women also mentioned at least one relevant family member. All five of the family members who were mentioned more than twice were notable male relatives: fathers (10), husbands (9), father-in-laws (4), grandfathers (4), and then instances of co-donations with husbands (3).

5.5 Public Roles of Female Benefactors

Exploring the public roles held by benefactresses in the regions of Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor is a complex but fascinating journey, as the roles vary by region, especially in Asia Minor where the culture developed from Hellenistic Greek to Roman. Because of this history, the roles will often have different names due to being in Greek or Latin, but will have the same responsibilities or characteristics.

5.5.1 Italy

In Italy, variations of a couple public roles were mentioned significantly more than other positions: *sacerdos*/priestess and *flaminica*. There are additional details which can be associated with each of the benefactress' public roles, but for the scope of this research the roles will fall into the categories listed above (*sacerdotes, magistrae, ministrae,* and *flaminicae*). Additional work could be undertaken using this corpus to decipher the more nuanced links and descriptions for public roles held by these women.

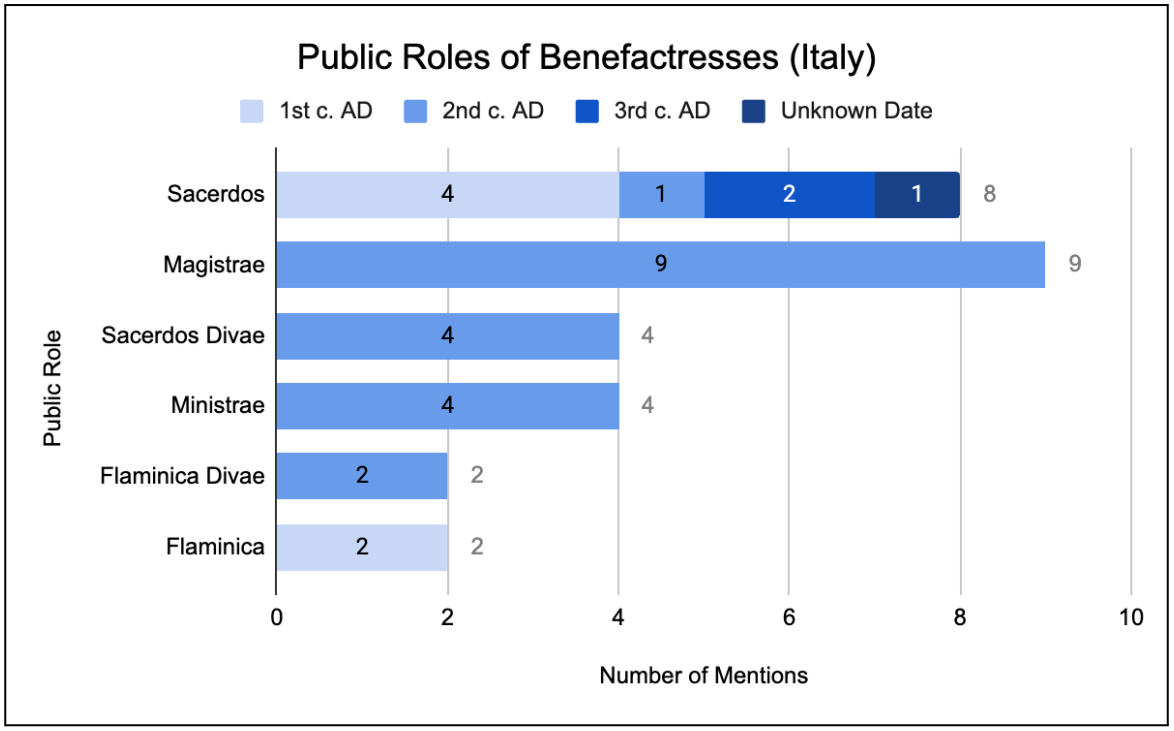


Figure 5.13. Graph showing the frequency of benefactresses' public roles in the region of Italy across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

5.5.1.1 *Sacerdotes* and Priestesses

The *sacerdos* or priestess is the most frequently mentioned public role for benefactresses in every region of this research. That being said, the way benefactresses portrayed this role varies between the regions. In Italy, the role of priestess is often associated with the term *divae*, which indicates the woman was priestess 'of the deified empress'. The usages of these additions to the term priestess or *sacerdos* will be examined in this chapter and the following Discussion Chapter.

There are 28 women from the region of Italy who included information around their public roles, and thus this is the number which will be used for comparisons. Out of these women, 13 stated they were a *sacerdos* or priestess, some with additional descriptors. The most frequently mentioned city in this corpus where women highlighted their role as *sacerdos* was in Pompeii, where three individual benefactresses noted this position.

In terms of dates, benefactresses in Italy were highlighting their roles as priestesses or *sacerdotes* primarily in the second century AD (5), followed by the first century AD (4), and then the third century AD (2). There was one example of a benefactress claiming this role in the first century BC, and one woman in the research data does not have a clearly defined date of benefaction. As this is a religious role, it should not be surprising that the most

prominent benefaction type donated by *sacerdos* or priestess is the temple (6), then *porticus* (4), and followed by statues (3).

Recorded individuals or families honoured by the benefactress include the emperor (3 times) and the benefactress themselves twice. There were no patterns regarding the gods honoured by these priestesses, aside from that they either honoured a female deity or a deity related to the success of the emperor. The gods mentioned by *sacerdotes* include: *Concordia and Pietas Augusta, Genius Coloniae, Genius Augusti*, Juno, and Spes.

5.5.1.2 *Magistrae*

A less directly religious role which appeared often in the Italy section of this corpus is that of a *magistra*. Hemelrijk notes that this role may have varied regionally, and was likely an administrative one in a local sanctuary or cult (Hemelrijk 2015, 89). She also notes that women holding these roles were often of a lower social class, and were not fulfilling priesthood duties in the same way as *sacerdotes* (Hemelrijk 2015, 90). This is true for the Italian women in this research also, as eight of the nine benefactresses who *magistrae* were freedwomen. This could explain why there were three or four women acting as co-donors in this section of the dataset.

All nine of the benefactresses who held the position of *magistra* were active in the second century AD. It is interesting that they would have been donating in such a specific time period, though this could be coincidental. While there are only nine women to draw information from, it can be determined that they primarily focused on donating temples (all 9 of them), restorations (4), or *porticus* (3).

Five of the nine women honoured Bona Dea in their donations, though four of these women were co-donors and thus this honour for Bona Dea was repeated. Similarly, three women honoured the god Fonio (a deity often paired with Bona Dea), but they all were co-donors as well. There was one woman who co-donated with two men (***It 46***); they were not linked to her as family members but rather were freedmen of the same patron. Since there were two group co-donations by *magistrae*, the city where they were active appears multiple times within this dataset, and thus Aquileia is noted for seven of the nine *magistrae* donations, suggesting this was a notable area for those worshiping Bona Dea and Fonio.

5.5.1.3 *Flaminicae*

While *sacerdos* refers to a public priestess, *flaminicae* were specifically priestesses of the imperial cult. Some of them repeated this information by denoting themselves as *flaminica*

divae, or some just stated their roles as *flaminicae*. There are four benefactresses from the region of Italy who claimed the public role of *flaminica* or *flaminica divae*, making up 14% of the women with public role information associated with them from Italy.

When comparing these four women, the first point to note is that they were all active in the first and second centuries AD, with two women linked to each century. They were most frequently associated with donations of bathhouses and building restorations (each with 2 mentions out of the 4 *flaminicae*).

All four of the *flaminicae* in Italy listed their social status: two freedwomen, one woman of equestrian status, and one woman of senatorial status. Three of the four women were co-donors alongside male relatives, two husbands, and one son.

5.5.1.4 Other - Roman Citizen

Though only one woman highlighted her status as a Roman citizen, this inscription phrasing is worth identifying as it also appears in the other regions of the empire and would be worthwhile to compare their occurrences. In this case, the woman was Ummidia Quadratilla (***It 103***), who was active in Casinum in the first and second centuries, donating a temple, theatre, funds, and restoring structures in the city (Hemelrijk 2015, 110; *IL 10.5813* = *ILS* 5628). She honoured political officials, the people, and specifically women with her donations. Aside from highlighting her Roman citizenship, she also was noted as a *princeps femina* of Casinum by Pliny the Younger, which has been compared to the title Mother of the City (Hemelrijk 2015, 110; Plin. *Ep*. 7.24). She highlighted that her spending came from her own funds, and mentioned family members such as her grandson, granddaughter, and her father.

5.5.2 North Africa

Of the 55 benefactresses from North Africa in this research, 21 of them retained public role information in their inscriptions. In this region, Roman benefactresses were part of a social structure which appeared to have had limited public roles for women. This can be seen by the roles represented in Fig. 5.14, as it lacks the variety seen in Italy or Asia Minor, particularly exemplified by the fact that all represented public roles are included in the chart, since every benefactress with public role information fits into only these four categories or have unknown public roles associated with them.

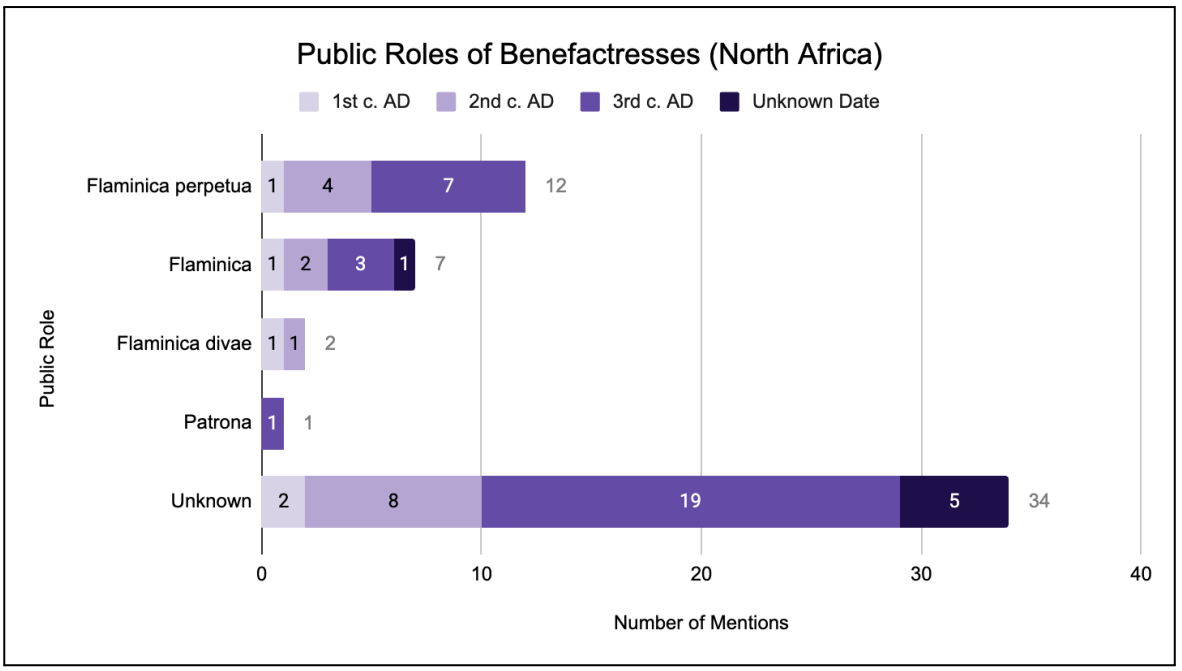


Figure 5.14. Graph showing the frequency of benefactresses' public roles in the region of North Africa across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

5.5.2.1 *Flaminica/Flaminica Perpetua/Flaminica Divae*

Variations of the role of *flaminica* are almost the only roles held by these benefactresses in North Africa (20 of 21 with public role information). While Italy had a combination of the role of *flaminica*, *sacerdos*, and priestess, North Africa prioritised the role of *flaminica* in a few forms. As this is the case, the variations of *flaminica* will be examined separately for this region, though for a holistic overview of the area where *flaminica* derivations are mentioned, it should be noted that six of the 20 *flaminicae* in this corpus were active in Thugga

Flaminica Perpetua

As mentioned above, the *flaminica perpetua* is a 'priestess of the imperial cult for life'. Twelve of the 21 benefactresses denoted this social role in their inscriptions, making up 57% of these entries.

The *flaminicae perpetuae* from North Africa were primarily donating in the third century AD (7 of 12), with a few in the second century AD (4) and one in the first century AD. Though the public role options were limited, the donation types for these benefactresses were broader. *Flaminicae perpetuae* donations were again led by temples (7), statue-related donations (6), then adornment and *porticus* donations (four each). Inscriptions and *rostra*, each had three mentions, and restorations were mentioned twice.

One of the women chose to also honour the emperor with her donations (***NA 34***), while another honoured her father (***NA 14***). Honouring deities with donations was uncommon among these benefactresses active in North Africa, as there were only seven women who honoured a deity in their donations, and the only repeated deity was the goddess Minerva with two mentions.

There was not a great deal of information about women's social status, as only four women included these details. Three noted their decurial status, while only one woman was a freedwoman (***NA 38***). The profiles of these women were enhanced by the mentions of notable family members in their donation inscriptions, as seven benefactresses here linked themselves to at least one relative. The most frequently occurring link tied six benefactresses to their husbands (three as co-donors), two women mentioned their sons, and a daughter and a father were each mentioned once.

Flaminica

The title of *flaminica*, without the attached *perpetua*, was used by seven of the 21 benefactresses active in North Africa. As these roles are very similar, this review of the data will only briefly identify any differences compared to women with the title *flaminica perpetua*.

In terms of benefaction dates, the timeline is similar to that of *flaminica perpetua*, with the majority of the donations occurring in the second (2 mentions) and third centuries AD (3 mentions). Aside from these centuries, there was one woman who donated in the first century AD (***NA 38***), and one with an unknown date range associated with her.

The preferred donation type was temples (5) followed by inscriptions (2), and there was one benefactress who donated a *porticus*. This prominence of temple donations corresponds with the number of deities honoured in these donations, as four out of the seven benefactresses in this section honoured a deity in their donations. The most frequently mentioned deity was *Fortuna Augusta* (2), but otherwise there were no additional repeated religious figures among these benefactresses.

In contrast to the *flaminicae perpetuae*, the social status of these women was typically at the freedwoman level (3 mentions). There was less familial information available, as the only recurring mention of a relative was that of the benefactress' father by two of these women. In addition to these two mentions, there were singular mentions of co-donations with a father, a son, a husband, and mention of a husband which was not a co-donation.

Flaminica Divae

There were only two benefactresses who noted their roles as *flaminicae divae.* Active in the first and second centuries AD, both women donated temples, one to honour the goddess Caelestis (***NA 21***) and one to honour the Deified Empress (***NA 23***).

5.5.2.2 *Patrona*

While there is only one mention of a benefactress with the public role of *patrona* in the North African section of this dataset, the role is unique in comparison to some of the other roles highlighted, as it would have been a highly regarded position. Julia Memmia Prisca Rufa Aemiliana Fidiana (Julia Memmia) (***NA 35***) held this position in Bulla Regia in the third century AD and was noted for donating a bathhouse and paying for its future upkeep. She was a woman of senatorial status, and only mentioned her father as a corresponding family member in the inscription, though he was not noted as a co-donor.

5.5.3 Asia Minor

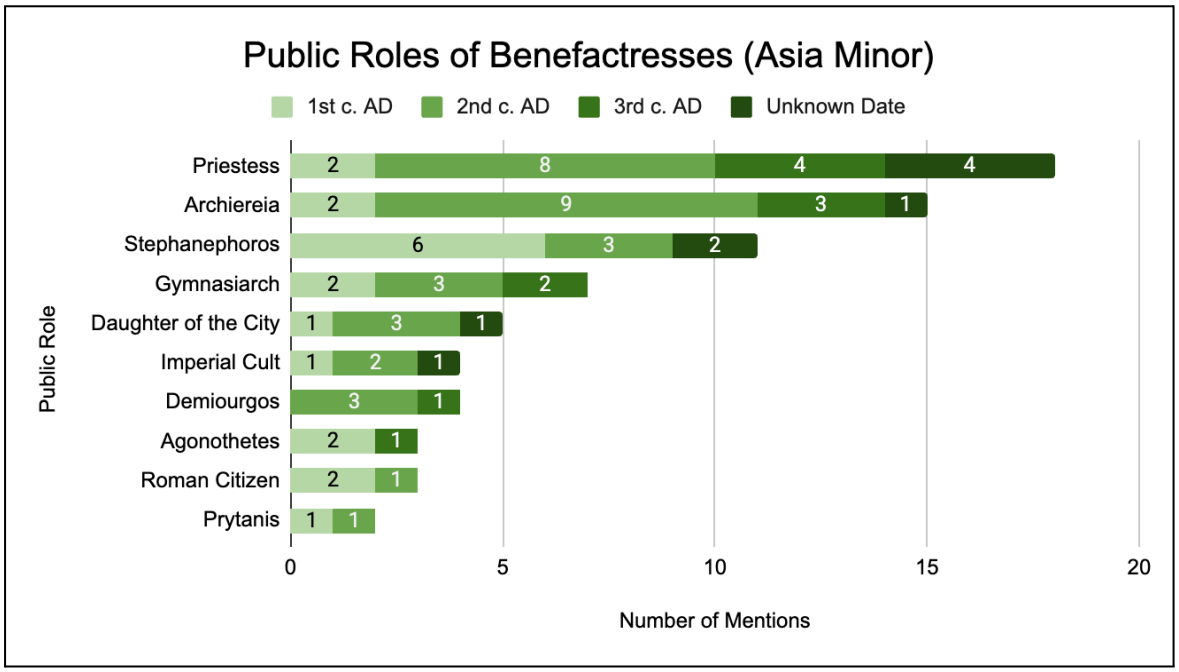


Figure 5.15 Graph showing the frequency of benefactresses' public roles in the region of Asia Minor across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

When first examining Fig. 5.15, the initial conclusion is that there was a greater variety in public roles compared to Italy and North Africa, particularly public roles of a religious nature. This could indicate that there were more options for women to get involved in the public sphere. Unique public roles which did not have a western equivalent include Daughters of the City and Mothers of the City, which will be examined individually below. In this segment

of the data, there are 79 benefactresses from Asia Minor, and 35 of those women retained public role information.

5.5.3.1 Priestesses and *Archiereiai*

Once again, the role of priestess (*hiereia*) is the most dominant role in this region, confirming its influence over all three regions (although in North Africa the most frequently mentioned role was specifically 'priestess of the imperial cult'). In Asia Minor, the role of priestess is akin to *archiereia* and thus they will both fall under this subsection. Potentially the only difference between these two descriptors is that *archiereia* is the untranslated version of the word priestess, though authors have also suggested that *archiereia* could indicate the position of 'high priestess' as well (Friesen 2003, 146; Van Bremen 1996, 118-119).

Priestess

Slightly more than half of the benefactresses who had associated public role information in Asia Minor were denoted as holding the position of priestess (18 of 35). Much of the work used to compile this dataset relies upon translations, which leads to a bit of confusion around the exact term that was used in these inscriptions. Nevertheless, knowing the women were priestesses still helps shape understanding.

Priestesses in Asia Minor were most active in benefaction during the second century AD, as eight of the relevant benefactresses were donating during this century, followed by the third century (4), and then the first century (2), with four women having no conclusive dates linked to their donations. The cities with the most priestess mentions within this corpus include: Bonitai (2 donations), Ephesos (2), Perge (2), Stratonikeia (3).

In terms of donation types which were most frequently employed by priestesses in Asia Minor, the frontrunner was ‘buildings’ with six mentions, followed by temples (5), statues (4), bathhouses (3), fountain complexes (3), funds (3), and *porticus* (2). The remaining benefaction types were only mentioned once.

When discussing mortal figures honoured by these benefactresses’ donations, there is a tendency to honour the imperial family, as four of the benefactresses in this section shared in this trend. Six of the nine benefactresses who honoured a deity in their donations chose to honour the goddess Artemis, followed by Aphrodite and Tyche, who both had two mentions. Gods with one mention include Eros, Dionysus, Demeter, Zeus, Hera, and the Great Mother Goddess.

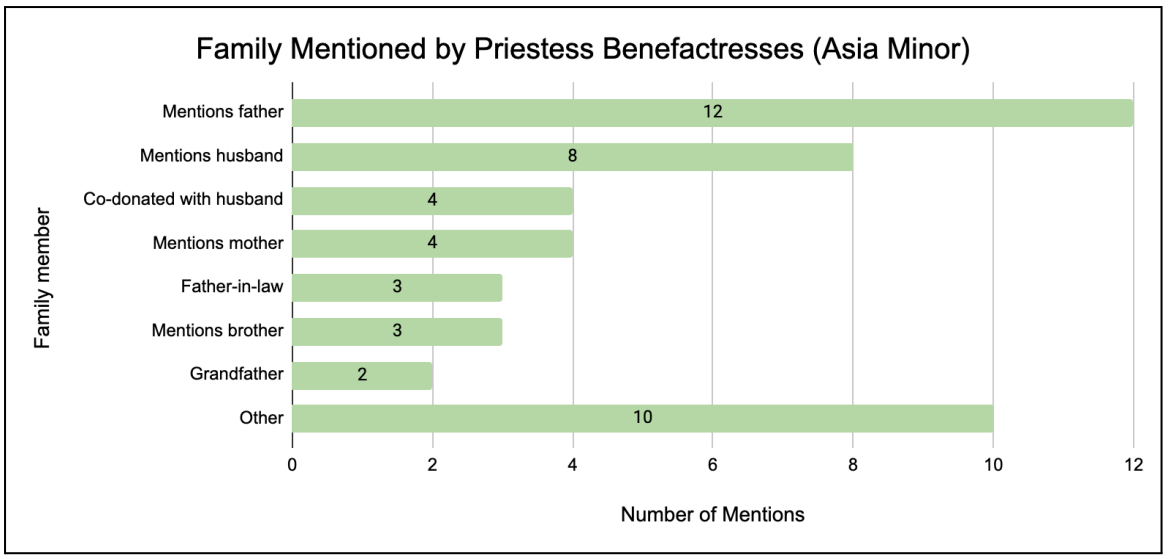


Figure 5.16 Graph showing notable family members mentioned by benefactresses who were also priestesses in Asia Minor.

Interestingly, none of these women recorded a social status, which indicates this was not a typical practice in this region. In contrast, 16 of the 18 women discussed here did mention at least one family member in their inscriptions, some as co-donors and some to clarify and highlight her family line. There were no co-donations with fathers of benefactresses, despite fathers being the most often cited relative.

Archiereia

It is unsurprising that the data for *archiereiai* replicates the information presented above, as these two roles are known to potentially be the same position, with one of them being translated for current literature. The author did consider combining the two positions in order to analyse the data, but this would potentially skew the results if the benefactresses did use *archiereia* to specifically indicate that they were a high priestess.

There were 15 benefactresses who listed their public role as *archiereia* out of the 35 women who retained public role information in Asia Minor. The time frames for their donations are similar to that of priestesses in this region, with two women active in the first century AD, nine in the second century AD, and three in the third century AD. The regional spread is similarly diverse and contains some overlap, with multiple instances of *archiereiai* in Aphrodisias (2), Perge (2), and Stratonikeia (2). The primary benefaction types in this segment were temples (5), bathhouses (3), buildings (3), and gymnasiums (3). This is similar to the structures donated by priestesses, with the addition of gymnasiums to the most frequently represented structures.

Five of the women in this group honoured a non-religious figure or family with their donations, and three of them chose to mention emperors while three benefactresses honoured the imperial family (with overlap). There were fewer instances of *archiereiai* honouring a religious deity with their donations though, with only six of the 15 relevant benefactresses in this section naming a religious figure. The only deity named three times was Artemis, followed by the goddesses Aphrodite and Tyche (each named twice), while Moira, Eros, and Dionysus were each named once.

No social status information is linked to the *archiereia* or priestess segments, in contrast to the other two regions. This will be evaluated further in the Discussion Chapter. However, there are several family members mentioned by *archiereiai* within their inscriptions, illustrated in Table 5.17. Notably there are no instances of co-donations among the *archiereiai*, which could support the view that *archiereiai* are high priestesses with more financial resources.

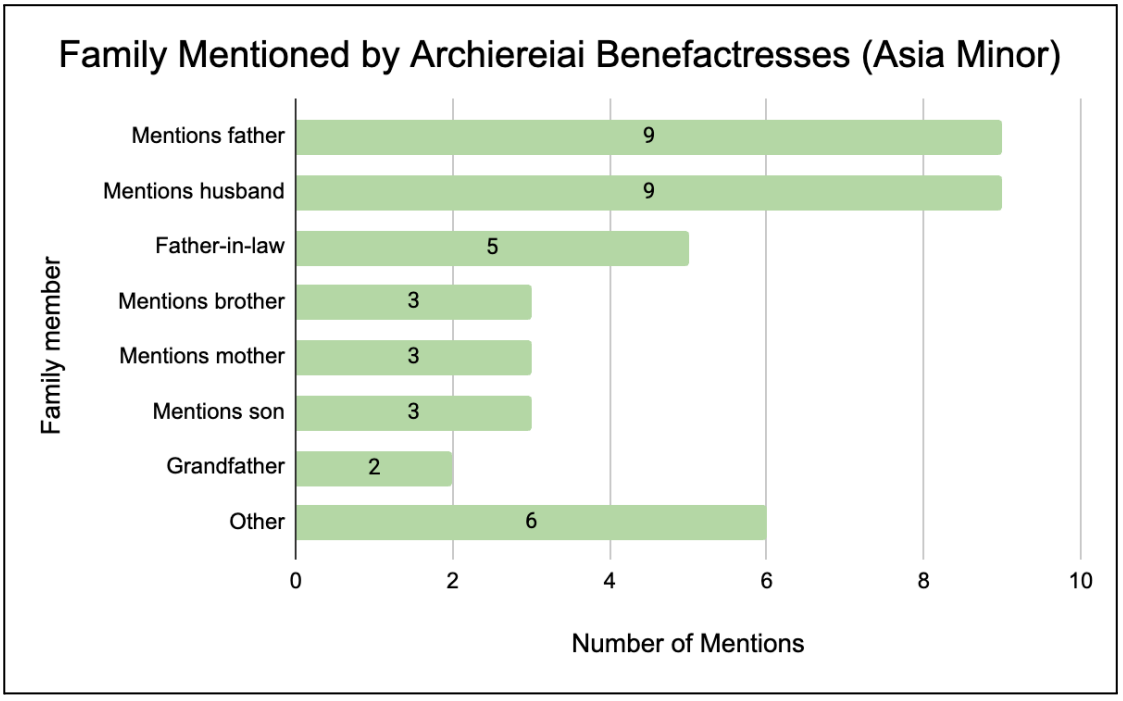


Figure 5.17 Graph showing notable family members mentioned by benefactresses who were also *archiereiai* in Asia Minor.

5.5.3.2 *Stephanephoroi*

Among the 35 benefactresses with public role information in Asia Minor, 11 of them held the role of *stephanephoros*, a role linked with that of a *magistra,* although female *stephanephoroi* would not have had political or legal responsibilities. *Magistra* is another role which was

mentioned by a few benefactresses, but there was not enough information about this public role to provide any clear insights.

Stephanephoroi were most frequently mentioned among benefactresses active in the first century AD (6 mentions), followed by three mentions by women active in the second century AD, and then there were two benefactresses with unknown dates. The benefaction types which occurred most frequently were: bathhouses (5), aqueducts (2), buildings (2), funds (2), and temples (2). The preference for water features appears clear for benefactresses in the role of *stephanephoros*.

As *stephanephoros* is not a religious role, it is unsurprising that only one of the 11 women in this position highlighted a deity. The one mention was of Aphrodite, by Attalis Apphion in Aphrodisias (***AM 12***). The most frequently mentioned family member was the benefactresses' father, who was mentioned by nine of the 11*stephanephoroi* in Asia Minor. Again, these were not co-donations with their fathers, but rather they mentioned their fathers in the inscription, most commonly as they described their family line. The second most frequently mentioned family member was the benefactresses' husband, who appeared in 5 of the inscriptions. Four other family members were mentioned more than once by *stephanephoroi*, including husbands (as co-donors, mentioned twice), two fathers-in-law, a grandfather, and a mother.

5.5.3.3 Gymnasiarchoi

The public role of the *gymnasiarchia*, or head of the gymnasium, was held by seven of the 35benefactresses with public role information in Asia Minor, and no two of them were active in the same city. Two women were active in the first century AD, three in the second century AD, and two more in the third century AD. In terms of benefaction type, there is no dominant type among the *gymnasiarchoi* in this research's data. Several structures were only mentioned once, but there were four which occurred twice in the selection: buildings, funds, and temples. The structures mentioned once were: adornment, an arch, a basilica, a bathhouse, gates, a gymnasium, a peristoon, a restoration, a statue, and a wall.

When examining the non-religious figures honoured in donations by *gymnasiarchoi*, 'the emperors' appears twice from the three benefactresses with information in this category. Other non-religious figures who were mentioned once include: the benefactress's son, the benefactress herself, the benefactress's family, the imperial family, and the people (likely indicating the people of the city). Gods mentioned by *gymnasiarchoi* in Asia Minor include Artemis and Tyche, each mentioned twice by the three benefactresses with religious

connections in their inscriptions (one benefactress honoured both of these deities in her donation).

Three family members were mentioned more than once by the *gymnasiarchoi*: fathers (5), brothers (3), and husbands (2). There were no co-donations with family members or other individuals associated with these *gymnasiarchoi*.

5.5.3.4 Daughter and Mother of the City

Unique roles in Roman Asia Minor include the public roles of Daughter of the City (*póleos thygatéra)* and Mother of the City (*meter poleos*) (Adak 2020, 50; *IK Perge* 120). Mother of the City is only mentioned once in this region in this data(***AM 63***), so is not the focus of this Quantitative Findings section but is worth mentioning as an adjacent public role.

As there were five women who held the position of Daughter of the City, the information is not representative of trends in the region. Daughter of the City was mentioned by benefactresses active in the first and second centuries AD with one and three mentions in each century respectively. There was one benefactress with the title of Daughter of the City in an unknown century, and the one Mother of the City was active in the third century AD. Despite this research dataset covering the first to third centuries AD, there are no multiples of Daughters of the City from the same city, further emphasising the uniqueness of this role.

The only structure mentioned more than once among the Daughters of the City was the gymnasium (by ***AM 30*** and ***AM 40***). Other structures donated by Daughters of the City included a bathhouse, gates, a wall, a statue, a temple, and an arch. One woman who was listed as Daughter of the City, Plancia Magna of Perge, honoured both Artemis and Tyche with her donation (***AM 62***). The other Daughters of the City did not indicate a connection with a deity in their donations, or there is no remaining evidence of them doing so.

Finally, each Daughter of the City did mention at least one relative in their inscriptions. Three family members were mentioned more than once among these five benefactresses: fathers (4), husbands (4), mothers (3), and sons (2).

5.5.3.5 *Demiourgos*

There were four instances of *demiourgoi* found in Asia Minor in this data, and they donated in the second century AD (3) with one outlier donating in the third century AD. The only overlap in benefaction type for this group is that two of the four women donated buildings, while there were singular mentions of gates, a wall, a statue, an arch, funds, and a temple.

An interesting point is that half of these women mentioned Tyche alongside their donations, despite the donations being in separate cities in Asia Minor. Additionally, the women who highlighted their role as a *demiourgos* seemed to be likely to hold other notable positions, as they were not only *demiourgoi* but also priestesses (4), *archiereiai* (3), *gymnasiarchs* (2), an *agonothetes* (1), Daughter of the City (1), a *magistra* (1), Mother of the *Boule* (1), and a Mother of the City (1). Another place where these women had ample information was in the 'Notable Family Members' column, where they mentioned fathers (4), mothers (3), brothers (3), husbands (3), a son (1), a daughter (1), a grandfather (1), a great-grandfather (1), a great-great-grandfather (1), a father-in-law (1), and a sister-in-law (1).

5.5.3.6 *Agonothetes*

Agonothetes were mentioned three times by benefactresses in Asia Minor, twice in the first century AD and once in the third century AD. Each of these women donated a different benefaction type: a synagogue, a gymnasium, and a building. The roles held by these three women are diverse, and include *agonothetes* (3), *archiereiai* (2), a *stephanephoros*, a Daughter of the City, a *prytanis*, a Mother of the City, a Mother of the *Boule*, a priestess, and a *demiourgos*. While much information is unknown about these three benefactresses, it is known which family members they chose to highlight alongside their donations. They chose to highlight: husbands (3), sons (2), fathers (2), mothers (2), a mother-in-law, a brother, and a sister-in-law.

5.5.3.7 Roman Citizen

In both Italy and Asia Minor, there has been at least one benefactress who highlighted that she was a Roman citizen within her donation. Among the three benefactresses in Asia Minor who listed themselves as Roman citizens, two were active in the first century AD and one in the second century AD. Their donations differed from each other, as one woman donated a bathhouse with adornment (***AM 23***), another donated funds (***AM 43***), and the third donated a synagogue (***AM 69***). Two of the three benefactresses were also *stephanephoroi*, while one woman only recorded that she was a Roman citizen in terms of public role. In terms of familial relationships, two of these women mentioned their father in their inscriptions, one alongside her brother and the other alongside her grandfather. The third woman is not known to have been linked to any particular family members.

5.5.3.8 Other

There are a number of roles which were not examined here as there was not enough information for any conclusions. There were an abundance of public roles mentioned in Asia Minor when compared to Italy and North Africa, and a separate investigation into these roles

is necessary to do these benefactresses justice. The list of roles which were only mentioned once in Asia Minor include: *basileia*, *clarissima*, Daughter of Asia, *gerousia*, high priestess, *hydrophoros*, key-holder, Mother of the City, and Mother of the *Boule*.

5.6 Notable Family Members Mentioned by Benefactresses

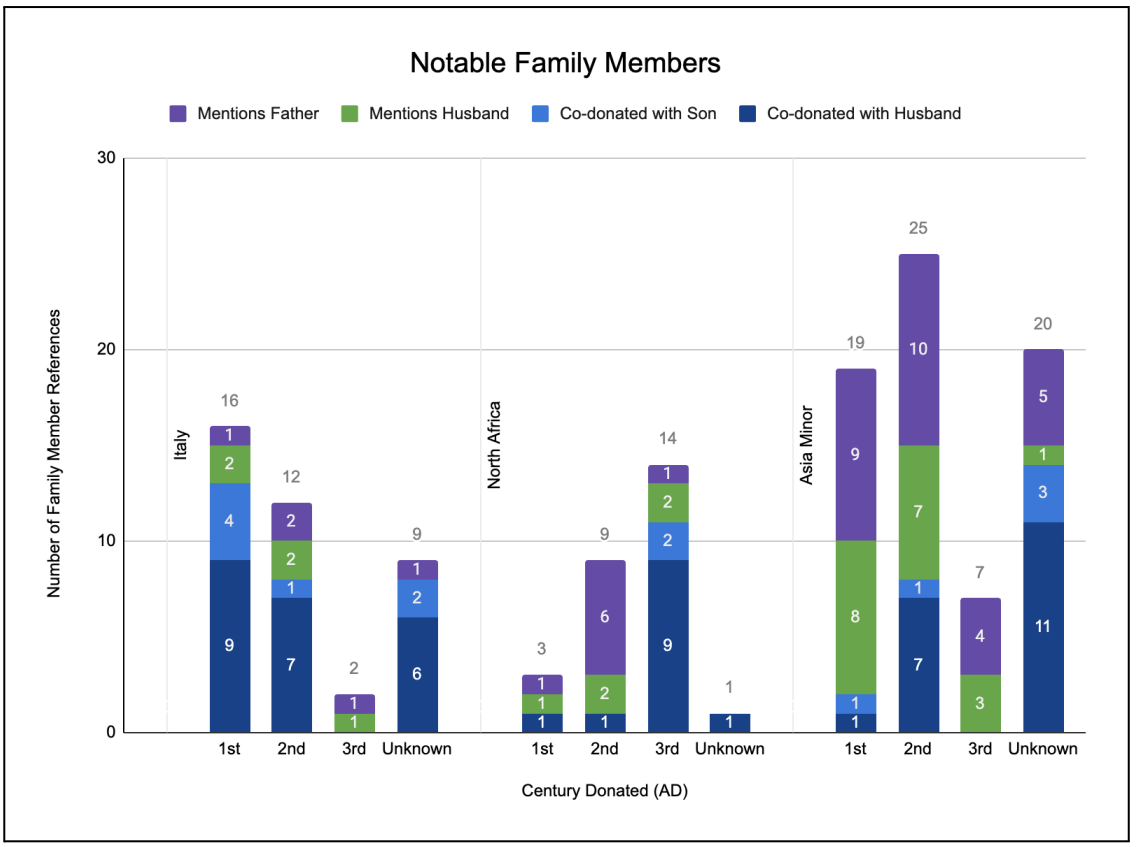


Figure 5.18 Graph showing the most frequently mentioned family members within this dataset, delineated by regional and temporal information.

The final theme to review is the relationship between benefactresses and their family members. This section was broken into two segments, as benefactresses would choose to co-donate with a family member or merely mention them as a relative within their inscriptions. This differentiation was noted and will be shown within the figures and clarified within the Quantitative Findings Chapter analysis.

5.6.1 Italy

There were 45 women in this dataset who were from Italy and retained information regarding family members within their inscriptions. Clear preference is shown for co-donations with husbands and sons, followed by mentions of husbands and fathers which were not co-donations. These will be explored further below, and the family members with fewer mentions will be reviewed if there is any particular trend to identify.

5.6.1.1 Co-Donated with husband

Co-donations with husbands and mentions of husbands within inscriptions occur most frequently in Italy, and the only other family members mentioned in a similar frequency are co-donations with sons and mentions of fathers.

There are 23 counts of benefactresses co-donating with their husbands among the 45 women with family member information. This indicates that over half of the benefactresses in Italy with family information were noted for co-donating with their husband, a sizable amount.

When examining the centuries where women were co-donating with their husbands most frequently, the first century AD had nine occurrences and the second century AD had seven occurrences. This is a very close split between the first and second centuries AD, which correlates with the time frames where benefaction was most frequently occurring in the region. Six women did not have dates associated with their donations, and one donated in the first century BC.

In terms of what benefaction types were being co-donated by these husband and wife pairs, the temple occurred most frequently with nine mentions. The second most frequent donation type is bathhouses (8 mentions), which were not common benefaction types for benefactresses in Italy generally (they make up 11% of the benefaction types for Italian benefactresses when the family relationship factor is removed). Adornment (7) and restoration (5) descriptors appear next in terms of mentions, but as these are more descriptive rather than naming a specific type of structure, this is unsurprising.

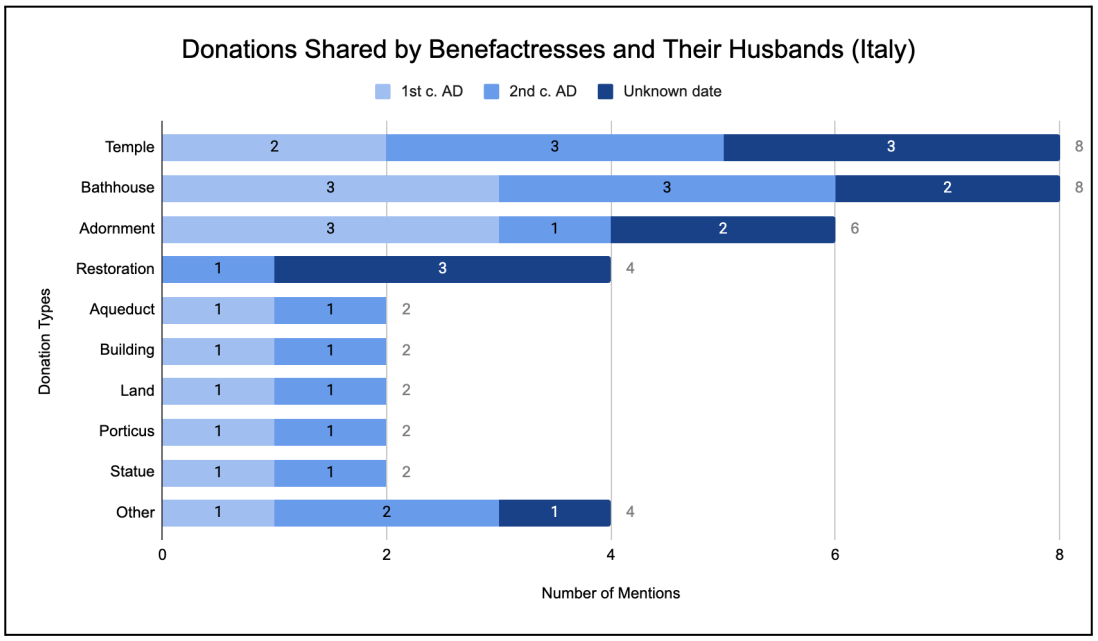


Figure 5.19 Graph showing the donation types frequently shared by a benefactress and her husband in Italy across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

5.6.1.2 Mentions of Husbands

It seems prudent to include donations which mention husbands, but not as co-donors, in this section as well. It is very possible these donations were also co-donations, but there is no epigraphic evidence which states concretely that this is the case. There are only five benefactresses who mention their husband not as a co-donor, which makes it difficult to ascertain any trends. With this in mind, the date information for this group shows that two women donated in the first century AD, two women donated in the second century AD, and one woman donated in the third century AD.

Three of the five women who mentioned their husbands donated a temple, but this was a common benefaction choice. There is little other information to gain from this group of benefactresses, aside from that three of them solely mentioned their husbands, while the other two also either mentioned their father or their son.

5.6.1.3 Co-Donated with Son

While 'co-donations with sons' appears second in frequency, there is a large discrepancy between the 23 examples of co-donations with husbands and the seven in this category. Regardless, this is still notable and will be broken down by similarities and differences between the benefactresses who have this co-donation status in common.

Of the seven benefactresses, four were active in the first century AD, one was active in the second century AD, and there were two women with unknown benefaction dates. In terms of benefaction types by this group, only four were mentioned more than once: bathhouse (4), adornment (3), *porticus* (2), and statue (2). Several building types were mentioned by one of these benefactresses: a basilica, building, crypt, funds, restoration, temple, and a wall.

There were no clear trends in the columns labeled 'Religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction' or 'Public Role', and very little information in the 'Social Status' column, though there were two women of equestrian status and one freedwoman in this group. Four of the seven women who co-donated with their sons noted that this was a co-donation with their husband as well. This could indicate a variety of dynamics between the family.

5.6.1.4 Mentions of Fathers

Similarly to benefactresses' husbands, fathers were both mentioned as co-donors and as non-donating relatives of these women. There were five mentions of fathers and one mention of a father as co-donor among the Italian benefactresses. The five benefactresses who mentioned their fathers in their inscriptions were active across the first to third centuries AD. Four of the five of the benefactresses in this group did mention a public role, though there was no repetition of the roles highlighted in Italy. There was a *patrona*, a Roman citizen, a Mother of the City, a Secretary in the Cult of Venus, and two *sacerdotes*. These are notable roles, and it is interesting to note that the benefactresses who held these titles all had in common that they highlighted their relationship to their fathers.

5.6.1.5 Other

While the following were only mentioned once among the benefactresses in this group, they are interesting to see as outliers in comparison to the dominating nuclear male relationships that appeared most frequently. The 'Other' category includes one mention of each of the following: a co-donation with a brother, a co-donation with a freedmen, a dedication to a son, family, a brother, a grandson, a nephew, a familial relationship to the imperial family, a grandmother, a mother, and a granddaughter.

5.6.2 North Africa

There are 30 benefactresses in this corpus who have associated epigraphic information linking them to one or more family members. These are the relationships which will be explored further in this section.

5.6.2.1 Co-Donated with husband

Similarly to the benefactresses active in Italy, the women in North Africa tended to highlight their relationship with their husbands most frequently. Primarily they were noted for co-donating with their husbands (12 instances), though there were also five instances where benefactresses mentioned their husband not as a co-donor.

The height of female benefaction in North Africa was in the second and third centuries AD. The trend for this group of benefactresses is dominated by primarily later donations with nine donations occurring during the third century AD, singular donations occurring in the first and second centuries AD, and one donation having an unknown date. The city with the most instances of co-donations with husbands is Thugga (4 donations), followed by Lambaesis and Madauros (2 each).

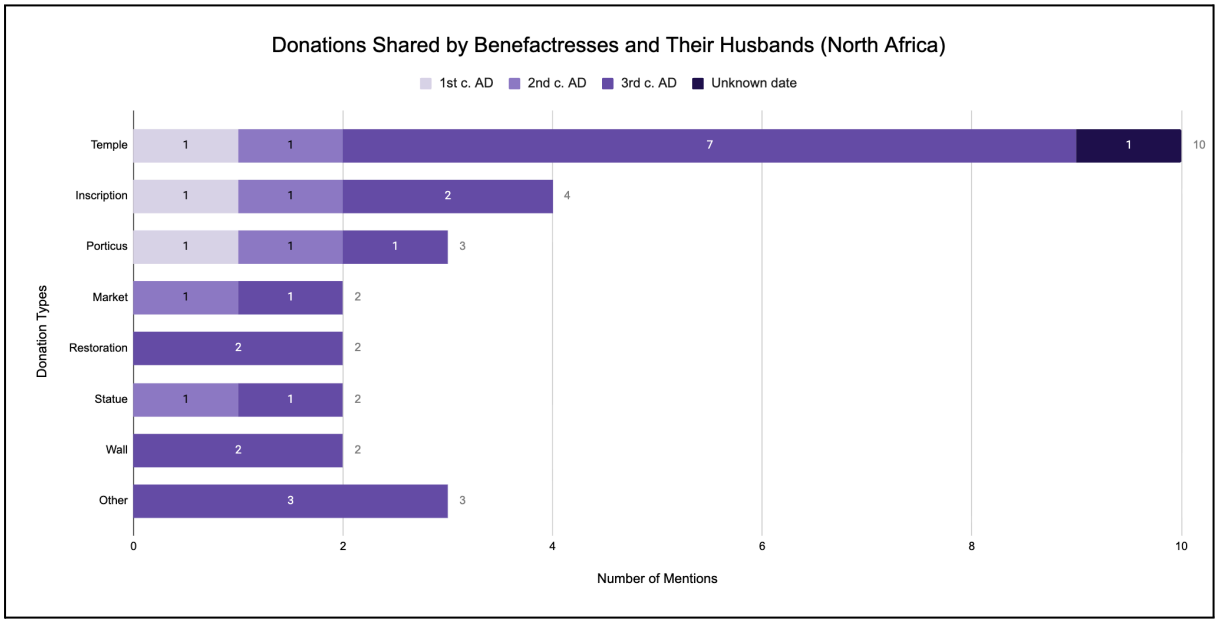


Figure 5.20 Graph showing the donation types frequently shared by a benefactress and her husband in North Africa across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

The benefaction types associated with these donations do not necessarily line up with those discussed in Italy for benefactresses who co-donated with their husbands, but as shown earlier in the Quantitative Findings Chapter, the benefaction types among regions do vary

(Fig. 5.20). The focus on the temple donation here lends to the other benefaction types being incorporated significantly less frequently.

There is very little information associated with this group of benefactresses in terms of non-religious entities honoured by the donations, though there is more data in the column including details about religious entities honoured by the given donations. Eight of the 12 women in this group honoured a religious figure with their donations, primarily Jupiter (3), followed by Juno (2), Minerva (2), Saturnus (2), and Ops (2), followed by singular mentions of Caelestis, Mars, Mercury, and Tanans.

While many of the co-donations with husbands were solely a wife and husband venture (7), there were also several which either referenced another family member (not as a co-donor) or included an additional donor. There is one example where the benefactress mentioned her son in the inscription as well (***NA 46***), one where she dedicated the donation to her children (***NA 54***), and another who mentioned both her father-in-law and mother-in-law (***NA 31***). The only other co-donor who was mentioned by a benefactress in this group is the son of Julia Victorina, who was listed as a co-donor alongside Julia and her husband (***NA 32***).

5.6.2.2 Mentions of Husbands

There are five instances where the benefactress in North Africa mentioned her husband, but not as a co-donor. While these are only a few examples, the way they differ from the co-donations with benefactresses' husbands provides insight into the motivations for these donations and their corresponding inscriptions.

The mentions of husbands occurred over a wider timeframe than the co-donations with husbands in North Africa, with one of the five women in this group donating in the first century AD, two women donating in the second century AD, and two more women donating in the third century AD. Four of the five benefactresses in this group donated temples, two donated *rostrum*, and there are singular mentions of funds, a statue base, an inscription, and a *porticus*.

Interestingly, three of the benefactresses who mentioned their husbands also mentioned another family member. All three of these other family members are children of the donating benefactress, with one a daughter (***NA 14***), and the other two sons (***NA 17*** and ***NA 21***).

5.6.2.3 Fathers

In total, in North Africa, there were two co-donations with fathers, eight mentions of fathers (not as a co-donor), and one mention of a father-in-law. This makes up a large portion of mentions of family members, but still occurs much less frequently than mentions or co-donations with benefactresses' husbands. Across the variations of inclusions of fathers within donation inscriptions, there is a slight regional preference for Thugga (3 instances), followed by Thamugadi and Leptis Magna (2 each).

In the section below, only the mentions of fathers will be analysed, as there are only one or two other inclusions of fathers which are not significant. Mentions of fathers in North Africa primarily occurred in the second century AD (6 of the 8 in this group), though there was one donation in the first century AD, and one in the third century AD.

Half of the donations by the women in this section were temple donations (4), and the remaining donations of a bathhouse, market, *porticus*, theatre, statue, adornment, upkeep, and land were only mentioned once. Six of the eight benefactresses in this group retained social status information corresponding to their donations and are as follows: two freedwomen, two decurial status women, and two senatorial status women.

5.6.2.4 Sons

There were four mentions of the benefactresses' sons, and two co-donations with their sons in North Africa. These donations all occurred within the second and third centuries AD, with the two co-donations occurring in the third century AD. Four of the six donations including the son of the relevant benefactress were temple donations, again continuing the trend of donating this prominent building type. Three of the women who donated a temple also listed their public role as *flaminicae*, and the fourth woman who donated a temple had no documented public role information.

Four of the six benefactresses who mentioned or co-donated with their sons also reference their husbands in the inscription. There is a slight variety in whether the husband or son is simply mentioned, or is a co-donor, but it is clear that it was typical to include not only the son in these inscriptions but oftentimes the father alongside him.

5.6.2.5 Other

In the 'Other' section for this group, there are one-off mentions of the following family members: a grandfather (co-donation), a father-in-law, a mother-in-law, a daughter, children ('dedicated to'), and a grandson.

5.6.3 Asia Minor

5.6.3.1 Mentions of Fathers

As highlighted earlier, mentions of fathers in Asia Minor were the most frequently occurring category from all three regions. Benefactresses who retained family member information within their inscriptions included at least the name of their father on 28 occasions in this corpus. Cities where at least two benefactresses mentioned their father include Aphrodisias (3 mentions), Keramos (2), and Termessos (2). It is important to note that these are only mentions of fathers, and do not include those women who co-donated with their fathers.

These mentions were dispersed throughout the first and second centuries, with nine mentions and ten mentions respectively. The third century displayed a decline in mentions of fathers, with only four occurring in this corpus, though this trend corresponds with a general decline in female benefaction in the region at this time. Benefactresses who mentioned their fathers within donation inscriptions did not show any particular preference for building types, though the most frequently occurring were temples (7), bathhouses and buildings (6 each).

An interesting trend which appears when analysing benefactresses who highlighted their father in this region, is a tendency to similarly mention the emperor or imperial family. Of the 28 women in Asia Minor who mentioned their fathers, seven of them also honoured a non-religious figure with their donations, and five of those women elected to honour one of the following: the emperor, the emperors, or the imperial family. Three of these benefactresses honoured 'the people' as well. The ‘Religious Entities Honoured by the Donations’ were also quite varied, and included four mentions of Artemis, two of Aphrodite, two of Demeter, two of Tyche, and singular mentions of Core, Zeus, Hera, the Great Mother Goddess, and Moira.

In regards to the public roles held by these benefactresses, three are mentioned in notable amounts: priestesses, *archiereiai*, and *stephanephoroi*. The first two are linked in that *archiereiai* were high priestesses and could overlap with the general priestess segment, and *stephanephoroi* were high magistrates, suggesting all of these women held notable positions in their communities. Many of the 28 women here mentioned other family members aside from their fathers (20), though several only mentioned their fathers (8).

Fathers-in-law

There were seven mentions of fathers-in-law, primarily occurring in the second century AD, with four of the seven benefactresses active in this century. The other benefactress with

corresponding date information donated in the first century AD, while two women did not retain date information in their surviving inscriptions.

5.6.3.2 Husbands

Mentions of Husbands

While mentions of husbands were the most frequently occurring in Italy and North Africa, they came second to mentions of fathers in Asia Minor with 20 occurrences. When benefactresses were mentioning their husbands, it often happened alongside mentions of several other family members. Mentions of husbands occurred in the first and second centuries AD, in contrast to co-donations with husbands which were primarily occurring in the second century AD. Again the benefactresses honoured the imperial family (4 mentions) with these donations, perhaps to align their own family with the family in power.

When reviewing the public roles held by women in this segment, the three notable roles highlighted in the 'Mentions of Fathers' results were repeated the most frequently here. There were nine mentions of *archiereiai*, eight mentions of priestess, and five mentions of *stephanephoroi*. A trend which was less typical was that four of the benefactresses were noted as being Daughters of the City (***AM 5***, ***AM 35***, ***AM 40***, and ***AM 62***), an elite title which was only held by six of the women from Asia Minor in this dataset. When looking at mentions of fathers and husbands, this role comes up four times for each descriptor with some overlapping, though it only appears alongside one co-donation (***AM 53***). If the woman had the status to be named the Daughter of the City, perhaps she did not need a co-donor in her philanthropic activities.

Co-Donations with Husbands

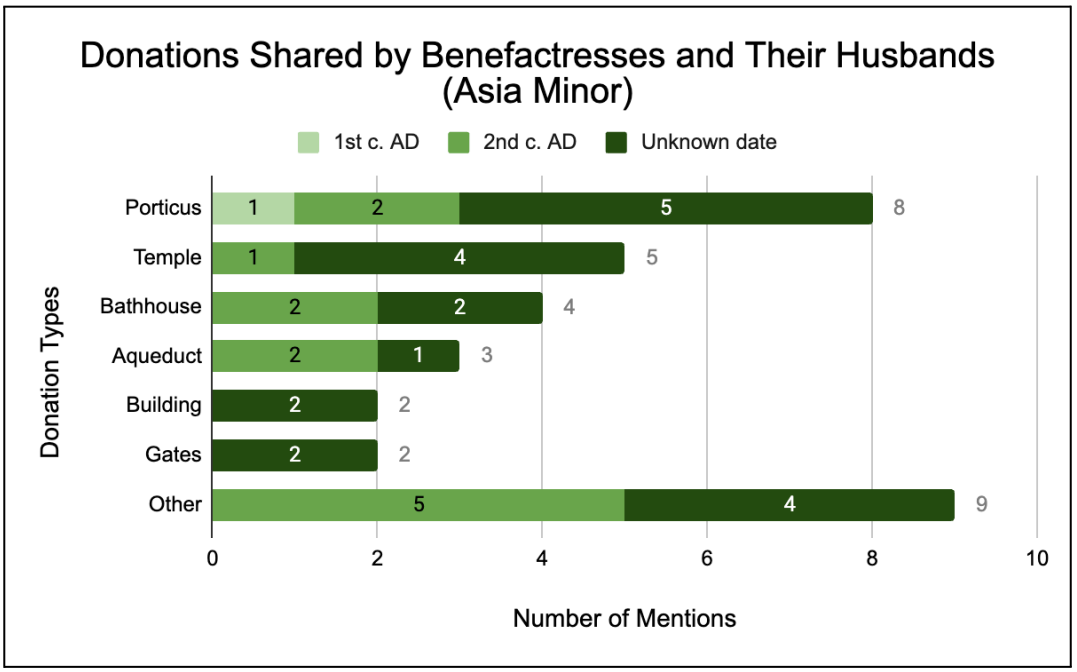


Figure 5.21 Graph showing the donation types frequently shared by a benefactress and her husband in Asia Minor across the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

'Co-donated with husband' was the third most frequently occurring mention in Asia Minor. There were 19 benefactresses who co-donated with their husbands in this region, and nearly all of them with associated date information were active in the second century AD. While mentions of husbands did not demonstrate any notable regional data, co-donations with husbands were popular in Ephesos (3 donations) and Stratonikeia (4 donations amongst 5 benefactresses). These co-donation instances could suggest these structures were large and required multiple donors, that there was a local preference for couple donations, or that the couples were trying to communicate marital concordance by acting together. There was no particular benefaction type which was clearly preferred, though temples (5) and *porticus* (8) were favoured over other types.

Nine of the benefactresses only mentioned the co-donation with their husband, leaving out any other co-donors or family members. Interestingly, four of these benefactresses mentioned a father-in-law or mother-in-law. While it is a small proportion, it is still an intriguing choice which stands out among the other mentions. There was only one mention of a co-donation with both the husband and father (***AM 74***), as well as only one example where the benefactress co-donated with a husband and mentioned her father (***AM 10***). While these combinations seem uncommon, one should remember there are several examples where both male family members were mentioned in the same inscription, but just not as co-donors.

5.6.3.3 Mothers

Mothers appeared within this section eight times, with six of them being mentions and two of the appearances being co-donations. As it would be difficult to analyse any trends among the benefactresses who co-donated with their mothers, I will focus on the six women who chose to mention their mothers (as non-donors) within inscriptions.

There's no clear preference for the time period where benefactresses in Asia Minor highlighted their mothers, as there were examples from the first (2), second (3), and third centuries AD (1). The characteristics of these women were consistent across many of the other categories as well, though they were all thoroughly involved in their communities, with the majority holding at least four positions, some with titles which were the most elite in their cities (such as Mother of the City). One of these women only mentioned her mother, while the others also included their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers.

5.6.3.4 Highlighting Ancestry

When filtering the dataset to reveal benefactresses who highlighted at least one grandparent, there were seven women who matched the criteria, and they demonstrated this behaviour across Aphrodisias, Nysa, Phocaea, Sillyon, Stratonikeia, and Termessos, showing a widespread adherence to this tradition. While some mentions were only as far back as one generation, another woman highlighted her family tree back to her great-great-great-grandfather (***AM 3***). There is also a grandmother and great-grandmother named by these benefactresses, though there are not any examples of generations of women named beyond great-grandmother.

5.7 Conclusion

A strength of this research is the manner in which it is able to utilise the methodology to understand these ancient Roman benefactresses in ways they have never been understood by a modern audience. With the findings provided in this chapter, unique circumstances become clear as they stand out from the more traditional approaches, which allows for an appreciation of the distinctive choices by these women. In addition to being able to identify individual instances, the holistic approach of this method and corresponding results provide a broader narrative which incorporates variations in timeframes, regions, donations, religious ties, public roles, and family relationships alongside each other in a way that has not been achieved previously.

These results begin a conversation around the hundreds of benefactresses in the corpus who acted with a variety of personal motivations, though there are three particular areas which are new in comparison to previous work and which deserve deeper analysis, and these will be the focus of the following Discussion Chapter. While the Findings Chapters addressed several characteristics of involvement in benefaction by women, the Discussion Chapter will specifically explore three core themes: unique donation types, family relationships, and unique social status indicators across Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor. Specifically, donation types which expressed a unique desire to communicate power, agency, or connection with female networks stand out within this dataset, and will be broken down in more detail in the following chapter. Family relationships, and how benefactresses applied them alongside their donations, have been a fascinating characteristic within research on public benefaction in the past, and provide new holistic insights into regional norms and cultural expectations within this research. The importance of female connections will be emphasised again, while also highlighting examples of benefactresses not following traditional formats when they epigraphically placed themselves within their wider family networks. Finally, while the varied application of including social status references within an inscription first seemed like a hindrance, further examination showed that exploring social status reveals some of the most fascinating trends within this research. Both freedwomen in Italy and benefactresses in Asia Minor exhibited unique behaviours regarding highlighting their social status, though on the opposite sides of the spectrum, as freedwomen are found often highlighting their status while women in Asia Minor tended to obscure this characteristic.

These discrepancies provide insight into regional culture and expectations for benefactresses, which add to our understanding of the reality for Roman benefactresses throughout the empire. There are many other facets of this Quantitative Findings Chapter and wider research which could be further explored in the future, but these three themes identified are the most notable, comparable, and provide new insight into the lives of ancient Roman benefactresses which address the research aims for this thesis.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The results presented in Chapters 4 and 5 provided information covering topics from benefaction type to family relationships, across regions which both greatly varied from each other as well as overlapped, to provide a thorough review of the women being considered. By applying the mixed-methods approach, this discussion contextualises the most notable outcomes from the numerical data presented through the lens of the qualitative background which informs this research. While previous work examined these benefactresses in isolation, this chapter will effectively provide a more holistic view of their lived experiences and unique contributions. These noteworthy developments include a focus on the insights revealed about the most unique types of donations by women across the empire, the similarities and differences in family relationships throughout the three regions, and an investigation into unique social status trends, particularly by freedwomen in Italy and benefactresses in Asia Minor. When referring back to the aims of this research, these outcomes directly address the structures through which women participated in benefaction, the impact of family relationships on women's access to social mobility, and how women's networks and social status contributed to their access to benefaction. This Discussion Chapter will utilise more detailed representations of the data and case studies to further our understanding of female benefaction between, and also within, these regions during the first to third centuries AD.

6.2 Unique Preferences for Certain Benefaction Types

Examining benefaction type preferences allows perspective into the channels through which Roman women were able to participate in public benefaction. Rather than seeing donation types at face value, this section will review how donation choice was a way to communicate belonging within their communities, whether that afforded them a platform in social groups or demonstrated adherence to Roman value systems. Whether forming a new identity in a community, or reinforcing an existing status, the choices made by benefactresses provide information regarding their goals and motivations, though sometimes in a discrete form which requires intentional analysis.

Across the three regions studied in this research, various trends in donation type have led researchers to investigate the different motivations and cultural settings which would have inspired a woman to donate one structure rather than another. These choices will be the first major outcome to be discussed in this chapter, with a particular examination of the temple

kitchen donations which occurred in Italy, alongside other lesser known and unlikely structures across the empire. By understanding the broader historical and social contexts which influenced benefactresses, the inspirations behind these donation decisions become more clear and relevant in this area of research.

6.2.1 Common Benefaction Types Across the Roman Empire

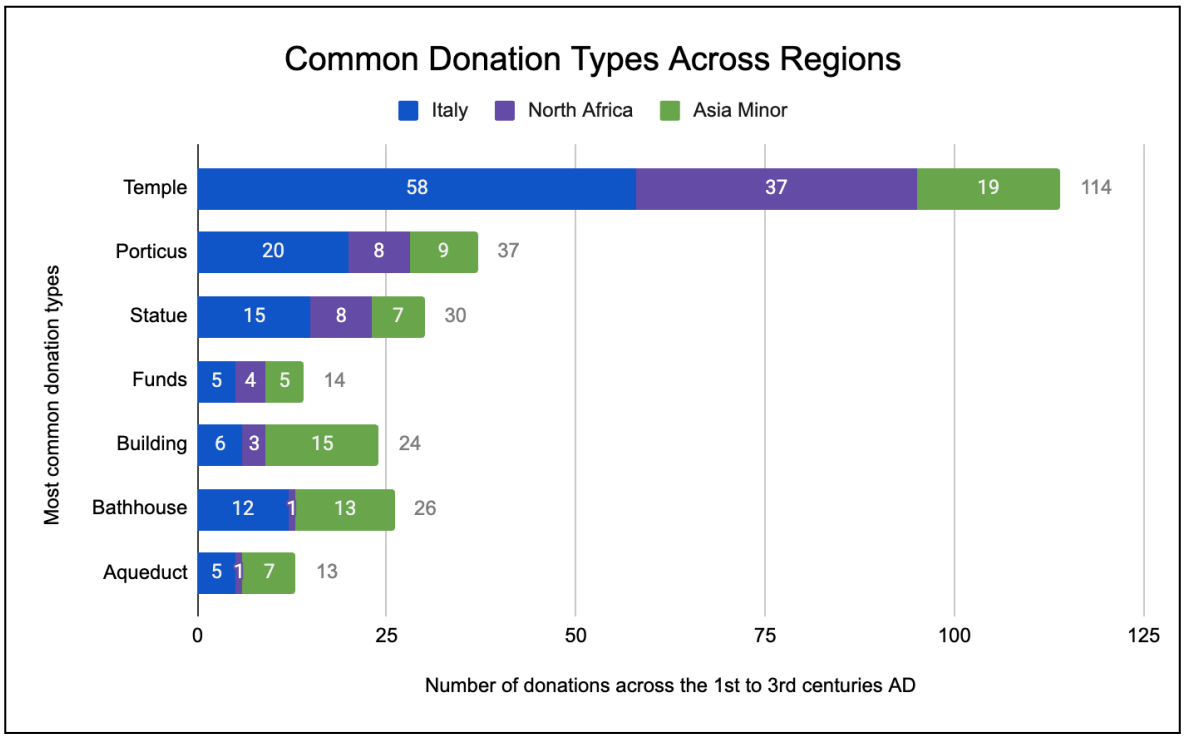


Figure 6.1 Graph showing the most common donation types across the regions of Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor.

Before investigating the more distinctive benefaction types, it is worthwhile to briefly visualise the most common donations laid out comparatively by region. As is clear from Figure 6.1, temples dominated as the most common donation type by Roman women during the first few centuries of the Roman Empire. While there was a clear preference for this structure by women in Italy and North Africa, benefactresses in Asia Minor opted for more variation in donation type and thus had fewer temple donations comparatively. This similarly reflects the importance of religion in the given regions, as women in Italy and North Africa found access to benefaction and public roles more directly through religious associations. Trends for *porticus* and statue donations are fairly consistent in all three regions, while Asia Minor also demonstrated a strong preference for donating water features such as bathhouses and aqueducts. The fewer donations in North Africa of buildings, bathhouses, and aqueducts in comparison to temple donations demonstrates their reserved approach to uncommon donations, and exemplifies how they were more conservative within the system of euergetism compared to Italy and Asia Minor.

6.2.2 Temple Kitchen Donations

The most intriguing and underexamined donation type in this dataset was that of the temple kitchen or *culina,* which appears to be confined to Italy. There was one *culina* donation in the first century BC, six in the first century AD, and two in the second century AD. The kitchen references are always linked to a temple, indicating that early benefactresses wanted to specifically link themselves to this room or space in the religious complex (Hemelrijk 2015, 459; *AE* 2012, 335). Most of the donations described here are donated by both male and female benefactors, and while an uncommon donation, the *culina* is no exception, further confirming that donation choices were not typically gendered (*AE* 2006, 314; Aliquot 2011, 87-8; Verboven 2020, 19). This pattern is seen throughout this research, where a donation is linked to a bigger structure, a historic reference, or family connection, all of which are examples of strategic adjacency. These kitchen areas may have been used for intimate gatherings, or as preparation space for larger banquets (Hänninen 2019, 69). As mentioned in the Quantitative Findings Chapter, these donations were often linked to female deities, most frequently Venus, followed by Juno and Bona Dea. While Bona Dea was a deity most commonly associated with Roman Italy, references to Venus (Aphrodite) were found across the empire, suggesting these donations did not only occur in Italy due to a singular religious association or tradition.

Due to the lack of scholarly literature discussing kitchens or *culinae,* Latin epigrapher and historian John Bodel was consulted for additional insight (John Bodel, pers. comm.). According to Bodel, *culina* could refer to a meal prepared in a kitchen (Carroll 2022; Hor. *Sat*. 1.5.38; Juv. *Sat*. 5.162) or some kind of cooking facilities, either a physical kitchen or even a campfire area, where banquets were cooked (Carroll 2022). The women within this corpus provide brief indications regarding the environment of the temple kitchens, with details such as 'paid for the plastering of the *porticus* and the roof of the kitchen (*culina*) for the temple of Bona Dea'' and 'paid for kitchen (*culina*) and *strongyla* (circular niches) in the temple of Venus' (Hemelrijk 2015, 454-459; *AE* 1996, 468-469; *CIL* 1.3025, 361, 127, 467; *ILP* 156, 157, 159). Knowing that some kitchens had roofs according to the above phrases indicates these structures were sometimes more grand than campfire pits or simple hearths, although potentially not of banquet size (*CIL* 1.3025). Regardless of the exact dimensions and shape of the kitchens, this donation type is uncommonly associated with male or female benefactors, though it was a common practice for local benefactors to host communal meals, so there is an evident tie between local cults, community dining, and benefaction (Wen 2018, 15-18).

A reason for the exclusion of kitchen structures as a focus in historical and archaeological research is that these structures were typically donated by freedwomen (Hemelrijk 2015, 445, 452, 455). Freedwomen made up 87.5% of the donors of kitchens (for which we also have social status information), and the only other *culina* donor noted in this research was a woman of equestrian status (***It 104***) (Hemelrijk 2015, 459). This informs researchers that not only were there certain categories of benefaction type that applied to female benefactresses but also there was a class divide. Perhaps these freedwomen did not have the funds to donate entire temples and thus decided to enhance their contributions by linking them to temple donations through donating the associated kitchens (Hemelrijk 2015, 119).

Additionally this donation would tie the freedwoman to any temple meals or communal events which relied on the kitchen space for food preparation. When examining the decisions made by the benefactresses highlighted in this work, it is clear that women made particular choices to maximise their impact. In this dataset, two of the kitchen donations were shared among freedwomen groups; one donation was given by a freedwoman pair, and the other donation was split among four freedwomen, adding to the evidence that these women were co-donating for the purpose of combining resources to contribute something significant in order to be remembered by future generations. These actions challenge the view that for participation in benefaction to be meaningful, it had to come from women of elite status or families with a history of beneficence, and indicates instead that religious belonging and strategic visibility could provide similar outputs. This evidence of female networks and community is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

6.2.3 Gymnasia

While kitchen donations were confined to Italy, donations of gymnasia solely appear in Asia Minor. With a structure as large as a gymnasium, it is unsurprising that none of the cities where women donated a gymnasium contained more than one. Gymnasia were a unique choice as they were non-religious buildings, which would have offered a variety of benefits including baths and communal spaces for public gathering or philosophising (Mantas 1999, 183; Glass 1988, 15). The gymnasium was originally a Hellenistic structure that eventually reached Italy and North Africa, though it evolved to be more like a bathhouse in depiction (Cartwright 2016; Ginouvès 1962). It is interesting that while there were gymnasia in these regions, they were not adopted as a form of benefaction to which women would be inclined to donate. This could be a cultural difference, but occurred potentially because gymnasia could often be seen as masculine spaces due to the training, bathing, and political debates held at them (Mantas 1999, 183). It is possible that in the Roman East, women did not feel they had to avoid these structures, while in the west, women found donating a gymnasium

improper. We see trends of benefactresses typically avoiding structures such as stadia, libraries, and meeting houses, so perhaps in the western Roman Empire, there were particular views around donating a gymnasium as well (Mantas 1999, 183).

6.2.4 Libraries

Another unique donation, which is only seen in the second century AD in this corpus, was the library, which was donated in Pergamon and Aphrodisias, Asia Minor (***AM 36*** and ***AM 46***) and in Suessa Aurunca, Italy (***It 66***). Houston provided insight into the decoration of the library in Pergamon, describing the floor as being 'paved with coloured marble in geometric patterns, walls covered in marble veneer, and an intricate mosaic on the wall behind the deified Hadrian statue placed by the benefactress' (Houston 2014, 208). He proceeds to emphasise that the ornamentation within libraries is not necessary for the building to serve its purpose, but that the decor elevates the status of the benefactor and was often expected within these structures (Houston 2014, 208). Houston compares Flavia Melitine's library to those which were constructed in Ephesos (Asia Minor) and Timgad (North Africa), both of which were donated by notable male benefactors (Houston 2014, 208). Surprisingly, this is all that we know of Flavia Melitine despite her heavy involvement in the city and her evident financial power which would have enabled her to finance further projects beyond the library.

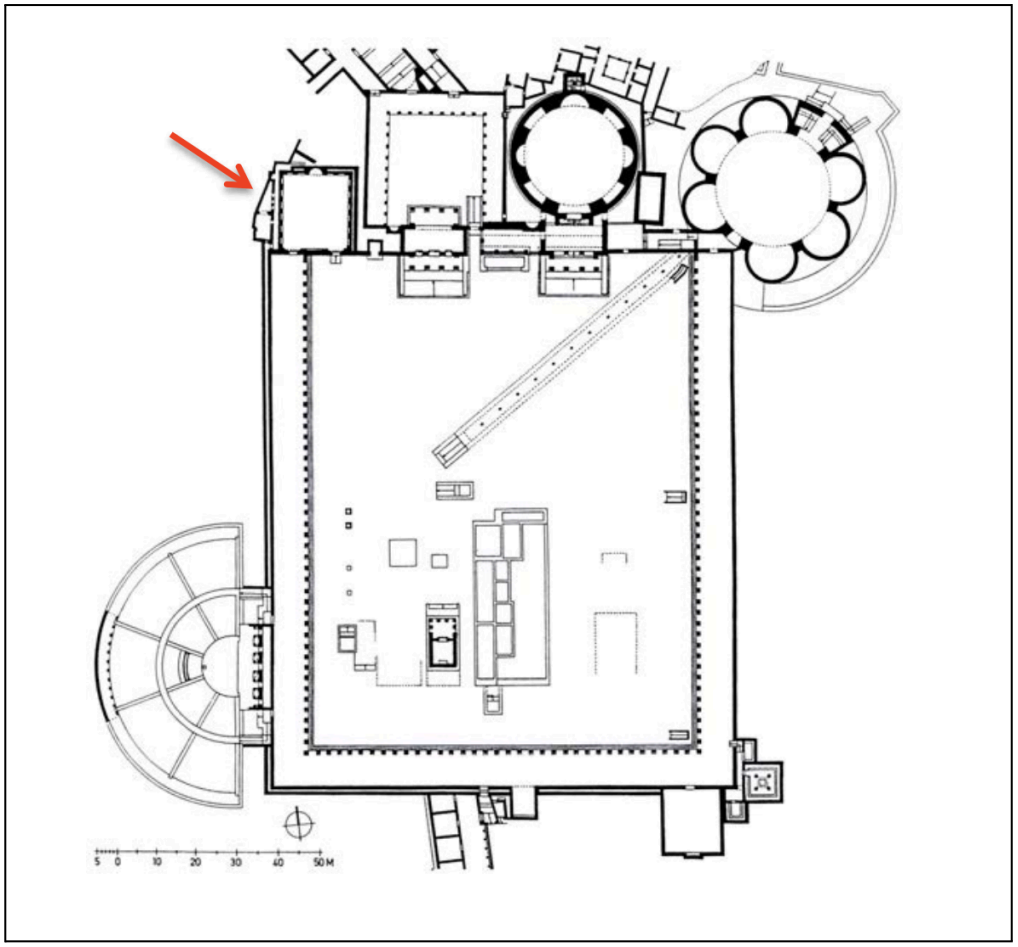


Figure 6.2 The Melitine library in the healing temple and sanctuary of Asklepeios in Pergamon (Source: Radt 1999, fig. 175.)

The other library donation in Asia Minor was by Julia Paula of Aphrodisias (***AM 46***). Julia Paula came from a wealthy family connected to G. Julius Zoilos, known to be Aphrodisias' most notable benefactor during the reign of Augustus; the donation, therefore, highlighted her sizable wealth and symbolic historic family connections in the region (Morgan 2014, 134). In Aphrodisias, it was often the female half of a partnership who brought much of the wealth into the family, as was the case with Julia Paula and several others though this did not hinder her husband Jason from waiting to mention her until the tenth line of the honorary inscription (Morgan 2014, 134, 162). Jason's family was also quite wealthy (though did not have the caliber of beneficence that Julia Paula's ancestry did) which would indicate that the marriage of these two benefactors would have significantly contributed to their elite status in the city (Morgan 2014, 212).

Italy's library donation in the dataset comes from Matidia Minor (***It 66***), another wealthy elite benefactress who was not restricted by social standing or funding, as she was the great-niece of Emperor Trajan (CIL 10.4760; Boatwright 1992, 31; Woodhull 2018, 212). She also was known for donating a theatre, road, and bridge as well as the library, so it is clear

that she was well prepared to make sizable contributions to her local communities (Hemelrijk 2015, 464). Woodhull notes that the library also was the location where the town council meetings took place, further indicating that Matidia Minor was present in all facets of Suessa Aurunca's daily activities (Woodhull 2018, 212).

Libraries are perhaps one of the first benefaction types where there is a clear indication that significant wealth was needed to donate this structure. There were only three examples of library donations in this corpus, but each woman involved was noted for having significant wealth and status, sometimes linking back to elites and benefactors from centuries earlier. This would explain why they were comfortable with donating an atypical building variety, as they had the status and connections to not be questioned. Libraries also were known for being donated as memorials, particularly in Hellenistic tradition, which could add to our understanding of why or why not a benefactress would choose this structure (Woodhull 2018, 213). Both Augustus' sister (Octavia Minor) and Octavia built a library following the deaths of their sons, making it clear that the custom of commemoration was closely tied to this building type and could have influenced a benefactress to avoid this donation if the occasion was not appropriate (Woodhull 2018, 213). Knowing that wealth and memorialisation were often tied to this structure is an insight which is not available for many of the commonly donated or more unique structures, but provides an idea of how these benefaction behaviours can be explored in the future.

6.2.5 Theatres

Figures 6.3 (top) and **6.4** (bottom). Annia Aelia Restituta's theatre in Calama (now Guelma). (Source: S. Arab, About Algeria)

While gymnasia and libraries dominated in Asia Minor, one benefaction type which emerged in the first and second century AD across Italy and North Africa was the theatre. There are nine donations of theatres across the two regions, and their lack of popularity and the fact that they required a significant financial contribution makes them worth discussing in this section. There were four examples of theatres in both the first (in Asisium, Nemus Dianae, Opitergium, and Verona) and second centuries AD in Roman Italy (in Casinum, Falerio Picenus, Lupiae, and Suessa Aurunca), along with one donation in the second century AD in North Africa (Calama). The one woman who donated a theatre in North Africa was Annia Aelia Restituta, in Calama, during the second century AD (***NA 5***) (Hemelrijk 2015, 466). The cost of this theatre is recorded to be 400,000 sesterces, the highest cost known to be linked to an entertainment structure. Annia Aelia Restituta was granted five public statues as a thank you from the council (Figs. 6.3 and 6.4) (Hemelrijk 2015, 123).

The variation in donation cities indicates that similarly to gymnasia, there were not duplicate theatres being built in one location. While benefactors chose structures which appealed to them, there was also a tendency to donate structures that were desired by the community (Mantas 1994, 349). What can be deduced is that the women who commissioned theatre donations would have stood out among their peers as incomparable, as there were much fewer structures to juxtapose their donations against.

6.2.6 Brothels and Lavatories

Figure 6.5 Lavatory donation by Varille and her father Poplius Quintillius Varius in Ephesos (Source: Brothel and Latrine, 2013)

There is only one occurrence of a brothel and a lavatory in this dataset, and, even more interestingly, they were donated by the same person in Ephesos (***AM 77***) (Mantas 1994, 349; IEphesos no. 455). When other donation types are examined for their social implications and impact on a benefactress' public persona, it can be clearly understood why these two structures were not the norm. Ummidia Quadratilla in North Africa was critiqued for her involvement in the world of theatre, so one would wonder what involvement in the world of brothels would mean for an elite woman (Sick 1999, 330-346). When researching women as business owners in the Roman Empire however, one of the potential businesses a woman might run was indeed a brothel (a role referred to as the pornoboskos) (Cuchet 2013, 226; Fleming 1999, 41).

There is not a substantial amount of information about this particular benefactress, but there is enough to create an outline of why this donation type occurred. The benefactress Varille, in Ephesos, was actively donating within the second century AD (***AM 77***) (Mantas 1994, 349; *IEphesos* no. 455). The donations involving the brothel and lavatory were part of a reconstruction project, which was instigated by Varille's father, Poplius Quintillius Varius, who then elected to co-donate the structures with his wife (name unknown) and daughter Varille (Fig. 6.5) (Mantas 1994, 349). As a father would be unlikely to place his daughter in a questionable social position, the family must have concluded that this restoration was accepted by the community and would elevate their social status in Ephesos.

Unfortunately, this is all that is known about this donation, but it does inspire a few ideas regarding the accessibility of structures to donate or restore in large cities. Potentially this restoration was chosen because it was a structure that was available and desired in Ephesos, and the family would have chosen another structure to restore if there was one

with a similar financial expenditure available. Perhaps there was a concern regarding old age, and Poplius Quintillius Varius had to choose the most fitting cost, restoration timeline, and location to participate in the system of public benefaction before his death. There could simply be a 'somebody has to do it' ideology when it comes to more facility-based donations. It is possible that knowing the financial status of this family would provide needed insight into who was responsible for the choice to commission these sorts of unlikely structures. Regardless of the reasoning, this restoration is an example of architectural adjacency, which furthers the impact of the donation based on preserving its prior associations and forming newfound connections.

6.2.7 Scholae

Finally, there are *schola* donations, with three instances across the three regions and centuries. These structures could appear as 'a school or a place for debate and discussion' (Carroll 2018, 197). Two of the donations had unknown donation dates, while the third was donated in the third century AD in North Africa by Aquilia Blaesilla in Leptis Magna (***NA 13***). She linked the structure to Minerva and Mercury, and highlighted her son within the inscription as well (De Marre 2002, 353; *IRT* 587, 632). The religious ties and familial connection are unexpected with this donation, as a *schola* would not have been known for cult associations or have linked Aquilia Blaesilla to her role as a wife and mother. Regardless, Aquilia Blaesilla's contribution of a meeting place adjacent to the city bathhouse stands out within this corpus and likely within the community of Leptis Magna as well.

The other two *scholae* donations occurred in Italy, though their associated dates did not survive. (..) Junia (***It 1***) and Lollia Quarta (***It 52***) donated their *scholae* structures in Aquileia and Telesia (respectively), alongside other features such as a *porticus*, statue, gardens, and assembly house (Hemelrijk 2015, 438, 476). The only additional detail that remains is that the *schola* donated by (..) Junia was in honour of Juno, reinforcing Aquilia Blaesilla's decision to link her *schola* to notable religious figures (Hemelrijk 2015, 438, 476).

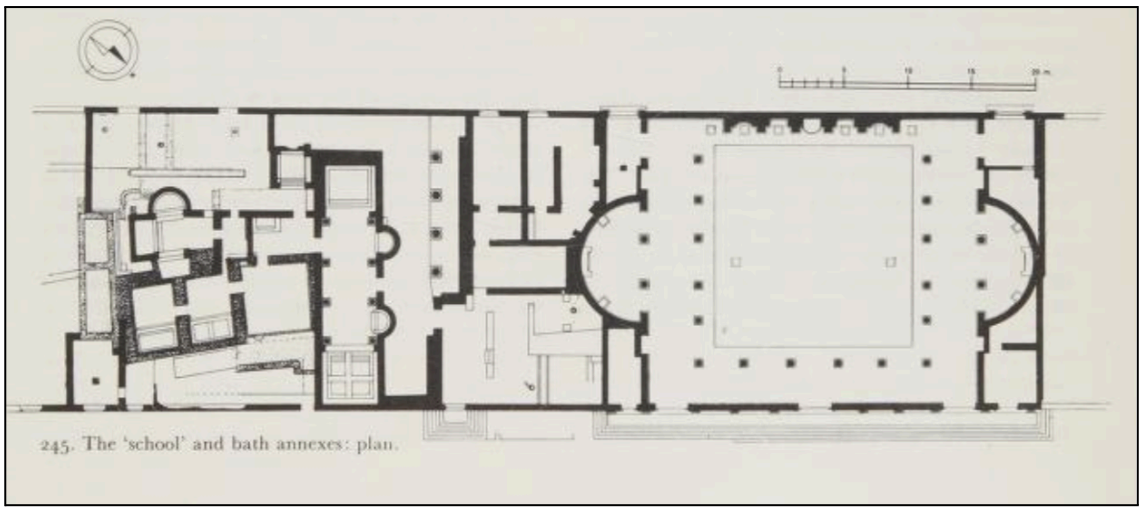


Figure 6.6 The schola (and baths) in Leptis Magna, donated by Aquilia Blaesilla
(Source: Bandinelli 1966, fig. 245)

6.2.8 Conclusion

There are a few takeaways from examining the most unique structures which were donated by women highlighted in this corpus. While this research has examined the common donation types throughout the Qualitative and Quantitative Findings Chapters, the uncommon ones provide more insight into the motivations, community pressures, and expectations surrounding benefactresses across the empire. The conversation leans heavily upon the donation of temple kitchens or *culinae* in Italy, where primarily freedwomen were able to combine their resources to build space for communal dining or cooking which tied them to the religious community, female networks, and the act of benefaction, which had once seemed only possible for the most elite. While temple kitchen donations would seem to have provided important connections and solidified memorialisation for benefactresses in any region, they remain uncommon in the record and only have been found in Italy (Aliquot 2011, 87-8; Verboven 2020, 19). Out of all of the uncommon donation types discussed here, this correlation and pattern seems the most cryptic.

While temple kitchens were likely modest donations, the uncommon status of gymnasia, libraries, and theatres is more likely due to their size and required financial contribution (Glass 1988, 15; Hemelrijk 2015, 123; Houston 2014, 208; Mantas 1999, 183, 349; Morgan 2014, 134). There is the possibility that these structures were not seen as appropriate in certain communities though, as gymnasia were favoured in Asia Minor and may have been associated with male donations in Italy and North Africa, and libraries and theatres sparsely appeared in separate towns as well. One of the most notable takeaways from the investigation into these structures is that libraries had a unique tie to commemoration due to imperial women building this structure after the death of their sons on two separate

occasions (Woodhull 2018, 213). Knowing the commentary Pliny recorded regarding Ummidia Quadratilla's affinity for pantomimes, the nine appearances of theatres in the corpus indicate that participation in theatre donations were not unheard of, and that women were more active in this community than written history suggests (Hemelrijk 2015, 129-130; Pliny 7.24; Sick 1999, 330). A uniting conclusion for each of these donation types is that the women funding them were likely so influential and valued in their regional areas that contributing an uncommon or unlikely structure was accepted without much retaliation from the local population or leaders, as they were to benefit from the building as well.

Brothels, lavatories, and scholae were found in much smaller amounts than the other donation types discussed, but their unique presence in cities across the empire also add to the discussion of motivations and expectations of benefactresses. While there was only one woman who donated both a brothel and lavatory with her parents, the unlikeliness of the donation informs researchers that co-donations with family members could change the expectations around behaviour for benefactresses in a way that solo donors may not have access to (Mantas 1994, 349; *IEphesos* no. 455). This donation also highlights the decisions benefactors had to make regarding preference for a structure in comparison to the needs of the community, and how these priorities could be decided in unison with other family members or co-donors. It is important to note that many of these strategies and decisions were not exclusive to female benefactors, but what did distinguish benefactresses in this system was the relational frameworks and constraints which only they faced.

Through evaluating each of these unique donations, it becomes clear that the choice of structure did not depend on a singular factor such as financial ability or availability of donation type, but rather that several factors would have determined what a benefactor chose to connect their name and identity to. There are certain environments and themes which overlap across the empire, and other areas where the actions of benefactresses were quite unique and confined to a particular region. This insight continues to provide evidence which can be applied to the wider empire, as an absence of donation types is valuable to understanding the topic as well. Through compiling both the most common and least common structures, conclusions around independence, motivation, family relationships, and civic needs are made clear. This continues to be seen in the following section, where the intention behind the framing of family relationships contributes to understanding other decisions made surrounding the donation.

6.3 Family Differences Across Regions

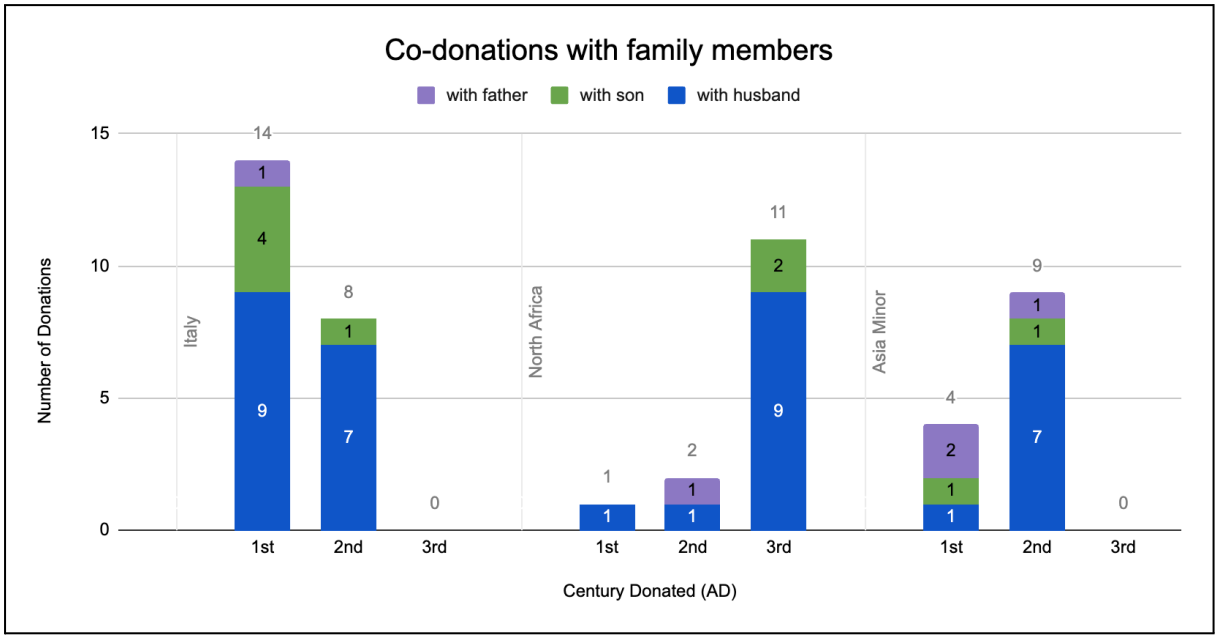


Figure 6.7 Graph showing the number of co-donations with fathers, sons, and husbands across the regions of Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor in the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

While the previous section examined the most unique donation choices, this family references section will primarily review the most common decisions benefactresses made regarding co-donating with, or mentioning, other family members. There will be some uncommon choices evaluated, but primarily the discussion is around the prevalence of male family members and the importance of female networks.

6.3.1 Benefaction with male family members

Strategic donations by women with relevant male family members were part of the multi-faceted approach to use benefaction to improve social standing, and are an example of strategic alignment to male authority in order to promote self-interests. When the focus is on these relationships, understanding the language and depictions used allows for a deeper understanding of agency, particularly when separating women who convey personal independently and those who emphasised more traditional roles and values. In this research, agency is not seen as acting separately from male relatives, but rather as the ability to make intentional and strategic decisions within social systems, so when discussing the choice of co-donors, an emphasis on lineage, or an alignment with particular communities, agency is visibly in action.

When examining co-donation behaviours, it is important to remain focused on who benefits from the donation. For example, when a co-donation is made with a husband, this was the benefactress' partner and the whole family would benefit from the donation being linked to

the couple, both because of local prestige and because this action would demonstrate marital concordance (Bertolazzi 2016, 101; De Marre 2002, 353; Hemelrijk 2015, 131-134; Lott 2015, 141). When a woman co-donated with her son, this action was for future generations, as it is likely that the son was quite young or actively competing for a political position and the benefactress showed support for him through the donation (Hemelrijk 2015, 131-134). These differences in motivation narrate these benefactresses' choices regarding co-donation in unique ways which should remain the focus when examining the data in Figure 6.7.

What is immediately clear is that co-donations with husbands were the most significant across every region, and highly consistent despite the varying number of inscriptions from each region. This consistency in co-donation behaviours is unusual considering how distinct the regional data is in several of the other areas examined in this research, and because of how varied the co-donation behaviours are outside of co-donations with husbands.

Co-donations with fathers diverge from this consistency, as benefactresses in Asia Minor showed a preference for this behaviour, while benefactresses in Italy and North Africa were less likely to elect to co-donate with their fathers. Potentially this is because benefactresses in Asia Minor were more accepted in society if they were linked to their fathers, or because there was a different respect for parents and elder family members in the Roman East. This statement is reinforced by the knowledge that the only benefactresses who co-donated with their mothers also came from Asia Minor. Another area where benefactresses from Asia Minor act as outliers is in terms of co-donations with daughters, another interaction between the benefactress and another female family member. These female connections and networks are some of the best evidence for social mobility and access to power, and will be explored further below.

6.3.1.1 Benefactresses and their husbands

Across the three centuries examined here, co-donations with husbands continued to be one of the most popular mentions of a family member by a benefactress throughout the first to third centuries AD, in all three regions. Co-donations between wife and husband could also be due to varying factors, such as a strong partnership between the couple, a desire to combine finances for a larger impact, or aid from the benefactress or her husband to commission a structure that otherwise they would not have the financial power to donate (Bertolazzi 2016, 100-103; Hemelrijk 2015, 167; Van Bremen 1996, 43, 69-70, 291). The first two options are the most likely, where the benefactress and her husband both held honourable roles in their local communities and a co-donation from both parties would carry

more symbolism and power or where the co-donors decided that the combination of funds would create a more valuable impact on the city's infrastructure.

There is a clear separation in the first century AD between the benefactresses who sought to highlight the identity of their husbands alongside their donations and the women who actively co-donated structures with their husbands. This separation is seen along a geographical divide, as benefactresses in Asia Minor chose the former connection, while benefactresses in Italy chose the latter. Female benefaction was not well established in North Africa in the first century, so there is not enough information to know which trend these benefactresses adhered to (Hemelrijk 2015, 20).

Why might this separation have occurred? Potentially there was more familial wealth in Asia Minor due to their longer established history, so when female benefaction became popular in the region and women were able to access their finances without supervision, benefactresses could more easily donate without linking themselves to their husbands (Morgan 2014, 134). However, this would suggest that there was less familial wealth in Italy, which seems like an unlikely reason. Another possible explanation is the different cultural expectations about being a respectful and honourable wife in Italy; perhaps it was seen as more virtuous to share the donation between husband and wife (Bertolazzi 2016, 100-103; Kleiner 1996, 30). The stark difference between these two regions seems to suggest that the second option is more likely, as it is well documented that the imperial women emphasised matronly values, which would encourage not upstaging one's husband (Barrett 1996, 110–111; Woodhull 2018, 230). This decision may have been more popular in Italy, as a strategic adjacency to the imperial family, honoured values, and descriptive language emphasising marital harmony, while in Asia Minor the strategy varied.

There was a clear shift in Asia Minor in the second century, and benefactresses who were hesitant to co-donate structures with their husbands in the first century AD joined in on the trend. This is potentially because they knew of the women of Roman Italy co-donating larger structures as a pair, and sought to emulate their actions, or because the matronly values of Italy and North Africa spread to Asia Minor, and women changed their donation behaviours to indicate wanting to show acceptance of Roman culture. Interestingly, mentions of fathers continued to be a characteristic of donations by women in the Roman East, so perhaps this decision paired with either language usage, imagery, or co-donor choice also demonstrated a benefactress’s integration of Roman traditions into the Hellenistic culture of the east.

6.3.1.2 Benefactresses and their fathers

While there were fewer co-donations with fathers than co-donations with husbands, there were still several inscriptions highlighting this occurrence. One may conclude that the scenario where a father co-donated with his daughter was similar to that of benefactresses as mothers and their sons, in that the father was setting up his daughter for public recognition. Perhaps this was due to him lacking sons to co-donate with, or possibly some fathers were nondiscretionary when highlighting their children within the public sphere, as a co-donation with a daughter provided many of the same benefits as co-donating with a son. It should be noted that if a father and daughter were donating together, the father would likely have contributed significantly more financially as his being alive indicates that the daughter had not yet received an inheritance and had to either make her own money or marry someone with substantial resources.

Consistently it is seen that family relationships and lineage played a larger role in the region of Asia Minor, and that occurrence is visible within relationships between benefactresses and their fathers in this corpus (Van Bremen 1996, 96, 177-180). In the first century AD, only two women in the region co-donated with their father, but nine women elected to mention their father as a non-donating family member. The father's position as a non-donor implies that there was not necessarily a need for the benefactresses to mention him, but rather that they chose to honour their fathers out of respect for their family lineage. In Italy and North Africa in the first century, only singular mentions of a benefactress' father occurred, implying that this connection was not seen as a key priority in these regions at the time.

This prevalence did change in the second century AD though, as mentions of fathers increased in both Italy and North Africa from one instance in each region to two in Italy and six in North Africa. Only one of the six was also a co-donation with the benefactress's father, indicating that influence from Asia Minor may have spread to North Africa regarding this practice, as the occurrences in Asia Minor also increased (from nine to ten). This is not the direction of influence which is frequently seen in this research, as many of the changes in benefaction behaviour come from Roman Italy influencing the Greek East as the empire expanded, but there are examples like this one where the actions by benefactors in Asia Minor actually appeared in North Africa or Italy.

6.3.1.3 Benefactresses and other family members

Knowing that there is a more defined relationship between women and their fathers in Asia Minor, it is not surprising that benefactresses from this region tended to mention other elder family members within inscriptions more than in Italy and North Africa. Within the dataset,

there are examples of benefactresses in Asia Minor mentioning their parents, in-laws (brother, sister, mother, and father), grandmother/father (6), great-grandmother/grandfather (3), great-great-grandfather (2), and even one great-great-great-grandfather, while in Italy and North Africa there is only one reference to a grandparent in each region. Perhaps a benefactress would go back so far to highlight a connection between themselves and a relative who was well-known and successful, but it is also possible that this was done simply out of respect and honour. This attachment to past and future memory signals temporal adjacency, where connections laid next to each other build a stronger case for social recollection and power.

Figure 6.8 Inscription from Aphrodisias recording the donations of Ammia, including the reservoirs and water tanks, and detailing her lineage to her great-great-great-grandfather. White marble monumental block, possibly a doorway lintel. Dated by titulature to A.D. 81-96. Found in 1973 in the eastern city walls. Inscription published as *IAph* 12.314. (Source: Inscriptions of Aphrodisias 12.314.)

Ammia (***AM 3***) was the benefactress from Aphrodisias in Asia Minor whose inscription referenced all the way back to her great-great-great-grandfather (Mantas 1994, 351). Although she was not the lead donor on this project, she was noted as acting as a co-donor with her father, and was listed as the person responsible for carrying out the donation (Fig. 6.8) (Mantas 1994, 351; *MAMA VIII*, no 449). This is a clear demonstration of how co-donations with relatives strengthen benefactresses' claim to social power within a community. Even if Ammia was not the decision-maker in terms of the inscription creation, she was linked as the daughter of a previous priest of Helios and high priest of Vespasian, and she performed a notable act of public beneficence in Aphrodisias (Mantas 1994, 351; *MAMA VIII*, no 449). It is impossible to know if their relationship was one where her father

was setting Ammia up for success, or if he needed her to carry out his wishes, but regardless she would have benefitted from being named on the inscriptions. That aside, this is not a strong example of a female benefactor acting independently or with her own motivations, as she mentioned late in the inscription and within her role as 'daughter of Adrastos the son of Apollonios' (*MAMA VIII*, no 449).

There was also a unique inscription which highlighted the benefactress' father-in-law by a benefactress named Julia Gallitta (***NA 33***) who donated in Thugga in North Africa in the third century AD (Bertolazzi 2016, 100-101). Interestingly, Bertolazzi highlights that Julia Gallitta was one of two married flaminicae in Thugga at this time, suggesting that this could be why she is unique in mentioning her father-in-law within the inscription (Bertolazzi 2016, 100-101). Her donation was a co-donation with her husband, so he may have chosen to highlight his lineage within the inscription, but it is still worth noting this inscription because of the fact that her mother-in-law was also mentioned (Bertolazzi 2016, 100-101). Again, this could be Julia Gallitta's husband's choice, but it does indicate that her husband chose to elevate his wife by co-donating a temple with her and also commemorate his mother through epigraphy.

6.3.2 Benefaction with female family members

As with co-donations with male family members, shared donation references between female family members provide evidence of using the materials, or family ties, provided in order to create a local identity and network (Holland 2012, 204-213). These acts are significant as they provide rare evidence for female networks performing within the system of benefaction, challenging the view that benefactresses' actions were controlled by men. Whether honouring maternal lineage in the inscription or providing support for future benefactresses through including a daughter in a donation, these intentional acts provide evidence for understanding the actions of these female agents.

As mentioned above, a fascinating distinction between regions is the emphasis on benefactresses' relationships with their mothers and daughters in inscriptions from Asia Minor. In this region, 9 of the relevant inscriptions by benefactresses mentioned their mother, while in Italy and North Africa, there was only one instance where a benefactress included her mother within her inscription (***It 66***). Why would this be? One must look into the cultural backgrounds to determine why certain relationships were seen as more important than others in each region. Since benefactresses in Asia Minor emphasised the relationship between benefactresses and their fathers more than in the other regions studied, it makes sense that this would extend to their mothers as well.

While there is only one instance of a co-donation with a daughter shown from the second century AD, there are three instances, all from Asia Minor, in the corpus overall (two are undated and thus not pulled into the data when filtered by time period). The fact that all three of the co-donations with daughters came from Asia Minor emphasises the diversity of donations in this region and also correlates with the point that benefactresses in Asia Minor highlighted maternal relationships significantly more than benefactresses in Italy and North Africa. Family relationships in Asia Minor appear to have been more close-knit than in the other regions discussed, as commemorative inscriptions are recorded honouring both male and female family members, as well as their sons and daughters (Van Bremen 1996, 241-251).

A particular inscription by Asicia Victoria (***NA 16***) where she mentioned her daughter stands out (though this was not a co-donation). One of the later benefactresses in this corpus, Asicia Victoria was active during the third century AD in Thugga, where she held the role of *flaminica perpetua* (Hemelrijk 2015, 463). She was honoured with several public statues and was noted for promising sums of money for public celebrations, a statue base, a rostra, and a foundation for a theatre, among other smaller donations (Hemelrijk 2015, 146, 463, 492). Hemelrijk highlights that one of Asicia Victoria's donations was 100,000 sesterces to the city, to perpetually cover both her and her daughter's *summa honoraria* (Hemelrijk 2015, 146). As we know that her daughter Vibia Asiciane went on to be a public benefactress herself, one can see how the early and permanent payment of Vibia Asiciane's *summa honoraria* allowed her to become involved in benefaction on a grander scale earlier in her career as a priestess (Hemelrijk 2015, 409).

It does not seem to be a coincidence that Ummidia Quadratilla (***It 103***) and Matidia Minor (niece of Emperor Trajan) (***It 66***), two women who held a lot of communal social power in Italian Casinum and Suessa Aurunca (cities that were only 25 miles apart), felt comfortable enough to diverge from the norms and create a focus on the network of women within their families (Hemelrijk 2015, 458, 464, 469, 510). As Matidia Minor was widowed and left childless, relationships with close relatives must have been a crucial part of her existence, demonstrated by her co-donations with her mother and references to family members such as her nephew in inscriptions (Wood 2015, 118-119; Woodhull 2018, 207, 218). Matidia Minor is the only example of a benefactress who highlighted her familial links to the imperial family, making her a unique case in comparison to the other benefactresses within this corpus. Ummidia similarly lived in an unconventional family setting, as her grandson lived with her following the death of his wife and unborn child (Plin. *Ep*. 7.24). These two powerful

benefactresses highlighted the importance of community networks for women within the upper circles of Roman society, and also embodied the idea that benefaction was seen as an appropriate format for women to participate within the community while living a life of solitude or while mourning the loss of family members.

6.3.3 Conclusion

Within this discussion on the regional and temporal differences in family relationships, a few things become clear. Co-donations were complex, and understanding the motivations behind the donations requires the application of varied lenses and a grasp of how the political, cultural, and social systems interacted with each other. Co-donations with husbands or epigraphic references to husbands in Italy show a cultural expectation around co-decision making and an emphasis on the values of a concordant marriage, which is seen within the prevalence of these epigraphic references in the region. Regional variation is more visible when looking at co-donation frequencies with their fathers, as a preference for highlighting and honouring older and varied family members is seen in Asia Minor. This extends beyond the male family members as well, as mothers, daughters, and extended grandparent generations are commemorated within the epigraphy. These patterns reinforce the view that family ties were central to a woman's role in local benefaction and not an afterthought. They allowed women to navigate restrictions around social expectations, and to utilise benefaction as a strategic act rather than a lavish civic contribution.

6.4 Exploring Social Status

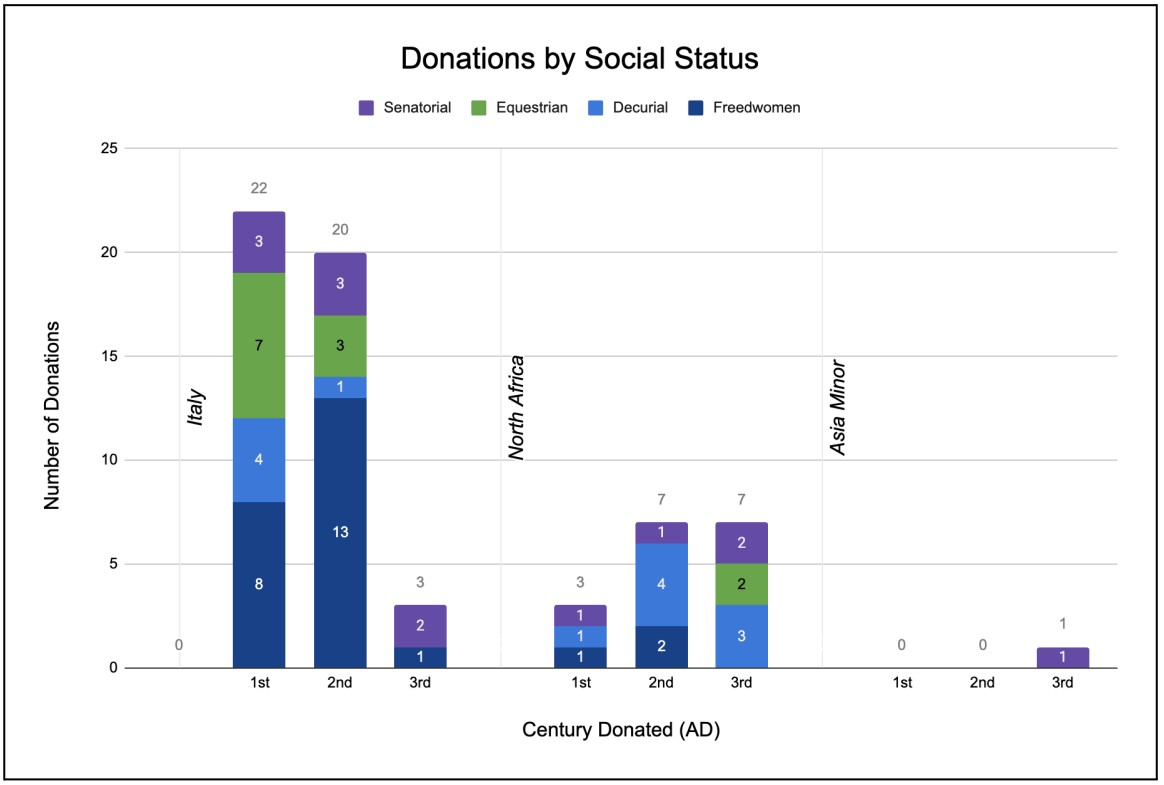


Figure 6.9. Graph showing frequency of references to benefactresses' social status in the regions of Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor across the first to third centuries AD.

There are a couple takeaways from Figure 6.9 that are the most relevant to the examination of social status within this dataset. The first is that freedwomen were the most likely group to highlight their social status within donation inscriptions in Italy. The second is that there is considerably less evidence denoting social status in Asia Minor. Both of these circumstances require investigation.

6.4.1 Freedwomen and social status

When considering why freedwomen were the most likely to emphasise their social status in inscriptions, there are a few possibilities: that people of lower social statuses had pride in their upwards movement from a previous status and chose to highlight this within inscriptions, that they did not hold positions that they could note alongside their donations and chose to highlight social status instead, or that among higher social classes, the inclusion of status may have been seen as unmannerly for their elite station. While this section focuses on the achievements and visibility of freedwomen in terms of social status, it is worth noting that freeborn women were acting in this system as well, though primarily reinforcing their existing status, referencing lineage, and retaining visibility, while freedwomen were establishing this identity for the first time.

Across Italy and North Africa, an increase in the representation of freedwomen can be seen in the second century AD, which reflects a general rise in euergetism in this time period. Perry (2013) provides additional insight into the legal and ideological settings of the late first century AD, where Augustus focused on reevaluating the present expression of feminine virtue as well as the issues caused by slavery, such as greed and self-interest (Perry 2013, 63, 130). This push by Augustus is a factor in many of the issues examined throughout this research, as it is well-known that Augustus wanted a spotlight on traditional Roman values, especially in regards to women (Kleiner 1996, 30; Milnor 2004, 59-62). On the topic of slavery, once freed, women would often struggle with the assumption that they were promiscuous, and learned that if they wanted to climb socially or at least be seen as a community member on an equal level, they needed to show that they participated locally, understood the social expectations of a Roman woman, and ascribed to Roman values (Perry 2013, 63, 130). Public benefaction was a clear response to several of these issues. This insight around the hurdles of being a freedwoman reinforces the conclusion that freedwomen were highlighting their social status because they did not have other roles to claim in their inscriptions, and not that there was necessarily pride in freedwoman status. On a personal level, a woman may have been proud to see how her family had climbed in standing over the decades but publically, this status was not always accepted by members of the local elite and likely being a freedwoman was not a title which came with positive connotations. The third suggestion regarding higher social classes excluding their status from inscriptions could have been true due to avoiding the behaviour of freedwomen, or it would have been assumed that the family name was already well-known locally.

While the second century AD saw a peak in benefactresses highlighting their social status in inscriptions, the third century AD saw a decline again (Hemelrijk 2015, 20). Only a single freedwoman donated in the third century AD (Flavia Epicharis), and little information is known about her other than that she was a priestess active in Rome, who mentioned her husband within her inscription (*CIL* 6.37170 = *ILS* 4438 = *AE* 1893, 79.; Hemelrijk 2015, 369). Perhaps as acts of benefaction declined in popularity, freedwomen did not see the value in participating, while more wealthy donors who had the finances to spend more frivolously continued to support their local communities. This is evidenced by the five women of senatorial status in Italy (2), North Africa (2), and Asia Minor (1) who continued to participate in euergetism despite it losing its popularity across the empire, likely due to a history of public participation and expendable wealth.

6.4.2 Freedwomen and the importance of networks

When reviewing the most referenced religious cults which existed across the Roman Empire earlier, the cults of Bona Dea and Venus were identified as the most popular for benefactresses. When solely looking at donations by freedwomen, eight benefactresses in Italy referred to Bona Dea alongside their temple donations, five women in Italy referred to Venus alongside their kitchen temple donation, and one woman in North Africa honoured Venus with her temple and porticus donation. Knowing that both of these cults were welcoming to freedwomen informs the conclusion that for these freed benefactresses, communities which embraced them regardless of background were invaluable and their gratitude came in the form of a donation which benefitted the donor as well as the religious community (Hallvig 2016, 13-14; Schultz 2006, 5). Donating to cults with a history of support, traditions, and like-minded members provides adjacency in a new symbolic form, reiterating how choosing to align with prominent people and settings reinforced legitimacy, especially for marginalised groups like freedwomen.

It would be remiss to ignore this direct insight into freedwomen finding and utilising their religious networks for social mobility in this section. Freedwomen participating in benefaction through co-donations demonstrates a desire to be a part of a community, their traditions, and to memorialise themselves for posterity. It makes sense that they would have formed a bond with other freedwomen with similar goals for themselves and their families, and that they would have invested both financially and socially in these networks.

The group of four freedwomen who donated in the first century AD in Casinum, Italy left behind the following inscription:

> *Flacceia A(uli) I(iberta) Lais,* \ *Orbia (Caiae) I(iberta) Lais,* \ *Cominia M(arci) I(iberta) Philocaris,* \ *Venturia Q(uinii) I(iberta) Thais* \ *culinam veneri de suo* \ *fecerunt loco* \ *precario.*
> - *AE 1975, 197, 55-56*
>
> Flacceia Lais, freedwoman of Aulus; Orbia Lais, freedwoman of Gaia; Cominia Philocaris, freedwoman of Marcus; Venturia Thais, freedwoman of Quintus; culina for Venus, with their own money, for this place of prayer.
> - *AE* 1975, 197, 55-56, translated by Maureen Carroll (2022)

From this inscription we can determine that these freedwomen met outside of their servitude, and likely within the cult of Venus where they went on to donate the temple *culina*. Acts such as this one contribute to conversations around community spaces and religious cults providing support and social mobility to underrepresented groups (Hänninen 2019, 69; Hemelrijk 2015, 119, 459). There is a clear attachment to the cult of Venus through donating in this space, but also through the language where they state that they paid for the structure "from their own money, for this place of prayer" (*AE* 1975, 197, 55-56). The personal ownership exhibited through this text, as well as the reference to each woman and her social status indicates that this was a significant donation for these freedwomen and is a remarkable testament which we are fortunate to be able to research today.

Over a third of this corpus' freedwoman donations in Italy occurred in Aquileia. A major military colony, Aquileia would have had building projects commissioned at the outset of its establishment and would have had a need for rebuilding after attacks from the north, providing opportunities for benefactors of every background to participate in local euergetism (Hillard and Beness 2016, 127, 147). Each of the ten donations in Aquileia were temple related, with four co-donating groups of freedwomen participating and nine of the ten donations occurring in the second century AD (the tenth donation did not have an associated date).

An example of freedwomen forming a co-donation group is seen in this inscription from Aquileia:

> *Bonae Deae Paganae / Rufria, C(ai) f(ilia), Festa, / Caecilia, Q(uinti) l(iberta), Scylace, / magistrae / d(e) p(ecunia) s(ua). Decidia, L(uci) f(ilia), Paulla / et Pupia, L(uci) l(iberta), Peregrina, / ministrae / B(onae) D(eae), / aedem fecerunt / p(ecunia) s(ua).*
> - *CIL 5.762a-b = InscrAqu 1, 159 and 166 = ILS 3498*
>
> To Bona Dea / Rufria, daughter of Caius, Festa, / Caecilia, freedwoman of Quintus, Scylace, / magistrae / of their own funds. Decidia, daughter of Lucius, Paulla / and Pupia, freedwoman of Lucius, Peregrina, / ministrae of Bona Dea, / they built this temple / of their own funds.
> - *CIL* 5.762a-b = *InscrAqu* 1, 159 and 166 = *ILS* 3498, translated by author

Two of these freedwomen held roles as *magistrae* and *ministrae* of the cult of Bona Dea in Aquileia and that they donated with other freeborn women, who they may have

met during enslavement or within the cult of Bona Dea after being freed. As Decidia was the freeborn daughter of Lucius, and Pupia was a freedwoman of Lucius, potentially this link between them led to the formation of this particular network where both freedwomen and freeborn women formed a strong connection which led them to co-donate a temple together.

There also was a donation in Aquileia between three women (Aninia Magna, Seia Ionis, and Cornelia Ephyre) who each held the position of *magistra* in the local cult of Bona Dea and restored a temple *porticus* and a smaller shrine in honour of the god Fonio (*CIL 5.757;* Hemelrijk 2015, 439). It is likely that Aninia Magna was a freeborn woman while her co-donors Seia Ionis and Cornelia Ephyre were freedwomen (Hemelrijk 2020, 243). This group of *magistrae* again emphasises how religious environments brought together female networks that may not have interacted with each other in other scenarios.

> *Aninia marci filia Magna et Seia Ionis et Cornelia Ephyre, magistrae Bonae Deae porticum restituerunt et aediculam Fonionis.*
> - *CIL 5.757*

> Aninia Magna, daughter of Marcus, Seia Ionis and Cornelia Ephyre, superintendents (*magistrae*) of the cult of Bona Dea, restored the portico and shrine of Fonio.
> - *CIL 5.757;* translated by Hemelrijk 2020, 243

Tyche, another freedwoman benefactress in Aquileia, acted on her own and also donated to the temple of Bona Dea, though it is unclear which structure she contributed to based on the remnants of her inscription (*CIL 5.761*; Hemelrijk 2015, 458). What is known is that she noted that she donated toward the temple of Bona Dea Cereria with her own money (*de sua pecunia*), reinforcing that this religious environment was one which enabled freedwomen to participate in donations and form female networks which provided support in various ways (*CIL 5.761*; Hemelrijk 2015, 458).

The final donation in Aquileia was by freedwomen and benefactresses Magia Ilias and Magia Vera, who together with a male family member (husband or father) contributed the local temple for the Junones, as well as at least three statues, *porticus*, walls, a kitchen, and the land it was all built on (*CIL 5.781*; Hemelrijk 2015, 452). These individual donations demonstrate what can be gained from examining donation behaviour on a granular level, as

the examples from Aquileia provide detailed insight into the actions freedwomen benefactresses were able to take within their local environment.

Outside of the group donations by freedwomen in Aquileia and Casinum, the only remaining group donation in Italy was by the women Marcia Nomas (freedwoman) and Marcia Pri(..) (freeborn) in Ficulea, Italy, where they completely restored a sanctuary of Bona Dea with the brother of Marcia Pri(..) (Gatto 2019, 109). This donation provides another perspective to the conversation on how religious environments provided social mobility, as this donation occurred with a sibling pair who felt close enough to their freedwoman that they chose to co-donate a sanctuary for Bona Dea together. While the social status dynamics here were varied, their shared interest in the cult of Bona Dea meant that Marcia Nomas was provided an opportunity to donate in her community.

> *M(arcus) Marciu[s ---] / et Marcia Pri[sca ?] / et Marcia Nomas, lib(erta) / eorum, /*
> *5 fanum Bona[e D]eae, / vetustate di[rut]um, / a solo resti[tuerunt].*
> - *CIL 14.4001*

> Marcus Marcius... and Marcia Prisca and their freedwoman Marcia Nomas have restored the *fanum* of the Bona Dea from its foundations, (since) destroyed by time.
> - *CIL 14.4001*, translated by F. Gatto (2019, 328)

The only co-donation by a freedwoman group outside of Italy occurred in Thamugadi, North Africa, where Annia Tranquilla built a temple with her sister Annia Cara in honour of Fortuna Augusta in the second century AD (*CIL 8.17831;* Hemelrijk 2015, 440). It is known that they built the temple with their own money and that they were *flaminicae* in the cult of Fortuna Augusta, which makes sense as the donation was described as a decree of the decurions implying that the structure was built as part of their *summa honoraria* in Thamugadi (*CIL 8.17831;* Hemelrijk 2015, 440). This inscription does not suggest that they co-donated with a male family member, but their father is mentioned as a descriptive reference regarding their family ties (*CIL 8.17831;* Hemelrijk 2015, 440). This donation in North Africa provides another view of co-donations by freedwomen, as these benefactresses were sisters who had both achieved the role of *flaminica* in their local cult after being freed. This is evidence of family support in another format from the cases above. Their association with the cult of Fortuna Augusta emphasises the sisters' commitment to honouring the imperial family at a time where the other known benefactresses in the region were of higher social statuses

(decurial and senatorial), and who were donating to figures such as Caelestis, Mercury, Minerva, Apollo, and Juno rather than imperial cult figures.

While not a donation by a group of freedwomen, there is an interesting inscription from Fidenae, Italy where a woman named Italia co-donated a temple in 105 AD with fellow freedmen (Hemelrijk 2015, 447). She served as a *magistra* in the local imperial cult community and was able to participate in public giving by partnering with two other freedmen who had been freed from the same patron as her (Hemelrijk 2015, 447). This partnership between non-related people demonstrates how public benefaction was seen as an important step to social mobility, or else one would assume that these freedpeople would not have put their hard-earned funds into the temple donation. Having their names on this structure provided them with a long-lasting sign of status which could aid their heirs in further advancing their family names (Hemelrijk 2015, 166-167). The community emphasised by this case expands beyond freedwomen supporting each other, but includes the wider community of freedpeople of either sex who may have met before being freed or after, likely in a religious cult setting.

6.4.3 Social status in Asia Minor

Another evident conclusion from Fig. 6.9 is that benefactresses in Asia Minor did not seem to highlight this information in their inscriptions. This is likely due to three core factors: that there was less of a hierarchical system in Asia Minor and power was more divided amongst relevant leading groups, there was more flexible movement between social groups, and that benefaction functioned differently within Greek societies and impacted decisions accordingly.

Zuiderhoek (2008) reflects on the first factor, emphasising that the strict hierarchical status groups which were enforced in the Roman Empire were a Roman phenomenon, not a Hellenistic tradition. He struggles with defining the political systems which were at play in Greek cities in the Empire, describing them as ‘oligarchic, hierarchical, and democratic at the same time’ (Zuiderhoek 2008, 444). The defined status groups such as decurial, equestrian, and senatorial were less traditional in the east, and the inscription patterns by both male and female benefactors reflect that difference. But it would be naive to think the absence of these defined Roman social statuses meant there were not similar social groupings which were well-known in the region, such as being a member of the council (*boule*) or assembly. In letters, emperors addressed these groups directly, solidifying that they held a notable amount of power, and benefactresses would have done well to get direct access to these local leaders through their donations (Zuiderhoek 2008, 418-423). The assembly was the deciding body which would negotiate a donation with the benefactor, and thus could be a powerful ally

(Zuiderhoek 2008, 420). When discussing why women in Asia Minor did not highlight their social status, the question is more around what they did highlight which could provide insight into their social status. In the case of the benefactress Publia Plancia Aurelia Magniana Motoxaris, the public roles 'Mother of the City' and 'Mother of the *Boule*' heavily indicate social power and significant connections, similar to how defining oneself as equestrian or senatorial status would in Italy and North Africa (I. Selge, nos. 15, 16, 17; Van Bremen 1996, 341). Similarly, links to collegias would have held power, so it is prudent to examine a woman's reference to teachers, physicians, or craftsmen as another form of expressing social standing (Hemelrijk 2008, 115-117, 135-136, 140-142).

Benefaction would have played a role in aiding donors in moving between classes as it was a setting where intentional self-presentation choices were made and the community noticed the actions. The movement may have been more flexible as benefactors were able to negotiate their standing through donations, while in Roman Italy and North Africa, the social statuses were more firmly established. This information provides insight into why benefactresses were not highlighting their social standing, as mentioning that you are a freedwoman when trying to participate in the community like an elite woman would only be to your detriment. By focusing on the ability to donate a structure, rather than on qualifiers such as social status, benefaction in Asia Minor was more accessible and benefited in unique ways from in Italy or North Africa. Knowing that this approach was more normalised in this region means that women who did choose to highlight their status in this region were communicating something unique by choosing to do so. The only two benefactresses which meet this requirement were Vibulia Polleita (***AM 78***) and Sempronia Secunda Papiane (***AM 65***) (Mantas 1994, 363; Van Bremen 1996, 195).

As there have been many overlapping discussion points in this chapter, a clarifying point is that these two women were the only two from Asia Minor to reference a social status clarifier, regardless of timeframe. This decision would have been almost unheard of in the region, which makes this choice worth investigating. Vibulia Polleita was a freedwoman who was active in Thespiae, Asia Minor, where she co-donated a nondescript building with her husband which honoured the city of Thespiae as well as the goddess Isis. Sempronia Secunda Papiane's background differs greatly from Vibulia Polleita, as she was a senatorial status woman in the city of Ephesos. Little else is known about her donation, as it is only documented that she contributed a building, but the disparity in circumstances between these two women who highlighted their status in Asia Minor makes the investigation all the more intriguing.

Finally, to understand why benefactresses in Asia Minor were not typically referencing their social status in a similar manner to women in Italy and North Africa, it is pertinent to grasp how benefaction worked differently in Greek society. When Roman customs began to integrate into Greek society, there was a battle for power between the new Roman leaders in Asia Minor and the socially powerful members of the *boule* or assembly, and Zuiderhoek proposes that benefaction was a reliever of tension (Zuiderhoek 2008, 435). While elite oligarchs were trying to win over communities with their donations of buildings and large sums, they were unable to be honoured with a statue or negotiate the contribution effectively without the goodwill of the council (Zuiderhoek 2008, 420-422, 435). Benefactresses in the first to third centuries AD may have begun to lose their social power with the rise of a hierarchical society in this region as well, further supporting their decision to lead the narrative with the ability to contribute to their local community rather than with details regarding their social or family background.

This exploration into the meaning behind benefactresses in Asia Minor 'obscuring' their social status brings up conversations around motivation and opportunity, while also being paired with little information to use to generate conclusive understandings. When reconciling with the details that are available, the fact that women agreed to have these particular characteristics of their lives inscribed on stone, often at great cost and with the intention to be remembered forever, demands further investigation into the social order in Asia Minor and how benefactresses fit into it.

6.4.4 Conclusion

What can be taken from both directions of the investigation into social status in this research, integration of freedwomen and expression of status in Asia Minor, is that the circumstances of benefaction are not all as they have been described in previous research. In recent history, benefaction was heralded as a contribution by the elite, but the data from this corpus and other recent research indicate otherwise, as freedwomen were actively participating in the tradition and clearly stating their use of their own funds or that they were not donating due to a link with a male family member or connection (De Marre 2002, 357; Bertolazzi 2016, 88; Hemelrijk 2015, 440, 444-445, 458). Female networks were complex and were most often centred around religion, which provided benefactresses with opportunities to have public influence, notable roles, and a community of like-minded individuals who could participate in benefaction alongside them. There are layers to understanding the circumstances of the donation, the motivations, the finances, and the decision-making process, which applies to the topic of social status in Asia Minor as well. There would have been influence between regions in terms of inscription formulas, depictions, and systems

which made the donation possible, as well as discrepancies between traditions and approaches to effectively contributing a structure or sum to the community. By understanding that things are not as they first seem, such as the ‘absence’ of social statuses in Asia Minor, researchers gain insight into interactions between benefactresses and their environment that are otherwise obscured.

6.5 Final Thoughts

This research has revealed new understandings around female benefaction, which both add to and contradict conclusions from previous analyses. Earlier scholarship focused on benefaction by the elite classes, which was found to not be representative of the majority of donors across all three regions examined (e.g. Cornell and Lomas 2002; Kalinbayrak 2011; Meyers 2012; Trimble 2013; Veyne 1990; Woodhull 2018). There was once a reliance on visibility being a sign of independence, but this conversation must incorporate a more holistic approach in identifying epigraphic trends, local community traditions, co-donating strategies, and more to better understand how much power or say a woman contributed to a donation. Finally, it must be noted how regional comparison allows for absences of information to not be considered unhelpful data, but rather another line of investigation. In Asia Minor, there may have been few examples of defined social status, but this provided the knowledge that status in the region was flexible, communal, and evident in forms unique from Italy and North Africa, such as through public roles or inscription details.

Across the three areas of benefaction type, family ties, and social status indicators, women applied strategic adjacency to get the most value out of a contribution. This could be through donating a structure which had local or wider-reaching references which further emphasise Roman values, mentioning a great-grandfather who had made a notable contribution to the community, or by donating in a cult environment with a group of fellow freedwomen. This chapter demonstrates that mobility was relational and situational, and that women across social groups adapted according to their personal setting and circumstances to negotiate access to communal influence. While there are examples of individual decision-making and priorities, there are far more instances where connections, networks, and links provide the value in a donation.

Comparison as part of the methodology of this research allows for the creation of patterns as well as individualistic decision identification, furthering the field by acknowledging that there were norms and traditions across the regions which showed an exchange of ideas between

cultures as well as made the regions distinct. By acknowledging differences between Italy, North Africa, and Asia Minor, novel conclusions are drawn which further the work in this field.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This research set out to explore how women across different regions experienced the system of public benefaction, the forms of social power and community access it provided, and the restrictions encountered by benefactresses. One of the key reasons for the regional comparison was due to wanting to get a more intimate understanding of motivations, which could be pulled out more easily when comparable cultures are explored. While the scope of this research was broad in the inclusion of 245 benefactresses, the discussion and conclusions that come from it are precise, personal, and bring researchers of the 21st century closer to understanding the women of the first few centuries. These conclusions come from the three interrelated findings which were examined in the preceding Discussion Chapter: the meanings behind the unique donation types by female donors, the role of family members in shaping women's benefaction actions, and the ways benefactresses applied social status to framing their civic involvement. These themes provide insight into shared experiences and region-specific opportunities which women navigated in order to participate in benefaction to the fullest extent.

7.1 Reflection

While reflecting on the catalysts for women to participate in their communities and the larger empire as benefactresses, it is clear that formally allowing women access to public roles via legal changes enhanced the Roman Empire's access to improved cities and social networks. While the transition began with the most elite classes, eventually women from many social statuses were able to see themselves participating in benefaction and creating a name for themselves and their families. The impact of giving these women agency and something to work toward in their lifetimes, is not to be overlooked.

While participation in benefaction initially grew over time, its growth was moulded by legal, social, and cultural limitations, which would have varied across these regions and determined women's actions (Gardner 1986, 5-30; Van Bremen 1996, 206). This is seen by the repeated theme which was the importance of the Roman family. Family relationships formed the second core discussion point of this research, as they shaped both the opportunities and limitations of female benefaction. When examining each characteristic noted in the dataset of this research, applying the lens of family led to new understandings. Women were choosing to honour their family members, such as husbands and fathers, but also daughters, mothers, and great-great-grandparents. Women would honour their chosen family members, whether that was other benefactresses, or freedpeople they had navigated through life with. These relationships would have both enabled and restricted women's

participation, as they would have typically acted within the accepted cultural and social norms.

Some women chose not to honour anyone else with their structures, or focused on their relationships with religious or political figures within their donations. Religion was a powerful thread that continued to appear in inscriptions from every century and every region, as temples and religious roles were places where women were welcomed, elevated, and thanked for their contributions (Hallvig 2016, 13-14; Schultz 2006, 5). While it may have been due to cost that the group of freedwomen chose to donate a temple *culina*, it may have also been the case that these women sought out this donation opportunity as a way to give back to a community where they had been embraced and were provided opportunities for social assimilation and public commemoration (Hemelrijk 2015, 454-459; *AE* 1996, 468-469; *CIL* 1.3025, 361, 127, 467; *ILP* 156, 157, 159). The various cults, local deities, and goddesses who played a role in women's lives in the Roman Empire were key factors for the establishment and continued nurturing of female benefaction.

7.2 Addressing Research Aims

7.2.1 Independence

One of the research questions this thesis sought to answer was: 'how was independence represented in the regions examined?' In this research, independence is recognised as being relative and situational, meaning that women's choices are analysed from within the existing systems which determined their actions, not that they needed to perform in isolation from these structures. Independence is treated here as a lens through which donation types, family relationships, and social status can be understood, but does not emerge as a standalone theme. Employing the regional data for this research question revealed trends that may spark intrigue for future research, but the three core answers fall into three categories: through inscriptions, donations, and religious associations.

One of the most defined ways that women represented themselves as independent and self-reliant was through epigraphy. It is difficult to understand statements such as 'from her own funds and in her own right' as anything other than a direct intention to be seen as the sole donor, responsible for the donation and the impact on the community (Deforest and King 1993, 283; Longfellow 2014, 85; Richlin 2011, 189). This language was found across all three regions, reinforcing the conclusion that these women were proud of their contributions and unashamed to boast about their accomplishments. Within building donations, there are

instances where benefactresses opted not to co-donate with another person or intentionally left their family members off of the inscription details (e.g. Ummidia Quadratilla, Plancia Magna). These choices indicate how women throughout the empire were placing themselves front and centre, and ensuring that donations were exclusively linked to themselves without distractions. As a starting point for understanding how independence was communicated across the empire, highlighting epigraphic phrasing as the base for understanding is essential.

While epigraphic evidence is a clear way to visualise women's desire to express independence, donation choices are another foundational piece for understanding. Some of the most unique donations occurred as a negotiation of the societal expectations for female benefactors. While women were supposed to be kept away from political or scholastic donations, two women in Asia Minor and one in Italy elected to donate libraries (I. Pergamon, no. 38; MAMA 8, no 498). Ummidia Quadratilla knew that the notable historian Pliny negatively judged her love for theatre and pantomimes, but continued to fund a monumental theatre complex in Casinum, Italy to enhance the community and continue to pursue her affinity for celebrating the arts (Sick 1999, 330-346). Eight benefactresses in Italy and one in North Africa donated entire theatres or were linked to theatre projects (Hemelrijk 2015, 415, 458, 464, 466-468, 470, 483). While some projects were donated due to passion, there were also women who donated unpopular buildings out of necessity, and perhaps for financial gain. Varille in Asia Minor donated a brothel and a lavatory in Ephesos…while unconventional structures for a benefactress, these structures were likely desired by the community and thus elevated her social status to commission (*IEphesos*, no. 455; Mantas 1994, 349). Women were spending large sums on projects that meant something to themselves and their community, further emphasising their access to financial resources and their pride in their choices.

Finally, benefactresses' independence was displayed through religious choices. In each region, women chose to honour female deities more frequently than male deities, particularly goddesses such as Venus and Bona Dea, who were associated with female power and independence (Hänninen 2019, 65-71; Salathe 1997, 8-10, 26-33). Venus' cult was open to women of all social statuses and typically would see priestesses rather than priests leading the cult (De Marre 2002, 279-280; Hemelrijk 2015, 59; Salathe 1997, 30). Bona Dea's cult allowed women to drink wine that was typically forbidden and the practices were so sacred that they were kept from Roman men, creating a unique space and bond for women (Hallvig 2016, 9, 20-22). Isis' cult brought women in large masses to participate, Juno protected women in childbirth, and Minerva allowed women to link themselves to military protection for

their loved ones (Dolansky 2011, 194; Hemelrijk 2015, 464; Heyob 1975, 56). Benefactresses had options concerning who they would honour with their donations and displayed independence through their choices. The women of Asia Minor had an additional format for expressing their independent associations, as many of them chose to honour gods and goddesses with their traditional Greek names and imagery while others chose to incorporate the Roman versions. Neither one of these choices necessarily displayed independence more than the other, but the evidence of there being an option that women would decide upon does reinforce the intentionality behind those decisions.

7.2.2 Impact of Regional Culture

Regional comparison revealed both shared patterns and local constraints which determined how participation could be expressed. When reflecting on the influence of regional culture on women's social mobility and on the expectations that society placed upon these benefactresses, many of the examples where the impact is made clear came from Asia Minor. This is likely because the culture of Asia Minor is greatly different from the culture in Italy and North Africa, due to their lengthy history, traditions, and influential experiences felt throughout the region. These reflections demonstrate how the results that come from regional comparisons are so valuable.

In answering the research question regarding the impact of regional culture, the conclusion can be placed into three categories: understanding through the availability of donation types, the intentional assimilation or rejection of Roman culture, and the variety of family values. Through the lens of these three points, one can grasp how the three cultures examined here interacted with each other in the first to third centuries AD.

7.2.2.1 Donation Types

When looking at the availability of donation types and how they related to social expectations in a region, Asia Minor's historical background meant that benefactresses in the region left a distinct impression that was not found in Italy or North Africa. This could be found in the variety of benefaction types which were seemingly more valued in the east, such as fountain complexes and bathhouses (Longfellow 2011, 186-190; Van Bremen 1996, 195, 246, 286). While the cities in North Africa needed more fundamental infrastructure, the cities of Asia Minor had more capacity for beautification projects or extravagant buildings that went beyond the basics. Views toward buildings such as *gymnasia* were different in the east, as there were six instances of the structure in Asia Minor and none elsewhere in the empire (Mantas 1994, 349; Van Bremen 1996, 195, 308, 331, 345-347, 352). These differences do not

indicate a lack of ambition, but that demonstrate regionally specific needs which shaped the desired format of benefaction.

7.2.2.2 Roman Culture and Values

Another area where we can see how regional culture impacted benefactresses is through how they accepted or rejected Roman values and practices. Whether it was through the spread of religious practices, traditions, language, or imagery, examining the way that benefactresses across the empire welcomed change or held on to their deeply ingrained history communicates what they valued most. In Asia Minor, evidence of benefactresses incorporating emperors alongside their Greek deities provides a distinct visual and textual aid toward understanding the cultural assimilation which was occurring (e.g. Aurelia Paulina, Plancia Magna). Whether they felt positively toward these changes is more complicated to unravel from these depictions. Similarly, the people of North Africa would have likely felt emotional about the acceptance and spread of the Egyptian goddess Isis throughout the empire, though a focus on the topic would be needed to evaluate how positive or negative those emotions would have been (Petersen 2016, [no pagination]).

7.2.2.3 Community Values

Finally, we have been able to identify the impact of regional culture through evaluating the nuances of local values. This emerged from this research in two areas: family expectations and status values. When one looks at the inscriptions from each of the three regions examined by this research, who a benefactress chose to highlight alongside her donations spoke about which connections she found important. The frequency of mentions of father figures in Asia Minor did not indicate that benefactresses did not value their husbands in the region, but it does indicate that parent relationships were held to a different standard (Van Bremen 1996, 164-170). Whether it was a case of tradition or a reduced emphasis on being a married woman (in comparison to regions such as Italy), the data does indicate regional differences on this topic. The fact that mentions of mothers were more frequently occurring in Asia Minor reinforces the tighter bonds these benefactresses may have held with their parents.

A benefit of comparing Italy and Asia Minor to North Africa was that the peak of female benefaction in North Africa came later, and thus it was useful to have the regional comparisons to understand which trends benefactresses chose to follow (Hemelrijk 2015, 20). The family conclusions from North Africa tended toward Italy's tradition of highlighting husbands, but when examining donation types in the region, they were need-based and

more structural, even though fundamental infrastructure donations were out of style in Italy by this time. Recent military history in the region influenced benefactresses' decisions as well, as they sought to link themselves to defense structures and the goddess Minerva, who was known for her protective qualities (Mattingly 2023, 16; Hoyos 2019, 31; Fishwick and Shaw 1977). The actions of these benefactresses and their cities in North Africa communicated a desire to link themselves to Italy more directly than to Asia Minor, perhaps as they sought favour from the emperor.

It is difficult to summarise the outputs of this research because while there were clear results, the analysis from the dataset and discussion have opened many doors for further investigation. Across all three regions, benefactresses engaged with euergetism in comparable ways, while the extent, visibility, and framing of their participation was shaped by locally specific restrictions and opportunities. While this research has furthered the conversations from earlier corpus analyses and regional focuses, there was a lot of deeper analysis that fell outside the scope of this doctoral thesis. This will be examined in the recommendations section, and will hopefully inspire future research by this author as well as others interested in the field.

7.3 Recommendations

Throughout this research, it has been important to highlight any questions that have had to be left unanswered so that future research endeavours can explore them properly. While this research expanded on datasets and conclusions from individual regions, it still was not able to encompass the entire Roman Empire, and thus left behind benefactresses from regions such as Gaul, Hispania, Britannia, Germania, etc. The author envisages a dataset that is regularly updated when evidence of female benefaction is found so that the investigation into these women is ongoing and comprehensive.

On the topic of an extensive dataset, I have been pleased with the amount of information that has been uncovered by tagging qualitative data and filtering it effectively, and believe that further research on this topic as well as in other typically qualitative fields would benefit from applying this methodology.

On more topic-specific recommendations, several benefactresses chose to honour 'the people' or 'women' in the inscriptions accompanying their donations. This decision, particularly honouring 'women', is compelling and would be valuable to examine further as it would provide additional insight into what women honouring women looked like. There is a published inscription from Akmoneia where “the wives, both Greek and Roman, honoured

Tatia…the high priestess, having acted as their benefactor in all circumstances for the sake of all virtue" which directly relates to the topics covered in this thesis, as female networks, systems of support, and preservation of memory all tightly bound the topic of benefaction to the debates around female commemoration (Thonemann 2010, 163-165). This inscription, along with the other similar epigraphic references mentioned in Thonemann's work, and the several examples in this dataset would provide the basis for an excellent discussion around the usage of inscriptions which refer to "the wives" or "women" and the organisations of women who publicly acted within their own realms across the Roman Empire (Thonemann 2010, 164-165, 169, 173, 175-178). The decrease in religious honours in female benefaction in Asia Minor was also intriguing, and a deeper investigation may allow researchers to understand if this was caused by a decreased religiosity in the region or a change in trends as benefactresses sought to follow the lead of Italian benefactresses at the time.

Further examination of freedpeople and their participation in benefaction is necessary to make this area more inclusive, as much of earlier research has specifically focused on the elite, perhaps because the expectation was that there would not be freedpeople active in benefaction or preserved via epigraphic remains. As this is not the case, a consideration of the motivations and pressures on freedpeople as members of the public in the Roman Empire through the lens of benefaction would be worthwhile. In a similar vein, the tendency for women of Asia Minor to avoid highlighting any particular social status, especially in comparison to the other regions of this study, stood out in this research and a more focused study would be significant in understanding why this region did not place as much emphasis on this characteristic of a benefactress, and more broadly, on the people of the region.

7.4 Final Remarks

This research has brought to light clear insights that will enhance the field and understanding of Roman benefactresses. As one can tell from the above recommendations, the findings here are only a piece of the journey, as unraveling the intricacies of their experiences will take time. It is my hope that this work has continued to amplify their voices, providing agency and significance, and making up for the years where they have been overlooked. The stories of these benefactresses have proven to be complex and diverse, valuable not only for a broader understanding of the ancient world but also for our understanding of the power of women throughout our history and as part of our future.

Appendix: Extended Tables

The tables below contain further details which are displayed in figures throughout this thesis, while also displaying the characteristics which may have fallen into the 'Other' category in the figures for the sake of brevity. These tables are also contained within the research dataset which will be shared on Research Data York repository following the completion of this research.

Date - Italy	Number
1st century BC	8
1st century AD	40
2nd century AD	39
3rd century AD	6
Unknown	18

Appendix table 1. Date of donations by Italian benefactresses in this dataset.

Types of Benefaction - Italy	Number
Temple	58
Porticus	20
Statue	15
Bathhouse	12
Kitchen	11
Theatre	8
Building	6
Funds	5
Altar	5
Aqueduct	5
Basilica	5
Other	***0***
Bench	4
Land	4
Pavement	4
Road	4
Wall	4
Assembly house	3
Fountain complex	3
Gates	3
Inscription	2
Arch	2

Crypt	2
Gardens	2
Market	2
Schola	2
Statue base	2
Bridge	1
Library	1
Unknown	4

Appendix table 2. Donation types by Italian benefactresses in this dataset.

Benefaction Details - Italy	Number
Restoration	25
Adornment	14
Testament	7
Upkeep	6

Appendix table 3. Donation details by Italian benefactresses in this dataset.

Religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction - Italy	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown Date	Total Number
Bona Dea	1	5		4	10
Venus	6	3			9
Isis		1	3	1	5
Juno	1	3		1	5
Jupiter		2		1	3
Fonio		3			3
Magna Mater	2	1			3
Bellona		2			2
Demeter	2				2
Other	***29***	***21***	***3***	***11***	***64***
Copia					
Castor and Pollux	1				1
Concordia and Pietas Augusta	1				1
Deified Empress	1				1
Diana	1				1
Genius Coloniae	1				1
Hercules					
Minerva	1				1

Silvanus				1	1
Spes		1			1
Genius Augustus	1				1
Unknown	22	20	3	10	55

Appendix table 4. Religious figures mentioned by Italian benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Public Role - Italy	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown Date	Total Number
Sacerdos	4	1	2	1	8
Magistrae		9			9
Sacerdos Divae		4			4
Ministrae		4			4
Flaminica Divae		2			2
Flaminica	2				2
Other	***34***	***24***	***5***	***17***	***80***
Patrona			1		1
Roman Citizen		1			1
Secretary in the Cult of Venus	1				1
Mother of the City		1			1
Unknown	33	22	4	17	76

Appendix table 5. Public role mentions by Italian benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Notable Family - Italy	Number
Co-donated with husband	23
Co-donated with son	7
Husband	5
Father	5
Co-donated	4
Son	3
Other	***12***
Co-donated with father	1
Co-donated with brother	1
Co-donated with freedmen	1
Dedicated to son	1
Family	1
Brother	1

Grandson	1
Nephew	1
Imperial connection	1
Grandmother	1
Mother	1
Granddaughter	1

Appendix table 6. Notable family mentions by Italian benefactresses in this dataset.

Social Status - Italy	Number
Freedwoman	27
Equestrian	11
Senatorial	9
Decurial	6
Imperial freedwoman	1
Unknown	58

Appendix table 7. Social statuses noted by Italian benefactresses in this dataset.

Deity Associated with Temple Donations - Italy	Number
Bona Dea	12
Venus	9
Isis	5
Jupiter	4
Juno	4
Fonio	3
Magna Mater	3
Bellona	2
Demeter	2
Other	**8**
Copia	1
Castor and Pollux	1
Deified empress	1
Genius Augustus	1
Genius Coloniae	1
Hercules	1
Silvanus	1
Spes	1

Appendix table 8. Deities associated with temple donations by Italian benefactresses in this dataset.

Benefaction Type Donated Alongside Temples - Italy	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown date	Total
Restoration	6	7	1	3	17
Porticus	5	7	1		13
Kitchen	5	2		2	9
Statue	4	4			8
Altar		4			4
Upkeep		3			3
Funds	1	2			3
Testament	3				3
Other		***11***	***2***	***1***	***14***
Building			2		2
Land		2			2
Statue base		2			2
Wall		2			2
Bench		1			1
Adornment		1			1
Pavement		1			1
Aqueduct				1	1
Assembly house		1			1
Theatre		1			1

Appendix table 9. Benefaction types donated alongside temple donations by Italian benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Donations Shared by Benefactresses and Their Husbands (Italy)	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown date	Total
Temple	2	3		3	8
Bathhouse	3	3		2	8
Adornment	3	1		2	6
Restoration		1		3	4
Aqueduct	1	1			2
Building	1	1			2
Land	1	1			2
Porticus	1	1			2
Statue	1	1			2
Other	***1***	***2***		***1***	***4***
Assembly house		1			1
Fountain complex	1				1

Gates				1	1
Upkeep		1			1

Appendix table 10. Co-donations shared by benefactresses and their husbands by Italian benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Kitchens by Century	Count
1st century BC	1
1st century AD	6
2nd century AD	2
Unknown	2

Appendix table 11. Kitchen donations in Italy by century.

Date Data	Number
1st century AD	4
2nd century AD	15
3rd century AD	30
Unknown	6

Appendix table 12. Date of donations by North African benefactresses in this dataset.

Benefaction Type	Number
Temple	37
Statue	8
Porticus	8
Inscription	6
Funds	4
Building	3
Statue base	3
Rostra	3
Land	3
Market	3
Other	***11***
Frieze	2
Arch	2
Altar	2
Wall	2
Aqueduct	1
Bathhouse	1
Theatre	1

Unknown	3

Appendix table 13. Donation types by North African benefactresses in this dataset.

Benefaction Details	Number
Adornment	8
Restoration	6
Upkeep	2
Testament	

Appendix table 14. Donation details by North African benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction - North Africa	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown Date	Total Number
Minerva		2	4		6
Juno		1	2		3
Apollo		1	2		3
Jupiter			3		3
Fortuna Augusta		2			2
Caelestis		1	1		2
Ops			2		2
Saturnus			2		2
Frugifer			2		2
Mercury		1	1		2
Other	***5***	***7***	***19***	***6***	***37***
Ceres Augusta	1				1
Genius Augustus				1	1
Mars			1		1
Deified Empress	1				1
Tanans			1		1
Magna Mater			1		1
Mercurius Sobrius			1		1
Neptunus			1		1
Tellus			1		1
Venus	1				1
Victoria Augusta			1		1
Ceres	1				1
Unknown	1	7	12	5	25

Appendix table 15. Religious figures mentioned by North African benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Public Role - North Africa	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown Date	Total Number
Flaminica perpetua	1	4	7		12
Flaminica	1	2	3	1	7
Flaminicae divae	1	1			2
Patrona			1		1
Unknown	2	8	19	5	34

Appendix table 16. Public role mentions by North African benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Notable Family	Number
Co-donated with husband	12
Father	8
Husband	5
Son	4
Co-donated with son	2
Co-donated with brother	2
Co-donated with father	0
Other	***4***
Co-donated with grandfather	0
Dedicated to children	0
Father-in-law	1
Mother-in-law	1
Daughter	1
Grandson	1
Unknown	25

Appendix table 17. Notable family mentions by North African benefactresses in this dataset.

Social Status	Number
Decurial	8
Senatorial	4
Freedwoman	3
Equestrian	2
Unknown	38

Appendix table 18. Social statuses noted by North African benefactresses in this dataset.

Benefaction Type Donated Alongside Temples - North	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown date	Total

Africa					
Inscription	2	1	3		6
Porticus	1	2	3		6
Restoration		1	4		5
Statue	1	3	1		5
Adornment			3		3
Land		2	1		3
Other		***5***	***8***		***13***
Frieze		1	1		2
Funds			2		2
Rostra		1	1		2
Statue base		2			2
Wall			2		2
Altar			1		1
Market		1			1
Upkeep			1		1

Appendix table 19. Benefaction types donated alongside temple donations by North African benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Deity Associated with Temple Donations	Number
Minerva	5
Fortuna Augusta	2
Apollo	3
Juno	3
Jupiter	3
Caelestis	2
Frugifer	2
Ops	2
Saturnus	2
Ceres Augusta	1
Victoria Augusta	1
Other	***10***
Ceres	1
Deified empress	1
Genius Sesase	1
Mars	1
Mercurius Sobrius	1
Mercury	1

Neptunus	1
Tanans	1
Tellus	1
Venus	1

Appendix table 20. Deities associated with temple donations by North African benefactresses in this dataset.

Donations Shared by Benefactresses and Their Husbands (North Africa)	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown date	Total
Temple	1	1	7	1	10
Inscription	1	1	2		4
Porticus	1	1	1		3
Market		1	1		2
Restoration			2		2
Statue		1	1		2
Wall			2		2
Other			***3***		***3***
Altar			1		1
Building			1		1
Frieze			1		1
Statue base					

Appendix table 21. Co-donations shared by benefactresses and their husbands by North African benefactresses in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Date Data	Number
2nd century BC	1
1st century BC	1
1st century AD	18
2nd century AD	26
3rd century AD	9
Unknown	24

Appendix table 22. Date of donations by benefactresses active in Asia Minor in this dataset.

Type of Benefaction	Number
Temple	19
Building	15
Bathhouse	13
Porticus	9

Aqueduct	7
Statue	7
Gymnasium	6
Funds	5
Assembly house	4
Gates	4
Fountain complex	4
Other	***24***
Peristoon	3
Inscription	2
Library	2
Synagogue	2
Basilica	1
Agora	1
Arch	1
Brothel	1
Bull	1
Decoration	1
Drain	1
Land	1
Lavatory	1
Propylon	1
Shrine	1
Stadium	1
Temple Pillars	1
Wall	1
Well	1
Unknown	8

Appendix table 23. Donation types by benefactresses active in Asia Minor in this dataset.

Details of Benefaction	Number
Restoration	9
Adornment	3
Upkeep	1
Testament	1

Appendix table 24. Donation details by benefactresses active in Asia Minor in this dataset.

Religious Entity Honoured by the Benefaction -	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown Date	Total

North Africa					
Artemis		3	3	1	7
Aphrodite	3	1			4
Zeus		2		1	3
Hera		1		1	2
Isis				2	2
Moira	1	1			2
Tyche		2			2
Demeter		1		1	2
Other	***14***	***22***	***6***	***20***	***62***
Aesculapius		1			1
Athena	1				1
Core				1	1
Great Mother Goddess		1			1
Hermes				1	1
Homonoia					
Sarapis				1	1
Eros		1			1
Dionysus		1			1
Unknown	13	18	6	17	54

Appendix table 25. Religious figures mentioned by benefactresses active in Asia Minor in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Public Role - Asia Minor	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown Date	Total Number
Priestess	2	8	4	4	18
Archiereia	2	9	3	1	15
Stephanephoros	6	3		2	11
Gymnasiarch	2	3	2		7
Daughter of the City	1	3		1	5
Imperial Cult	1	2		1	4
Demiourgos		3	1		4
Agonothetes	2		1		3
Roman Citizen	2	1			3
Prytanis	1	1			2
Other	10	14	7	20	51
Basileia	1				1
Clarissima			1		1

Daughter of Asia		1			1
Gerousia	1				1
High Priestess			1		1
Hydrophoros				1	1
Key-holder		1			1
Mother of the City			1		1
Mother of the Boule			1		1
Unknown	8	12	3	19	42

Appendix table 26. Public role mentions by benefactresses active in Asia Minor in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Notable Family	Number
Father	28
Husband	20
Co-donated with husband	19
Father-in-law	7
Mother	6
Co-donated with son	5
Grandfather	5
Son	4
Brother	4
Co-donated with father	4
Co-donated with daughter	3
Co-donated with mother	2
Great grandfather	2
Great great grandfather	2
Other	***11***
Brother-in-law	1
Co-donated with brother	1
Co-donated with mother-in-law	1
Co-donated with nephew	1
Daughter	1
Grandmother	1
Great-great-great-grandfather	1
Great-grandmother	1
Mother-in-law	1
Parents	1
Sister-in-law	1

Unknown	20

Appendix table 27. Notable family mentions by benefactresses active in Asia Minor in this dataset.

Benefaction Type Donated Alongside Temples - Asia Minor	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown date	Total
Porticus	1			2	3
Building	1	1		1	3
Gates	1			2	3
Restoration	1			1	2
Statue	1		1		2
Funds	1	1			2
Other	***2***	***1***	***1***	***1***	***5***
Bathhouse	1				1
Decoration			1		1
Fountain complex				1	1
Gymnasium		1			1
Propylon	1				1
Inscription					
Land					
Assembly house					

Appendix table 28. Benefaction types donated alongside temple donations by benefactresses active in Asia Minor in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

Family Mentioned by Priestess Benefactresses (Asia Minor)	Count
Mentions father	12
Mentions husband	8
Co-donated with husband	4
Mentions mother	4
Father-in-law	3
Mentions brother	3
Grandfather	2
Other	***10***
Brother-in-law	1
Co-donated with brother	1
Co-donated with nephew	1
Grandmother	1
Great-grandfather	1
Great-great-grandfather	1

Mentions daughter	1
Mentions son	1
Parents	1
Sister-in-law	1

Appendix table 29. Family mentioned by benefactresses who were priestesses active in Asia Minor in this dataset.

Family Mentioned by *Archiereiai* Benefactresses (Asia Minor)	Count
Mentions father	9
Mentions husband	9
Father-in-law	5
Mentions brother	3
Mentions mother	3
Mentions son	3
Grandfather	2
Other	***6***
Brother-in-law	1
Grandmother	1
Great-grandfather	1
Great-great-grandfather	1
Mentions daughter	1
Sister-in-law	1

Appendix table 30. Family mentioned by benefactresses who were *archiereiai* active in Asia Minor in this dataset.

Donations Shared by Benefactresses and Their Husbands (Asia Minor)	1st c. AD	2nd c. AD	3rd c. AD	Unknown date	Total
Porticus	1	2		5	8
Temple		1		4	5
Bathhouse		2		2	4
Aqueduct		2		1	3
Building				2	2
Gates				2	2
Other		***5***		***4***	***9***
Assembly house		1			1
Drain				1	1
Fountain complex		1			1
Gymnasium		1			1

Library				1	1
Peristoon				1	1
Restoration		1			1
Temple pillars		1			1
Well				1	1

Appendix table 31. Co-donations shared by benefactresses and their husbands active in Asia Minor in this dataset (any empty cell highlighted in grey indicates the contents equal zero).

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