

STUDIES IN THE ICONOGRAPHY  
OF BLACKS  
IN ROMAN ART

by

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## ABSTRACT

The post-Homeric literary sources of the Greek period mention Αἰθίοπες, inhabitants of a distant land, whose physical appearance differs from the Mediterranean somatic norm, but approximates that of peoples referred to in modern times as Black Africans. In the Roman era *Aethiopes* appear in the literary sources, perceived not only as distant strangers but also as persons familiar to the Roman experience. The sources also mention other peoples: *Mauri*, *Libyes*, and *Indi*, who are distinguished from *Aethiopes*, but are perceived as having some of the physical characteristics of *Aethiopes*. An evaluation of the archaeological evidence reveals the methods by which Roman artists conveyed difference from their somatic norm, and the problems they faced in their attempt to portray difference.

An INTRODUCTION explains the aims of the thesis and reviews the modern literature. CHAPTER 1 sets out the methodological approach and summarises ancient literary testimony concerning Greek and Roman perceptions of Blacks. CHAPTER 2 provides an overview of relevant archaeological material of the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman periods not included in the catalogue. CHAPTERS 3, 4, 5, and 6 deal with the iconography of the Black in the Roman period focussing on their appearance in thematic contexts (baths, spectacle, domestic service, and mythology). Following the

CONCLUSION, a CATALOGUE lists and describes 56 objects with museum, inventory number, provenience and bibliography.

The selected representations date from the Late Hellenistic to the sixth century A.C. They appear in mosaics, sarcophagi, in sculpture, and in paintings from the Mediterranean, Egypt, North Africa, and continental Europe.



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## DEDICATION

In memory of Victor Codjo Ako-Adounvo, beloved father.

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Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano. After H. Graeven, "Die Darstellungen der Inder in antiken Kunstwerken," *JdI* 15 (1900) 192, fig. 2.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The journal and series abbreviations used in this study are those given in American Journal of Archaeology 95 (1991) 1-16; other abbreviations are given as follows:

Amedick, Vita = R. Amedick, Vita Privata auf Sarkophagen. Die Sarkophagen mit Darstellungen aus dem Menschenleben 4 (ASR I.4 Berlin, 1991)

Aurigemma, Mosaici = S. Aurigemma, I Mosaici di Zliten (Rome, 1926)

Aurigemma, 1960 = S. Aurigemma, Tripolitania I, I Monumenti d'Arte Decorativa 1, I Mosaici. (L'Italia in Africa. Le scoperte archeologiche 1911-1943) (Rome, 1960)

Beardsley, Negro = G. H. Beardsley, The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization (Baltimore, 1929)

Becatti, Scavi di Ostia IV = G. Becatti, Scavi di Ostia, IV: Mosaici e pavimenti marmorei (Rome, 1961)

Blake, MAAR (1930) = M. E. Blake, "The pavements of the Roman buildings of the Republic and early Empire, MAAR 8 (1930) 7-160.

Blake, MAAR (1936) = M. E. Blake, "Roman mosaics of the second century in Italy," MAAR 13 (1936) 67-214.

Blanchard-Lemée et al., MRA = M. Blanchard-Lemée, M. Ennaïfer, H. Slim, L. Slim, Mosaics of Roman Africa transl. K. D. Whitehead (New York 1996)

Bugner, Image = L. Bugner, "Preface," in The Image of the Black in Western Art I, in J. Vercoutter ed., (Camb., Mass. 1976) 1-32.

Carandini et al., Filosofiana = A. Carandini, A. Ricci, M. de Vos, Filosofiana. La villa di Piazza Armerina (Palermo, 1982)

Cèbe, Caricature = J-P, Cèbe, La caricature et la parodie dans le monde romain antique des origines à Juvenal (Paris, 1966)



- Clarke, Black-and-White = J. R. Clarke, Roman Black-and-White Figural Mosaics (New York, 1979)
- Clarke, Origins = J. R. Clarke, "The origins of black-and-white figural mosaics in the region destroyed by Vesuvius," in La regione sotterrata dal Vesuvio. Studi e prospettive. Atti del convegno internazionale 11-15 Novembre 1979 Estratto (Naples, 1982)
- CMGR I = La Mosaïque Gréco-Romaine. Colloques Internationaux du Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique Paris 1963 (Paris, 1965)
- CMGR II = La Mosaïque Gréco-Romaine II. Deuxième colloque International pour l'étude de la mosaïque antique, Vienne 1971 (Paris, 1975)
- CMT = Corpus des Mosaïques de Tunisie
- Desanges, Image = J. Desanges, "The iconography of the Black in ancient North Africa" in J. Vercoutter ed., The Image of the Black in Western Art, I (Camb., Mass., 1976) 246-268.
- Dunbabin, MRNA = K. M. D. Dunbabin, The Mosaics of Roman North Africa. Studies in Iconography and Patronage (Oxford, 1978)
- Enc. Brit. = The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (11<sup>th</sup> edition, Chicago 1994) (15<sup>th</sup> edition, Chicago 1997)
- Friedländer, Sittengeschichte I, II, III, IV = L. Friedländer, Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von August bis zum Ausgang der Antonine 9th ed., Vols. I-II (Leipzig, 1920), Vols. III-IV (Leipzig, 1921)
- Himmelman, Realismus = N. Himmelman, Alexandria und der Realismus in der griechischen Kunst (Tübingen, 1983)
- Inv. Tun. = P. Gauckler, Inventaire des mosaïques de l'Afrique, II: Afrique Proconsulaire (Tunisie) (Paris 1910)
- Leclant, Image = J. Leclant, "Egypt, land of Africa in the Greco-Roman world" in J. Vercoutter ed., The Image of the Black in Western Art, I (Camb., Mass., 1976) 269-285.

- Levi, AMP = D. Levi, Antioch Mosaic Pavements (Princeton, 1947)
- Maiuri, Casa del Menandro = A. Maiuri, La Casa del Menandro e il suo tesoro d'argenteria (Rome, 1932)
- Matz, I = F. Matz, Die Dionysischen Sarkophage I (ASR 4 Berlin, 1968)
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- Snowden, Image = F. M. Snowden, "Iconographical evidence on the black populations in greco-roman antiquity" in J. Vercoutter ed., The Image of the Black in Western Art, I (Camb., Mass., 1976) 133-245.
- Snowden, LIMC = LIMC 1 (1981) 413-419, s.v. Aithiops (F. M. Snowden)
- Thompson, Romans and Blacks = L. A. Thompson, Romans and Blacks (Oklahoma, 1989)
- Vercoutter, Image = J. Vercoutter, "The iconography of the Black in ancient Egypt: From the beginnings to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, in J. Vercoutter ed., The Image of the Black in Western Art, I (Camb., Mass., 1976) 33-38.

## INTRODUCTION

Many barbarian (i.e. non-Roman) types are represented in Roman art. Gauls, Germans, Dacians, Parthians, and Scythians are only a few of those that occupied the Roman artist, who took great care to differentiate Romans from barbarians. But of all the barbarian types none seems to have challenged the artistic imagination like the Black African, who must have aroused considerable interest because of his/her somatic difference from the Roman. The iconography developed for a Black African physiognomy in Greek art was adopted by the Roman artists, who expanded upon it by reinventing it and extending its application to other black or dark-skinned peoples like Indians and Moors.

Previous scholarship has focussed on the role of Blacks and “race relations” between Blacks and Greeks and Romans. My approach to the study of the iconography of the Black is to examine the ways in which artists of the Roman period confronted the problem of representing perceived difference from their own somatic norm image, and the contexts in which they did that. It becomes clear that the artists were frequently confused as to the precise nature of that somatic difference, especially with regard to differences among various dark-skinned peoples. Although the monuments are the main focus of study in this thesis, the evidence of ancient literary testimony is also considered because it provides a complementary tradition to the images, and in many instances

furnishes a much needed context for an understanding of the artistic evidence. In conjunction with the iconography, it ultimately contributes valuable insights into the society that produced the monuments.

The corpus of representations of Blacks in Greco-Roman antiquity is of a considerable size, the unwieldy nature of which is attested by the scholars who worked with the Menil Foundation to sift through photo archives in about forty institutions.<sup>1</sup> The images are found in mosaics, smaller and larger scale sculptures in terracotta, stone and bronze, sarcophagus reliefs, vase-paintings, wall-paintings, and the minor arts.

The corpus I have assembled is only a small fraction of what is available, necessary for studying particular aspects of the iconography and highlighting some of its problems. The chronological range of this specialised corpus extends from about the 1st c. B.C. to the 6th / 7th c. A.C., with the largest numbers of images concentrated in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.C. Regionally the representations come from Italy, North Africa, Sicily and north-west Europe. Italy has the highest concentration of objects, followed by North Africa. In order to contextualise the main discussions I provide first an overview of representations of the Black in the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman periods.

Chapter 1 of this thesis is in two parts. In the first part I define the parameters of the study by setting out the determinative/diagnostic criteria by which I identify representations of Blacks. These criteria, consisting of a set of distinct somatic

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<sup>1</sup>Bugner, Image 3.

characteristics, are developed in relation to the Greco-Roman somatic norm, since it is from the perspective of that "somatic norm" that the artists represent difference. A definition of the various terms employed in the thesis will also be given. Next I address some of the methodological problems associated with the study of the iconography. In the second part of the chapter I summarise, through selected references from the Greek and Latin literary sources, ancient perceptions about Αἰθίοπες / *Aethiopes*, peoples who are generally taken to be equivalent to those known today as Black Africans/Blacks. References in the literary sources to other black or dark-skinned peoples will also be summarised.

Chapter 2 provides a background to the main thematic iconographical discussions. In an overview of representations of the Black in Greek and Roman art, selected examples are used to illustrate the breadth of the subject, the range of media, and contexts in which images of the Black appear. The images discussed include some that are clearly defined and identifiable representations of Blacks, as well as others that show only some of the determinative somatic characteristics the artists associated with Blacks. The latter type is found mainly in the Roman period.

A major innovation of the Roman iconographic repertoire is the increase in representations of the Black that are set in clearly recognisable contexts derived from daily life. This important development is explored in chapters 3, 4, and 5. The material in these chapters is grouped according to the major themes and contexts in which the artists chose to represent the Black. Chapter 3 deals with representations of the Black

with bath contexts. In that chapter I discuss a group of representations in black-and-white mosaic and highlight its importance to the development of the iconography of the human figure in Roman mosaic. I also discuss some of the factors that might have influenced the artists' decision to portray the Black in various contexts. In Chapter 4 I discuss domestic service scenes as the largest non-mythological context in which the Black is portrayed. Chapter 5 re-examines the views of earlier researchers concerning the portrayal of the Black in public spectacle.

Chapter 6 addresses the problem of how the iconography originally developed for portraying Black Africans is adapted to another barbarian type, with regard to Indians in scenes of Dionysus' triumphant return from India.

A Catalogue of 56 objects - mosaics, sarcophagi, terracottas, bronzes, marbles, and paintings - supports the specialised thematic discussions. Illustrations of the figures described in the catalogue are provided. I also include illustrations of some figures discussed in Chapter 2 that are relevant to an understanding of the subject as a whole.

### Review of modern literature

Before proceeding to a discussion of the iconography I review previous modern scholarship on the subject, which provides a point of departure for my own thesis. I review only the monographs on the subject as they incorporate a great part of previous and current research in their discussions.

Since the late 19th century there has been an interest in the theme of Blacks during the Greek and Roman periods. Research on the topic was concerned with specialised aspects of the iconography of Blacks, but there existed no monograph which covered the whole period until G. H. Beardsley's thesis of 1922, published in 1929.<sup>2</sup> It was a ground-breaking study in the field of the iconography of Blacks in ancient Greco-Roman art. It assembled material from restricted corpora put together by earlier scholars, and from what had hitherto been scattered references in museum catalogues. Beardsley undertakes an examination of a corpus of 289 objects from Greek and Roman sculpture, vases, and jewellery depicting Blacks, and includes ancient literary references pertinent to the theme. The author approaches the subject as a study of the role and status of Blacks in Greek and Roman society. The importance of her work cannot be over-emphasized, but the study is not without problems.

One troubling aspect of the scholarship is its racially prejudicial overtones, which become particularly evident when, for example, she employs phrenological criteria in assessing the representations. In these cases the author makes assessments like "...an extremely naturalistic portrait of an African of the lowest type of intelligence",<sup>3</sup> and "The characteristic features of the race are admirably rendered, including the woolly hair,

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<sup>2</sup>For references to earlier studies, see Beardsley, Negro ix-x.

<sup>3</sup>Beardsley, Negro 83.

protuberant forehead, thick lips and indescribable nigger grin".<sup>4</sup> Another problem is that of terminology. For example, although Beardsley provides definitions for the terms Ethiopian and Negro, so as to avoid what she considers the misleading practice of other scholars who employ the two labels interchangeably, she herself falls into the same misleading practice.

The basic premise in the work is that the iconography reflects scornful and condescending attitudes towards Blacks that arose because Blacks functioned as slaves in Greek and Roman society. She bases this on the frequent occurrence of the Black in the minor arts, for "...the great sculptors did not consider him a sufficiently dignified or important subject...".<sup>5</sup> Beardsley's reading of the literary sources also seems to support this premise, since she ignores references of a more positive nature.

Commenting on the source material, Beardsley accurately points out the paucity of references to non-mythological Blacks in Greek literary sources, in contrast to the number of references in the Roman. Therefore, while the discussion of Greek sources centred mainly on poetical references to a mythical Ethiopia located at the ends of the earth, some sources of the later period and Roman references dealt with topics of skin colour, physiognomics and social commentary on Blacks. This reveals differences between attitudes expressed by Greeks and Romans towards Blacks. The author argues

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<sup>4</sup>Beardsley, Negro 90, quoted verbatim from A. Evans, "Recent discoveries of Tarentine terra-cottas," JHS 9 (1886).

<sup>5</sup>Beardsley, Negro ix.



that in Greece, due to the rarity and unusual appearance of the Black, there was a literary idealising of the subject that does not exist in the Roman era.<sup>6</sup> The absence of a literary idealisation during the Roman period is attributed to the relatively greater numbers of Blacks in Rome, their propinquity to the Romans, and consequent Roman disillusionment with them.<sup>7</sup> Finally, therefore, in light of the focus assumed in the study, the author concludes that Romans had "...no special affection for Ethiopians at Rome".<sup>8</sup>

The author also argues that, because of mutual propinquity, Roman art was ethnographically correct in its iconographic treatment of the Black.<sup>9</sup> Beardsley fails, however, to address obvious instances of ethnographic and anatomical errors in the iconography or to consider the conventions in which the artists were working. In fact, what Beardsley's corpus reveals is that in both Greek and Roman art the portrayal of the Black is characterised by varying degrees of naturalism, stereotype, caricature, and fantasy.

The conclusions reached by Beardsley are not shared by F. M. Snowden writing almost half a century later, for according to him, ancient Greco-Roman attitudes towards Blacks were, on the whole, positive.<sup>10</sup> He updates the material assembled by Beardsley,

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<sup>6</sup>Beardsley, Negro 115.

<sup>7</sup>Beardsley, Negro 120.

<sup>8</sup>Beardsley, Negro 119.

<sup>9</sup>Beardsley, Negro 111, 113.

<sup>10</sup>Snowden, Blacks 217-218.

and presents an extensive corpus of Greco-Roman archaeological and literary evidence that includes more recent discoveries and some material of the Christian period. Snowden adopts Beardsley's approach to the subject, seeing the issue as that of the status and role of Blacks living in the Greco-Roman world, or in other words, of Blacks living in a white society, consequently as a matter of race relations.<sup>11</sup> His approach is influenced by the cultural issues of contemporary America with its racial problems, just as Beardsley before him articulated her own biases in her discussions. While both scholars have located their argument within the context of modern American racial problematics, Snowden's work has attracted scholarly attention in a manner that Beardsley's did not, probably because of growing interest in this area of inquiry.<sup>12</sup>

One major problem in Snowden's study is the tendency to downplay negative literary references to Blacks, and in some cases to interpret the sources in a very loose manner. Another problem is the inclusion of "multiracial" persons in his interpretations of the ancient concept of *Aethiops*, and his attempts to identify representations of such persons in the iconography. This is problematic because, although racially mixed persons are mentioned in the sources, it is not at all clear that in Roman conceptions such persons

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<sup>11</sup>This is a view he shares with Beardsley even though Beardsley does not articulate it in the same manner.

<sup>12</sup>Many scholars seem to be in agreement generally with Snowden's approach and his arguments. eg.: J. M. Cook, review of *Blacks in Antiquity* in *CR* 22 (1972) 253-5; L. Cracco Ruggini, "Il negro buono e il negro malvagio nel mondo antico," in M. Sordi ed., *Conoscenze etniche e rapporti di convivenza nell'antichità* (Milan 1979) 108-133; P. MacKendrick, review of *Blacks in Antiquity* in *AJP* 94 (1973) 212-14. Of those who challenge his findings and methodology the most comprehensive work is Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*, discussed below.

would have been considered to be *Aethiopes*. Furthermore, attempting to identify images of them in art is difficult, for again, it is not always clear whether the ancient artist regarded the “multiracial” person as sufficiently different from the “somatic norm”. Even less helpful is the application of anachronistic labels as “octoroon” and “quadroon” to figural types, since the somatic types to which such labels refer would be unlikely to differ from the “somatic norm” sufficiently to be distinguishable.

These were the two main monographs that incorporated archaeological and literary evidence into the study of Blacks in Greece and Rome until 1976, when the Menil Foundation and UNESCO sponsored a venture that resulted in the publication of a collection of essays entitled The Image of the Black in Western Art. The subject is dealt with in four volumes, of which volume 1, edited by Jean Vercoutter, is relevant to the Greek and Roman periods. Three essays of that volume deal with the Greco-Roman period in particular: “The iconography of the Black in ancient North Africa” by J. Desanges,<sup>13</sup> “Egypt, Land of Africa in the Greco-Roman world” by J. Leclant,<sup>14</sup> and “Iconographical evidence on the Black populations in Greco-Roman antiquity” by F.M. Snowden.<sup>15</sup>

Snowden's contribution is a major undertaking of about 112 pages in length, with

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<sup>13</sup>Desanges, Image 246-268.

<sup>14</sup>Leclant, Image 269-285.

<sup>15</sup>Snowden, Image 133-245.

excellent illustrations in colour and black-and-white. The aim of his essay is to produce a history of Blacks and persons of racially mixed parentage in art from the Minoan period to the 3rd c. A.C., to discuss the size of populations of Blacks in Greece and Rome, and to show that Blacks in the art can be seen in relation to the Aethiopians of the ancient literary sources. Snowden's essay in Image addresses the issues previously raised in his earlier monograph, Blacks in Antiquity, and expands the research by introducing new questions concerning the size of Black populations in the ancient world. He poses questions relating to the first appearance of Blacks in European art, the countries of origin of the earliest Blacks, and how the Greeks and Romans came to be in contact with them. He finally reasserts his earlier conclusion that Roman society was not racist. He argues that Greco-Roman evidence reveals that, while distinctions were made between slaves and free persons, and between Greeks (or Romans) and Barbarians, Greeks and Romans did not stigmatize a person on account of skin colour and “developed no special theory of darker peoples *qua* darker peoples, and consequently all peoples including Blacks could overcome the barrier of barbarism”.<sup>16</sup>

As in his earlier monograph, the use of modern American racial and sociological constructs to analyse Greco-Roman portrayals of the Black is problematic. A statuette of the 1st. c. A.C., identified as a representation of the goddess Libya or personification of Africa, is described by Snowden as a “mulatto or quadroon” on account of the figure's

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<sup>16</sup>Snowden Image 236.

broad nose and full lips.<sup>17</sup> The issue of whether such concepts existed for the ancient artist is not addressed. The term Negro is used as a catch-all label for dark peoples of African descent, racially mixed or otherwise, and also interchangeably with the term Aethiopian. As a result of this, there are unresolved questions at the end of the discussion. For example, can the Negro be equated with the Aethiopian of the sources? In other words, are all references to Aethiopians to be seen as references to the Negro type? Did the Greeks and Romans consider persons of mixed ancestry to be Aethiopians?

Regarding the call for an assessment of populations of Blacks in the ancient world, Snowden argues that portrayals of Blacks were not conventional stereotypes, but rather portraits based on live models living in the area. I agree that a few representations, for example, the marble head from Thyreatis identified as a representation of Memnon,<sup>18</sup> or the 2nd c. A.C. life-sized marble statue from the vicinity of Naples, which depicts an actor or a singer may have been based on real people.<sup>19</sup> But other portrayals of the Black are mostly conventional stereotypes. We have only to look at the anthropomorphic head vases of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., at the numerous bronzes depicting nude standing black youths in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and at the representations of servants

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<sup>17</sup>Snowden, Image 217, fig. 285.

<sup>18</sup>Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung, SK 1503: EAA 4 (1961) 1001, s.v. Memnone (G. Sena Chiesa); Snowden, Image 238, figs. 336-381.

<sup>19</sup>Naples, Museo Nazionale (no Inv. #): D. Faccena, "Rappresentazione di negro nel Museo Nazionale di Napoli," ArchCl 1 (1949) 188-195, pls. LIV-LV; Snowden, Image 224, fig. 291-292.

on sarcophagi discussed below.<sup>20</sup> Finally, neither the portraits nor the more conventional representations tell us much about the numbers of Blacks who might have lived in a particular locale. For although it is possible that there may have been Blacks living in areas where representations of the Black are found, we should consider that the objects may possibly represent nothing more than a taste for the exotic.

In his essay, Desanges attempts to answer the question of whether North African Blacks are represented in the iconography of the Roman period. This timely and well-illustrated work provides a much-needed overview of representations of Blacks on monuments from North Africa. In this restricted context Desanges is able to explore aspects of the iconography that Snowden, given the much broader scope of his research, is unable to do.

Desanges first discusses the ethnic composition of North Africa in antiquity, and postulates that certain areas of North Africa were settled by white and Negroid populations from the Neolithic to the Roman period. He argues that there was an original ethnic agglomeration of Negroids, which was later reduced and altered by Libyco-Berbers and Negroes from western Africa. He also addresses the question of whether a trans-Saharan traffic in slaves, gold, ostrich plumes, ivory, and lion and panther skins in antiquity, often suggested by Africanists, would have been possible, and whether it would have affected the numbers of black populations of North Africa. He argues that

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<sup>20</sup>See *infra* Chapters 2 and 4.

commercial relations between the north and tropical Africa were rare both in the Punic and the Roman periods and therefore did not cause the numbers of Blacks in North Africa to increase substantially. The author asserts that the Blacks in North Africa were indigenous, and could be the subjects portrayed in the local iconography.

Desanges reviews the evidence of mosaics, sculptures, lamps, and balsamaria (small, covered vessels in bronze or terracotta, used for storing unguents), initially. He subsequently narrows his focus of inquiry, by eliminating monuments which portray certain popular themes like that of Pygmies in Nilotic scenes, and the so-called Negro-head balsamaria, because they reveal little about real Blacks in North Africa. At the end of the survey only ten pieces are selected as iconographically representative of Blacks in North African art.

One flaw in Desanges' analysis is that the criteria for determining the identification of a representation as a Black are not specified. Thus the process by which he arrives at his final list appears somewhat arbitrary. For example, a wrestler on a mosaic from Thina described as "clearly dark skinned, but features...not particularly Negroid", is included in his final list of figures that represent indigenous Blacks.<sup>21</sup> The so-called grooms in a mosaic with a circus theme from Gafsa, although dark-skinned like the wrestler on the Thina mosaic, are not included in Desanges' final list.<sup>22</sup> A similar

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<sup>21</sup>Cat. no. 8, fig. 67, discussed *infra* Chapter 5. See also J. Desanges Image 265, and fig. 362.

<sup>22</sup>Desanges, Image 260, fig. 349. Cat. no. 16, fig. 58, discussed *infra* my Chapter 5.

problem presents itself again with the inclusion in the final list of a nude figure described as a black sorcerer pouring a libation in the Seasons mosaic from the Maison des Chevaux at Carthage (now in the Antiquarium at Carthage), who is portrayed as dark-skinned but of whose features very little can be made.<sup>23</sup>

Modern discussions of Egypt and Blacks are usually fraught with controversies and contradictions, yet J. Leclant in “Egypt, Land of Africa in the Greco-Roman world” adopts an approach that enables him to discuss the iconography relatively unencumbered.<sup>24</sup> Leclant assembles a selective corpus of vase paintings, small scale sculpture, relief sculpture, wall paintings and mosaics of the Greco-Roman period. He argues that the Greco-Roman world considered the Black a Nilotic. On Greek vases associations between Blacks and Egypt are expressed in varied themes, including those of a black youth being attacked by a crocodile, and Black priests and attendants of the Egyptian King Busiris being slain by Herakles. That the Romans also perceived the Black as a Nilotic is evident in the popular Nilotic landscapes featuring pygmies, as well as in Egyptianising scenes with black Isiac celebrants. According to Leclant, the Nilotic associations of the Black were emphasised because the Black was of a physical type so different from Greeks and Romans that he was a perfect symbol of an Egypt that itself seemed so exotic.

Leclant argues that Egypt was an exporter of black slaves and African products

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<sup>23</sup>Desanges, *Image* 260, fig. 360.



such as ivory, precious woods, ostrich plumes, skins and live wild animals. Some of these, according to him, may have been brought by Saharan tribes in the Roman period into Egypt via Meroe and Axum. Addressing the question of the origins of black slaves in Greece and at Rome, Leclant admits that information on this subject is inadequate, but puts forward the theory that centres of export of black slaves shifted from one country to another during the Hellenistic, Roman and Christian eras. He does not specify which countries had these centres of export.

Leclant touches on “Alexandrian art”, a subject he deems under-researched, due as much to the abuse of the term “Alexandrian art”, which is mostly a catch-all phrase, as to the problematic nature of the subject. He notes rightly, however, that the themes of Nilotic scenes, Pygmy battles and Nilotic hunt scenes so popular in Greco-Roman art were derived from Egyptian art and mythology, as are Isiac scenes with Blacks participating in the ceremonies.

The monographs and essays reviewed here have employed the archaeological evidence, supplemented by references in the literary sources, to support the arguments of the researchers. One monograph that also deals with the theme of Blacks in classical antiquity, but from a literary standpoint, is L. A. Thompson, Romans and Blacks (Oklahoma 1989). It is the most comprehensive discussion of the Roman literary source material regarding Blacks. In the monograph artistic monuments complement the

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<sup>24</sup>Leclant, Image 269-285.

discussion of the sources and the literary evidence is examined from a sociological and cultural point of view.

According to Thompson, previous studies of Blacks in ancient Greece and Rome have been flawed by insufficient clarification of some basic concepts in the argument, concepts such as “race”, “racism”, and “colour prejudice” among others. That, according to him, is the result of the failure of scholars to take into consideration the societal structure and value systems of the civilisations being studied. Therefore the arguments of Beardsley,<sup>25</sup> Snowden,<sup>26</sup> Balsdon,<sup>27</sup> and Watts,<sup>28</sup> that deal with ‘race relations’ are deficient in not having clarified these concepts. He therefore discusses these concepts in considerable detail.

Thompson differs from scholars who have addressed the subject before him in that, whereas others have seen degrees of resemblance to modern racist attitudes even when claiming that the Romans were not racist, to him, negative attitudes notwithstanding, colour prejudice and racial prejudice were not part of the Roman social outlook. Also different is his use of modern sociological theories in his analysis. It is by means of these theories that he is able to articulate the fine distinctions between aversions to *Aethiops* somatic types differing from the Roman somatic norm, and aversions to

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<sup>25</sup>Beardsley, Negro (discussed above).

<sup>26</sup>Snowden, Blacks (discussed above).

<sup>27</sup>J. P. V. D. Balsdon, Romans and Aliens (London 1979).

<sup>28</sup>W. J. Watts, "Race prejudice in the satires of Juvenal," AClass 19 (1976) 83-104.

Blacks *qua* Blacks.

Thompson rightly notes that the ancient literary sources offer only a limited amount of concrete information on the attitudes of Romans towards Blacks, since Blacks do not have a voice in the texts and many of the references are coincidental to some other purpose of the writer. According to Thompson's interpretation of the literary testimony, the educated and leisured classes of Rome, whose attitudes and voices are those contained in the sources, had no special "preoccupation with Blacks as social objects".<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the iconography of Blacks, Thompson believes that an element of caricature is retained in some of it, though in general those representations found on utilitarian objects

"suggest an absence of anti-Black xenophobia and a tendency on the part of the owners and users of these objects to take Blacks for granted, at least in those localities where Blacks were actually a familiar part of the local scene (in other localities the dominant suggestion would be a vogue for the exotic)."<sup>30</sup>

Thompson concludes after an examination of the literary and artistic evidence that Roman attitudes to Blacks were not racist, since in antiquity there was no concept of racism supported by societal structures and there were no structural barriers to an *Aethiops* and his descendants becoming full members of the society.

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<sup>29</sup>Thompson, Romans and Blacks 6.

<sup>30</sup>Thompson, Romans and Blacks 7.

## CHAPTER 1

The ancient monuments contain many representations that are clearly attempts by artists of the Greek and Roman periods to create images of persons that are recognisable to a greater or lesser degree as Black Africans. Such images are distinct because artists have identified somatic traits that they perceive as different from their own somatic norm (i.e. the Greco-Roman somatic norm) and reproduced them in the monuments. The degree of difference from the “somatic norm” depends on the number of distinguishing somatic characteristics the artist has decided to stress. The iconographic evidence, probably as a result of experimentation with various combinations of distinct somatic characteristics, contains portrayals that appear to be representative of a range of black and dark peoples.

The “somatic norm” image appears to have been a Mediterranean type of Caucasian physiognomy, consisting of pale brown skin, dark straight or curling hair, dark eyes, medium to thin lips with little eversion and prominent nose.<sup>1</sup> That “norm” appears in the numerous images of emperors, empresses, ordinary people, mythical figures and deities that constitute Roman figural art. And even the idealisation that is typical of images of deities, heroes and heroines, and some rulers, does not depart from the “somatic norm” to any great extent.

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<sup>1</sup>Many biological anthropologists today reject the traditional categories of Caucasoid and Negroid as clues to anatomic relationships among human groups; see J. Diamond, “Race without colour,” *Discover* 15 (1994) 83-89. E. A. Hooton, *Up from the Ape* (1946, rev. ed. New York 1963) 575-577, is an example of the traditional anthropological description of Mediterranean Whites.

It is against the “somatic norm” image that I employ the following diagnostic criteria in my analysis of the monuments to determine which images contain somatic features that the artists would have considered representative of a Black:

1. Hair type and/or hairstyle
2. Skin colour
3. Morphology of lips
4. Morphology of nose
5. Context.

Hair type includes that which seems to represent very tightly curled, as well as moderately curled hair. Hairstyle is the way in which the hair is arranged, as in a close cap or in tiers of corkscrew curls. Skin colour may be black or dark brown or various shades thereof, but must be darker than that of “somatic norm” images. Lips may be thick and everted, or very or moderately full. Noses may be snub, or broad. Although context is not a morphological criterion, I include it as a diagnostic factor because it also influences the interpretation of images, as for example, in the case of Nilotic landscapes with dark-skinned Pygmies.

In any given example some criteria may be pertinent while others might not. Therefore, in the sculptural medium in which sarcophagi reliefs and bronzes are largely monochromatic, at least in their present state, the other four criteria apply. The analysis and identification of certain images, however, is likely to remain problematic.

### Iconographical approaches: Some Problems

The study of ancient monuments is inherently problematic. Separated from our subject by the distance of centuries and culture, any attempt to analyse an image and understand the intentions of the artists who created the images is heavily influenced by this distance. It must be acknowledged that the subjectivity of our response to the images is often denied or rejected in the name of an objective assessment.

The iconography of the Black in ancient Roman art is a particularly problematic area of study, because in addition to the problems of distance there is the added factor of modern issues pertaining to race. Modern racial issues have influenced iconographical assessments of images of Blacks, to the extent that highly subjective judgements issuing from these are rarely questioned or challenged. The review of modern literature on the iconography of Blacks reveals just how elusive objectivity is and how subjective is the enterprise in actuality.

Pejorative racial language in the work of Beardsley, for example, who considers her work to be an objective assessment, has already been noted: in her discussion of a 3rd c. B. C. *askos* from Taranto in the shape of a little boy asleep beside a vase, where Beardsley quotes another author's description of the boy's smile (I fail to see even the hint of a smile.<sup>2</sup> Certain biases, once introduced into the field, become commonplace; for example, indiscriminate labelling of representations of Blacks as "slave", and seeing a "sympathetic" treatment or "extreme realism" in some portrayals of the Black that do not

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<sup>2</sup>Beardsley, *Negro* 90, no. 197, quoting A. Evans. The *askos*: Oxford, Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Inv. # 1884.583.

Blacks as “slave”, and seeing a “sympathetic” treatment or “extreme realism” in some portrayals of the Black that do not contain the full range of distinct somatic characteristics: the (unquestioned) implication being that Negroid features were an unfortunate endowment. The application of adjectives like “ugly”, “fine”, “noble”, and “savage” to representations of the Black is so commonplace that such labels often go unrecognised as subjective assessments, and therefore remain unchallenged. In order to avoid, as far as possible, those types of highly subjective analyses, it is essential that the researcher sets out clearly the criteria pertinent to the analysis, and confronts issues of perception.

The problem of chronological distance is evident when one attempts to guess the intentions of the ancient artist who has chosen to portray a figure with some but not all of the somatic features considered characteristic of the Black. Did the artist intend to create an image that would be recognisable as a representation of a Black person? The swimming figures executed in black silhouette against a white background in Italian mosaics of the black-and-white style are a case in point.<sup>3</sup>

One factor that renders problematic the identification of figures which have some but not all of the distinct somatic characteristics is the use of some of these features, like snub noses, full or thick lips, and very curly hair, in grotesques and caricatures.<sup>4</sup> Because of the features, these types of images are sometimes wrongly identified as representations

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<sup>3</sup>See discussion *infra* Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup>Bugner, Image 16; Cèbe, Caricature 345.

of Blacks. Snub noses and full or thick lips also appear in portrayals of deformed persons, the elderly, and other social outcasts. It is necessary, therefore, when analysing images in which the artist has chosen to depict only some of the distinct somatic traits, to consider that the image may not have been intended as a representation of a Black.

Closely related to the problem outlined above is the influence of artistic conventions in the interpretation of images. For example the short, tight, corkscrew locks that are a consistent feature in depictions of the Black from the Hellenistic period onwards become so standardised that by the Roman period they have become a kind of iconographical “shorthand” for depicting the Black. Thus, artists frequently show no other distinct somatic characteristics in the “shorthand” figures.

The images created by the artists are the result of complex interactions between several factors, including: the artists' observations, perceptions, cultural experience, artistic licence, and artistic medium, and competence. Sometimes the images resulting from these interactions bear a good degree of verisimilitude to nature. Frequently, the images are a curious blend of naturalism and fantasy. Note, for example, Attic black glaze anthropomorphic head-vases depicting heads of the Black, which, although immediately recognisable as representations of the Black, have unnatural (i.e. to the physiognomy of Blacks) features such as reddish eyebrows, reddish frown lines or cicatrices, and reddish hair, and even black-coloured skin.<sup>5</sup> Here, the artist has had to resolve the problem of how to depict the eyebrows and the hair, which should normally be black, against the skin

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<sup>5</sup>For the head vases see discussion *infra* Chapter 2.



colour of the figure which has been rendered in shiny black glaze on the red clay medium. The resolution has been to reserve these features in the natural red of the clay, and has consequently resulted in the production of an image that is simultaneously naturalistic and unnaturalistic.

### Explanation of terms

I employ several terms to describe representations of “racial” types. Some of the terms will be used interchangeably. This is a response to the fluid nature of the concept of the Black in antiquity, as well as to the changing applications of “racial” labels in our time.

I have avoided the term African in order not to conflate its ancient and modern applications; for while it is presently used to refer to Sub-Saharan Africans particularly, and to other peoples of the continent more generally, in the Roman context its use was far more restricted, referring only to provincials of North Africa. I use the terms Black African, Aethiopian, and Black to describe the appearance of figures that show all or several of the somatic characteristics outlined earlier.<sup>6</sup> Because the terms Negro and Negroid have also been used interchangeably in previous scholarship to describe images representing the Black, I too employ these terms when I quote previous researchers. For

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<sup>6</sup>Recent events of great historical import such as the American civil rights movements of the 1960s have given rise to new terms of reference with regards to people of African descent. For many in the post civil rights movement era, the term Black is more acceptable than Negro, mainly because of the historically attested abuse and denigration associated with the latter term, which became popular from the period of the transatlantic slave trade. In traditional biological anthropology, however, the term Negro retains its ethnological/racial classification as one human grouping.

example, I may note that Beardsley identifies a representation as that of a Negro, but in discussing the image I will subsequently refer to it as a representation of the Black.

The term Black is applicable to figures described by other researchers as Negro, Negroid, and Pygmy (when they do show a divergence from the “somatic norm”). Negro is defined as

“A member of a group of human populations either derived from or autochthonous to Africa south of the Sahara (excluding groups recently migrated from Europe or Asia)...the general characteristics of the negro populations are a dark skin, woolly hair, thick lips... a short and broad nose, a protruding lower part of the jaw (prognathism)...”.<sup>7</sup>

The hair of the Negro is actually tightly curled, forming small spirals, but is inappropriately and frequently described as “woolly”.<sup>8</sup>

Negroids share several features of Negroes. Negroid groups include types referred to in traditional anthropology as Nilotic, Hamitic or Nilo-Hamitic. They are described as having less tightly curled to almost straight hair, black or bluish-black skin, reduced or absent prognathism, reduced platyrrhiny and lips not as thick and everted as in Negroes.<sup>9</sup>

Pygmies are Negroids of very short stature. It is important that they be distinguished from clinical dwarfs who have larger heads, limbs disproportionate to the

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<sup>7</sup>Enc. Brit. (11<sup>th</sup> edition 1994) s.v. Negro, 187-188. For modern description of the hair as curly to extreme spiral-tuft hair forms, see Enc. Brit. v.8. (15<sup>th</sup> edition 1997) s.v. Negroid geographic race, 584.

<sup>8</sup>See Hooton (supra n. 1) 483. Hooton describes hair correctly and notes the inappropriateness of the term “woolly” but goes on to use it nevertheless in subsequent discussion.

<sup>9</sup>Enc. Brit. (11<sup>th</sup> edition 1994) s.v. Negro, 188. Modern anthropological descriptions of Blacks are also based on an idealised Caucasian physiognomy as the “norm”.

torso, and protruding buttocks characteristic of the clinical condition achondroplasia.<sup>10</sup> 25

Thus the term Black is used when the artist has chosen to stress divergence from the “somatic norm” by depicting various combinations of distinct somatic features that result in portrayals that may be identified as representative of Black African peoples. Distinct somatic characteristics are also used for other dark-skinned peoples including Moors and Indians under circumstances to be examined later; the term Black is applied those peoples too.

One major problem in the usage of the term Black is its modern American applications. Used in this way the term applies to all persons of African ancestry regardless of how “mixed” these persons are by having any number of white or Native American ancestors. An apparently white person in the 1930s might have been a Black in legal terms because that person possessed a one-sixteenth part of “Negro blood” in his or her veins (i.e. out of sixteen forebears one was Negro). Even though many of such laws have been abolished, the concept is still in existence and is driven by popular usage.

Although there were persons of mixed black and white ancestry in the Greco-Roman world, there does not appear to have been any system resembling the modern one of classifying such persons. Even more à propos to the discussion of iconography is whether it is possible to recognise portrayals of “multiracial” physiognomy in the monuments. It is not clear that artistic conventions would allow us to recognise portrayals of that physiognomy in the monuments. How would any perceived divergence from the

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<sup>10</sup>See V. Dasen, "Dwarfism in Egypt and Classical Antiquity: Iconography and medical history," Medical History 32 (1988) 253; ead. Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece (Oxford 1993).

“somatic norm” have been represented? Snowden has identified some objects as representations of “multiracial” persons, describing these figures interchangeably as Negro, Mulatto, and Quadroon: for example, the 3rd c. B. C. bronze statue of a jockey, from Artemisium.<sup>11</sup> But that figure has none of the defining elements signifying difference from the “somatic norm”.

In most cases the question at the outset of an analysis should not be whether a figure is a representation of a “real Black”, or of a “mixed Black”, but rather “what is the artist showing us in a particular figure?”. For what the viewer is confronted with is an artist’s attempt to convey the notion of a figure that is different from the “somatic norm”, and as will become clear later in my discussion, frequently without precise knowledge of the nature of that difference.

#### Summary of ancient literary evidence relating to Blacks

From the 6th c. B. C. Αἰθίοπες appear in the Greek literary sources as a distinct non-mythological people. This development appears to have been coincidental with increased Greek activity in Egypt as well as some limited exploration of the regions beyond Egypt that would have provided some measure of contact with Αἰθίοπες . The Roman era, however, had the advantage of increased contact due to imperial expansion, and this contact is borne out by references in the literary sources to *Aethiopes* in a Roman context, rather than to generalised *Aethiopes* in an Aethiopian homeland, as appears in the

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<sup>11</sup>Athens, Athens National Museum, Inv. # 15177. Snowden, Image 212, and fig. 275.

Greek sources, and who would have been outside the frame of reference of most Romans. In the Roman context *Aethiops* usually applies primarily to a person's physical characteristics, rather than to ethnic or geographic origins.

The literary testimony in Greek and Latin concerning Ethiopians is scattered throughout the various genres: in poetry, history, geography, philosophy, and medicine. A summary of the evidence comprising a selection of references concerning an Ethiopian homeland, descriptions of the somatic characteristics of its inhabitants, and descriptions of other peoples who inhabit the south but are not specifically referred to as *Αἰθίοπες* / *Aethiopes* outlines ancient perceptions about the Black.

The references are numerous, but not all are of equal value. Fact and fiction often appear simultaneously in one work, which means that there is always the task of separating the two. One might cite the example of Herodotus' Histories, in which myth, legend, eyewitness accounts, hearsay, and personal opinions are blended together in the historical accounts.<sup>12</sup> There was also the tradition of quoting one's predecessors, resulting in the creation of *topoi*. The validity of the ancient accounts becomes questionable when serious inaccuracies are discovered to have been perpetuated through *topoi*. It is fortunate that inaccuracies are sometimes corrected; thus, although Herodotus (3. 101) states that the semen of *Αἰθίοπες* is coloured black like their skin, Aristotle (Gen. An. 2. 2 [736a]) points out to the contrary, that the semen is in fact white. It is vital that all the aforementioned factors be borne in mind when assessing the ancient testimony.

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<sup>12</sup>Herodotus, 2.99.1.

### Greek Tradition

The importance of the term Αἰθίοπες is that its post-Homeric usage appears to have been in reference to human groupings that can be identified in our day as "Black Africans" or Blacks.

The etymology of the term Αἰθίοπες is from αἶθω meaning “burn” and ὄψ meaning “visage, face”, hence Αἰθίοψ “burnt face”.<sup>13</sup> It becomes clear that this term applies to a person of very dark complexion (dark beyond the Greek somatic norm), when we observe that the term is applied to persons who are non-Greek (barbarian), and who in addition to dark skin colour also have other somatic characteristics distinguishing them from the “somatic norm”. One can reasonably infer from this that Αἰθίοψ referred to a Black person.

The colour of the skin of Αἰθίοπες is described as black by Herodotus (3.101) who is the earliest Greek source that attributes a skin colour to Αἰθίοπες. Mention of their black skin colour is also made by Diodorus Siculus (3.8.2); and Aristotle (Problemata, 10.66.[898b]) describes the complexion of Αἰθίοπες as black, blacker than that of any other peoples. Aristotle's description is particularly valuable because it reveals an awareness of degrees of darkness of complexion; it implicitly acknowledges that other groups have dark skin, and makes a distinction between the “blackness” of those groups and the “blackness” of Αἰθίοπες. The fabular tradition also provides a clear association

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<sup>13</sup>LSJ (Oxford 1968) s.v. "αἰθίοψ".

between black skin colour and the Αἰθίοψ. In fable XI of the fables ascribed to Aesop, a man buys an Αἰθίοψ slave, and being ignorant of the fact that the slave's dark skin colour was not due to unhygienic habits, attempts to wash the colour off to no avail.<sup>14</sup> The proverb Αἰθίοπα σμήχειν, meaning “to wash an Aethiopian white”, or the futility of a labour, shows the intrinsic connection made between blackness of skin and Αἰθίοπες in the ancient popular view.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to skin colour, the sources comment on the hair of Αἰθίοπες which is described as being different from that of other peoples. The tightly curled hair of Αἰθίοπες was usually likened to wool and described as “οὔλος” (woolly). In his description of the Aethiopian allies in Xerxes' army, Herodotus distinguishes between the straight hair of one type of Aethiopian and the “woolly” hair of the other (Hist., 7.69-70). Diodorus (3.8.2) also describes the hair of Αἰθίοπες as “woolly” hair. Diodorus (3.28.1) and Xenophanes indicate a flat nose as another distinguishing physiognomic feature of Αἰθίοπες, but this difference in nasal morphology appears infrequently in the comments of other writers.<sup>16</sup>

One popular theory explained physiognomical differences between peoples as caused by climate. “Woolly” hair was believed to have been caused by the action of the sun's scorching heat upon the head (Arist.Problemata, 14.4.[909a]; Gen. An. 5.3.[782b]). Aristotle (Problemata 14.4.[909a]) contends that the bodies of Αἰθίοπες and Egyptians

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<sup>14</sup>Ésope. Fables (Paris 1927) 8, translation by E. Chambry.

<sup>15</sup>Lucian, Adversus indoctum, 28.

<sup>16</sup>For Xenophanes see H. Diels, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker (Berlin 1961) 21 B16.

have been warped by the sun, on account of which they have bowlegs.

Homer is the first to provide a geographical location for Αἰθιοπία, land of the Αἰθίοπες. According to him, Αἰθιοπία was situated at the most remote border of the world near the Ocean stream between east and west (Iliad, 1.423-424, 23.205-207; Odyssey, 1.22-24). This Αἰθιοπία was mostly an unknown quantity, since according to Homer himself no person knows where the sun rises or where it sets (Odyssey, 10.190-192). Homer's Αἰθιοπία was essentially a mythical place where the gods dined with the ἄμυμδνες (blameless) Αἰθίοπες (Iliad I. 423-425).

Αἰθιοπία was purported to have numerous ethnic groups (Diod.3.8). The names of these ethnic groups, as provided in the literary sources, usually refer to the people's diet or way of life. A few examples from those listed by Diodorus are: “rhizophagi” (root-eaters) (3.23.1), “hylophagi” (wood-eaters) (3.24.1), “spermatophagi” (seed-eaters) (3.24.1) and “struthophagi” (bird-eaters) (3.28.1). Infrequently additional description is given, as in the case of the “acridophagi” (locust-eaters), who are described as exceedingly black in colour (Diod. 3.29.1). The “Simi” are so called because they are very flat-nosed (Diod. 3.28.1), and the “Macrobioi” (long-lived) are the tallest and handsomest people in the world (Hdt. 3.20-21.5).

But the literary evidence is sometimes problematic. For example Λίβυς (Libyan) appears to be in some cases a synonym for Αἰθίοψ, as in a reference by Herodotus to Eastern Libyans whom he describes as the most woolly haired of all peoples (Hdt. 7.70). We might keep in mind at this juncture Aristotle's implicit reference to dark skin colour in groups other than Αἰθίοπες. Therefore Homer's description of the character Eurybates



(*Odyssey*, 19.246-247) as μελανόχροος is unproblematic until one confronts the second adjective οὔλοκάρηνος.<sup>17</sup> The complication here is that while dark skin applies to peoples other than Αἰθίοπες, the application of both these adjectives and especially the distinguishing οὔλοκάρηνος in this instance seems to indicate an Αἰθίοψ type. As it stands, however, Eurybates is not specifically referred to as Αἰθίοψ, and therefore, any identification is subject to debate. In one case where it is clear that the writer is not referring to an Αἰθίοψ type, the epithet Αἰθίοψ is employed nevertheless. The epithet is applied to Zeus by Lykophron (*Alexandra* 535-537).<sup>18</sup>

In spite of the wealth of references to Αἰθίοπες in the Greek sources, there is very little in the way of references to actual persons. There are, however, the Pharaohs of the Aethiopian XXVth Dynasty: Shabaka, who was said to have surpassed his predecessors in piety and uprightness (Hdt. 2.137, 139; Diod. 1.65), and Taharka, who led an army as far as Europe (Megasthenes quoted by Strabo 1.3.21, 15.1.6). There are also a few scattered references to persons perhaps not so famous, designated as Aithiopians in fragments of Papyri.<sup>19</sup>

It can be concluded from the foregoing that there was a general familiarity, at least in literate circles, with the somatic appearance of Αἰθίοπες. There is only a vague knowledge of the geographical location of the land Αἰθιοπία. There is limited reference

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<sup>17</sup>For the translation of the adjectives as black-skinned and woolly-haired, see Snowden, *Blacks* 19, and also for his argument that Eurybates was meant to be seen as an Aethiopian character.

<sup>18</sup>The epithet is used as one of Zeus' cult names in Chios.

<sup>19</sup>Snowden, *Blacks* 16-21.

to actual named and unnamed Αἰθίοπες i.e. the pharaohs, and the allies in Xerxes' army, and no reference to Αἰθίοπες in Greek social contexts (i.e. in the direct experience of Greeks generally).

### Literary testimony of the Roman era

The literary testimony of the Roman era regarding *Aethiopes* incorporates earlier Greek knowledge, and is characterised by a new familiarity with *Aethiopes* (Aethiopians) in a Roman context. With the introduction of Aethiopians into a Roman context, the designation *Aethiopes* no longer applied only to a mythical or exotic people living in a land situated with a greater or lesser degree of precision in the far south and outside the direct experience of most Romans.

The written evidence assembled here from poetry, historical and geographical accounts, and rhetoric, forms a complementary tradition to the iconographical one to be discussed in the main chapters. Some of the material in this section will appear also in the main iconographical discussions whenever it might serve to enhance the artistic evidence.

As in the Greek tradition, the literary testimony of the Roman period is a combination of fact and fiction. One instance of the more outrageous fictions survives in a reference by Pliny (N.H.5.46), who also thought it outrageous, describing *Blemmyae*, an Aethiopian tribe, as having no heads, but mouths and eyes on their chests! Rather more difficult than separating fact from obvious fiction, is the task of sorting out what somatic types are referred to in some instances by the names *Mauri*, *Libyes*, and *Indi*, since these are sometimes applied to persons or characters whose physical description matches that

attributed to the Aethiopian/Black.

The Latin term *Aethiops(-es)*, is derived from the Greek, and its usage is frequently applied to persons whose physical description matches that of persons designated in the Greek as Αἰθίοψ. As in the Greek sources, *Aethiopes* (Aethiopians) are compared or contrasted with other peoples by skin colour, hair type and other somatic characteristics.

Aethiopians are described as black or dark-skinned (Ov. Met. 2.235-236; Ach. Tat. 4.5.2.; Ptol. Tetr. 2.2.56; Hyg. Astr. 1.8; Manil. Astron. 4.758-759; Paul. Nol. Carm. 28.249). As in the Greek tradition, black skin colour was believed to have been caused by the effect of the environment--by living close to the equator or in a very hot climate.<sup>20</sup> According to Seneca (Q.N. 4a 2.18), *Aethiopiam ferventissimam esse indicat hominum adustus color*, while Hyginus (Astr. 1.8.28b) states that *...qui autem proximi sunt aestivo circulo eos Aethiopas et perusto corpore esse*. Vitruvius (De Arch. 6.1.4.) espouses the environmental theory, commenting on how the heat of their environment causes the dark skin and curly hair of southern peoples in general. In similar vein Lucretius informs us that the river Nile originated in the hot country of the south from among *nigra virum percocto saecla colore* (Rer. Nat. 6.722). It can be deduced from the environmental theory that commentators were aware that there existed other dark or black peoples who shared some somatic features with *Aethiopes* even though these dark peoples were not

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<sup>20</sup>Traditional anthropology also advances similar environmental theories for differences between races. For example, dark skin "...seems to result from an evolution of the gene pool in a warm and sunny climate." Enc. Brit. v. 8. (11<sup>th</sup> edition 1994) s.v. Negro, 188. For the effect of sunlight in depigmentation of Whites see Hooton (supra n. 1) 590.

*Aethiopes* themselves.

Another frequently mentioned distinguishing somatic feature of *Aethiopes* is hair, the description of which is more varied in the Roman period than in the Greek. The writers of the Greek period used only the term οὐλός and its variants to describe the hair of *Aethiopes*, and this usage survives in the comments of writers in the the Roman era writing in Greek (cf. in the 2nd c. A.C., Ptolemy, Tetrabiblos, 2.2.56). Some authors who wrote in Latin, however, actually describe the hair of *Aethiopes* more precisely as “tightly curled” rather than “woolly”. Hence in the description of the African cook Scybale, a character in the poem Moretum, the author speaks of her as *torta comam* (33), while Martial (De Spec. 3.10) refers to ...*aliter tortis crinibus Aethiopes* who have come to the games.

*Aethiopia* is, in the Roman tradition, a distant land whose location is imprecise, outside the direct experience of most Romans. *Aethiopia* appears in poetry, *Oceani finem iuxta solemque cadentem/ ultimus Aithiopum locus est* (Verg. Aen. 4.480), and Pliny follows Homer's theory of the existence of two *Aethiopias* located beyond the African desert, one to the east and the other to the west, *desertis Africae duas Aethiopias superponunt...Homerus bipertitos tradit Aethiopas, ad orientem occasumque versos* (N. H. 6.197). The dependence on the earlier Greek sources is also evident in the testimony of Strabo, who lists the locations of *Aethiopia* as given by his Greek predecessors (Strabo 1.29; 17. 768, 785, 788). Although it has been stated previously that *Aethiopia* and its inhabitants were outside the experience of most Romans, there were some ethnic groups that were part of the consciousness of some Romans. Thus whereas the Trogydytae who

lived underground in order to escape the fierce heat of the sun (Sen. Q.N. 4a.2.18), or the Tentyritae, small clever people who rode on the backs of crocodiles (Plin. N.H. 8.38.92-93), were merely exotic, the Blemmyae (Strabo 17.1.53), who menaced Roman territories and were finally defeated in the late third century A.C. by Probus (who displayed some of them in his triumphal procession [SHA Probus 19.2] and in his gladiatorial shows [SHA Probus 19.8]), would have been more “real” to Romans.

There are also references in the sources to persons within the direct experience of Romans who are described as *Aethiopes* or as persons having some or all of the somatic features attributed to *Aethiopes*. Memnon, a pupil of Herodes Atticus, is described as *Aethiops* (Philostr. V.A. 3.11).<sup>21</sup> A maid from *Aethiopia* is the subject of comment in Terence's Eunuchus (165-167), and a vain youth would like to make the right impression by having a personal *Aethiops* slave attend him at the baths (Ad Her. 4.5.63). Petronius (Satyricon 34) tells a story in which *Aethiopes* attend to guests at a dinner party. Even such fictive references as the one by Petronius are of value since they suggest that those types of stories contained elements that would have been familiar enough to make them outrageously entertaining to the intended audience. *Aethiopes* also appear in comments on public entertainment, where they are described as animal trainers (Mart. 1.104.9-10, De Spect. 3.10; Ach. Tat. 4.4.6; Sen. Ep. 85.41), as *venatores* (Pliny, N. H. 8.131), and as actors (Suet. Calig. 57.4; Dio Cassius, Epitome 62.3.1).

In some cases the context seems to suggest that persons described as having

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<sup>21</sup>See discussion of Snowden, Image supra my Introduction .

certain distinct somatic characteristics should be understood to be *Aethiopes* or more generally, Blacks. For example, Martial ( 1.104.9-10) comments on the skill of a black master whose elephant dared not disobey him, *molles dare iussa quod choreas/ nigro belua non negat magistro*. In light of an established tradition associating elephants and Aethiopians, it is possible that the master is to be understood as being *Aethiops*.<sup>22</sup> Slightly more problematic, however, is the example of a famous *venator*, Olympius, from Carthage, whose black skin colour is mentioned several times in the epigrams, but of whom no other distinct somatic characteristic is given.<sup>23</sup>

Related to the problem noted above is the usage by the ancient commentators of the terms *Libyes*, *Mauri*, and *Indi* to refer to persons that we are meant to understand as possessing some of the somatic characteristics attributed to *Aethiopes*. In a bitter complaint about the unequal treatment meted out to guests of low status, Juvenal (5.52) rants that some guests receive their drinks from the “bony hand of a black Moor”, “*nigri manus ossea Mauri*”, instead of from the pretty boy from Asia.<sup>24</sup> Making fun of a Roman husband who is cuckolded by his wife, Martial (6.39.6) lists the children of that adulterous union, including among these, a “curly-haired Moor” (*retorto crine Maurus*) who is the cook's son. This last reference recalls the twisty-haired *Aethiopes* the satirist mentions elsewhere (*De Spect.* 3.10). The description of Moors as black is paralleled in

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<sup>22</sup>For the Aethiopian and elephant association see discussion *infra* Chapter 5, and Appendix II.

<sup>23</sup>D. R. Shackleton Bailey ed., *Anthologia Latina* 1.1 (Teubner Stuttgart 1982) 273-274, nos. 348-334.

<sup>24</sup>See Snowden, *Blacks* 259 n.12 regarding the use of *Maurus* as an equivalent of *Aethiops*, and Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* 28-29, n.49 to the contrary.

the opinion of some ancient writers who suggested that Mauretania derived its name from the colour of its people (Isid., Origines 14.5.10). In this view the colour as well as the name of the people was *maurus* from the Greek μαύρος equivalent to the Latin *niger*.

Martial (6.77) also refers mockingly to the spectacle of a black elephant “carrying a Libyan of the same colour” (*vehit similem belua nigra Libyn*). The black Libyan in the reference might well have been intended as a very dark person, but it should also be borne in mind that the earlier Greek tradition described Libyans as having Aethiopian physiognomy (Hdt. 7.70), and this tradition could have influenced the poetic description.

Indians were frequently compared to Aethiopians in respect to the colour of their skin and the presumed similarity between their respective homelands (Ach.Tat. 4.5.1; Sid. Carm. 11.106-7; Philostr. V.A. 2.19, 3.11, 6.1).<sup>25</sup>

### Concluding remarks

The sources refer to persons within a Roman context described as possessing the physical attributes ascribed to *Aethiopes*, who are engaged in a variety of humble métiers, some of which rendered certain individuals famous. Attitudes towards them included admiration for certain talents or prowess they might possess, or ridicule and insult on account of their physiognomy or some perceived wrongdoing. A few like Memnon, the pupil of Herodes Atticus, and the *venator* Olympius are named and stand out from the voiceless, nameless mass who inhabit the literature.

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<sup>25</sup>See Snowden, Blacks 258, n. 10 for a discussion of adjectives common to the description of Aethiopians and Indians, and my discussion *infra* Chapter 6.

In the sources of the Greek period, Aethiopians occur in mythological contexts and in historical accounts as the inhabitants of a vague, distant and unknown land. In the sources of the Roman period, however, the contexts are different. Aethiopians are not only considered to be inhabitants of a land conceived as semi-mythical and outside the experience of most Romans, but also as peoples with whom Rome had some contact as inhabitants of a more clearly understood geographical entity. But most radically different from the Greek applications of the term Ἀιθίοψ is the use of the term *Aethiops*, in sources of the Roman period, to describe the physical characteristics of a person within normal Roman experience.



## CHAPTER 2

### SELECTIVE OVERVIEW OF REPRESENTATIONS

This chapter serves as a background and introduction to the specialised thematic discussions of the next four chapters. An examination of selective examples representative of the major periods is undertaken in this chapter, to introduce the media in which figures with somatic characteristics associated with the Black occur, and the range of contexts within which these images appear. The artists' response to the challenges of creating figures different from the “somatic norm”, and the traditions that developed out of the artistic response will also be addressed.

#### I. GREEK ART

##### A. The Archaic and Classical periods

Representations of the Black in archaic and classical art occur predominantly in black-figure and red-figure vase painting, anthropomorphic head vases, and figure-group vases.

##### Vase-painting

In vase-painting representations of the Black appear mainly in mythological scenes. The myth of Herakles and Busiris, for example, provided opportunity for the inclusion of the Black. In the myth Herakles slays Busiris the king of Egypt, his son, and

all their attendants when Busiris attempts to have Herakles sacrificed. The slaughter episode appears on a hydria (c. 530 B.C.) from Cerveteri, now in Vienna (Fig. 1),<sup>1</sup> and on several red-figure vases dating from about 480-450 B.C.<sup>2</sup> In the scenes on red-figure vases the artists distinguish the attendants of Busiris from Herakles by portraying the attendants with upturned snub noses, full or thick lips, and distinct hairstyles. On a red-figure pelike by the Pan Painter (c. 470-460 B.C.) the attendants have shaven heads, snub noses and full lips, while on a stamnos from Vulci (c.470 B.C.) the male figure being attacked by Herakles at the altar is also portrayed with a snub nose and full lips, but with short hair rendered as closely set black dots.<sup>3</sup> On a hydria from Vulci attributed to the Troilos Painter (c. 480 B.C.), however, the attendants are portrayed with "somatic norm" facial characteristics, have shaven heads with a lock above the ear, and wear earrings.<sup>4</sup> On one side of the previously mentioned hydria from Cerveteri, now in Vienna, some of Busiris' attendants are coloured yellow, while others are coloured black like Herakles. All the figures are portrayed with "somatic norm" features. But the scene on the other side of the same hydria (Fig. 1) shows four black-coloured male figures carrying clubs, who

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<sup>1</sup>Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, IV 3576: Snowden, LIMC 415, no.11; Snowden, Image Figs. 150-151.

<sup>2</sup>Snowden, LIMC 415-416, nos. 11-18.

<sup>3</sup>Pelike by the Pan Painter: Athens National Museum #AP9683; Beazley, ARV<sup>2</sup> 554, no.82; Snowden, LIMC 416, no.13. Stamnos from Vulci: Oxford, Ashmolean Museum #521; Beazley, ARV<sup>2</sup> 216, no.5; Snowden, LIMC 416, no.14.

<sup>4</sup>Munich, Sammlung antiker Kleinkunst #2428: Beazley, ARV<sup>2</sup> 279, no. 13; Snowden, LIMC 416, no.12.

although they have curly hair like Herakles, are differentiated from him by their snub noses and thick lips. It appears that in the latter scene, the artist was attempting to create figures that would be recognisable as representations of Blacks. But on the whole, the images on the Cerveteri hydria appear to reflect several problems: the conflicting and unresolved demands of the polychrome medium; and Greek artists' difficulties in distinguishing the various barbarian non-“somatic norm” figures (who appear to vary in the degree of distance from the “somatic norm”) from the “somatic norm” Herakles.

Another myth that provided an opportunity for depiction of the Black is the Andromeda myth which, set in Aethiopia, provided justification for the artists' departure from traditional norms. In scenes based on the episode of the sacrifice of Andromeda some of the attendants are portrayed with somatic characteristics of the Black. On a red-figure pelike attributed to the workshop of the Niobid painter (c. 460 B.C.), now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, three slaves assist in the preparations for the sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> One of the figures, probably representing a young girl, supports the heroine while youths carry possessions. The figure of the girl, like that of the other Blacks in the painting, is outlined in white against the black background of the vase. This contrasts with the figure of Andromeda that is reserved in the red clay. The girl is portrayed with a snub nose, full lips, and short hair coloured white and given an uneven outline. Cepheus, the father of the heroine, is portrayed with a snub nose and full lips, but unlike the slaves his figure is

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<sup>5</sup>Boston, MFA, 63.2663: Snowden, LIMC 416, no. 19; Snowden, Image 155, and figs. 174-175.

reserved in the colour of the clay, like that of Andromeda. Andromeda, however, is portrayed with “somatic norm” facial characteristics. The iconography of the figures seems to reflect the ambiguities of the Aethiopian context in the artists' conceptions: Greek (and therefore “somatic norm”) protagonists in an Aethiopia that is conceived of as non-Greek; Andromeda depicted according to the “somatic norm”, while Cepheus is portrayed with physical characteristics somewhat different from the “somatic norm”; and Aethiopian characters depicted with distinct physical characteristics in an “Aethiopian” scene.

The Trojan cycle is another example of myths that provided opportunity for the portrayal of the Black. The scenes on a group of three black-figure neck amphorae attributed to Exekias (c. 550-525 B.C.) are inspired by an episode of the Trojan cycle which had Aethiopian protagonists.<sup>6</sup> One of these vases, from Orvieto, has depicted on it a figure labelled “Menelaos” wounding a warrior labelled “Amasos” (Fig. 2).<sup>7</sup> The dying Amasos, who is bleeding profusely, is portrayed with a snub nose, full lips, and short hair rendered as a scalloped silhouette. According to the legend, Amasos was one of the followers of the legendary Memnon, prince of Aethiopia, and was slain by Menelaos after Memnon was killed by Antilochos at Troy.<sup>8</sup> The two other vases are variations on this

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<sup>6</sup>Beazley, ABV 144 no.8, 145 no.14, 149 V; Snowden, LIMC 415, nos. 1-3.

<sup>7</sup>Philadelphia, University Museum MS 3442: Beazley, ABV 145, no. 14; Snowden, LIMC 415, no.1.

<sup>8</sup>Amasos is believed to be a character from the Aithiopsis attributed to Arctinus (date very uncertain), which recounts the story of the duel between Memnon and Antilochus and its aftermath. Cf. Beardsley, Negro 46.

theme, with Amasos and another armed figure also portrayed with snub nose, full lips and scalloped hair. Motifs of warriors with somatic characteristics of the Black also occur outside the mythological framework. One example of this is an unusual depiction that appears on a polychrome lekythos in Six's technique from Cumae, (Fig. 3).<sup>9</sup> Unlike in most portrayals, such as on the Trojan cycle vases, where the black warrior either is nude, or wears a loincloth, or short chiton, and is armed with a lunate shield and club, this warrior (Fig. 3) is shown in Greek hoplite armour of cuirass, chiton, helmet, and round shield. Furthermore the snub nose and thick lips of the warrior are exaggerated and highly suggestive of a caricature.

A series of about 30 white-ground alabastra of the first half of the 5th c. B. C. depending on the Syriskos Painter also feature warriors with somatic characteristics of the Black.<sup>10</sup> On the alabastra the areas representing the warrior's exposed skin are coloured black, while the hair is reserved in the white ground and outlined with black dots. The warriors are mostly portrayed wearing short tunics over patterned trousers, and may have a cloth or animal skin folded over an arm. They wield weapons: axes and bows with

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According to J. Boardman, The Greeks Overseas (London 1980) 3rd edition, 152, the name Amasis(os) on the vases could have been a reference to Exekias' rival Amasis who may have been of Egyptian extraction. It had been argued by A.D. Fraser, "The panoply of the Ethiopian warrior," AJA 39 (1935) 40, that it could have been a generic name to designate a Black person. It is more likely that the artist was merely taking advantage of an opportunity to portray a Black.

<sup>9</sup>Naples, Museo Nazionale #86339: Snowden, LIMC 415, no. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Beazley, ARV<sup>2</sup> 267-269; Snowden, LIMC 415, nos. 7-8. For summary of history of these vases, see Beardsley, Negro 48-54.

quivers. One example from this series (Fig. 4) is an alabastron in the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University.<sup>11</sup> Vase-painters also used the image of the Black as a decorative motif on shields depicted on vases. A 5th c. B.C. red-figure amphora from Cerveteri shows a black silhouette of a youth with somatic characteristics of the Black on a round hoplite shield carried by a warrior (Fig. 5).<sup>12</sup> The youth blows a trumpet.

Although some of the earliest representations of the Black in vase-paintings are found in mythological scenes, the artists did not restrict themselves to the mythological context. Male figures with somatic characteristics associated with the Black, carrying choes and ladles, may have been intended as vignettes of the symposium.<sup>13</sup> Examples are found on two late archaic red-figure cups in Rhodes and the Louvre.<sup>14</sup> Both figures are nude, and are portrayed with snub noses and thick lips. Due to the fragmentary nature of the Louvre cup, there is no hair portion. Another nude male figure with curly hair and full lips holds up a mirror to a woman on a black-figure lekythos in Bucharest dated to c. 480 B.C.<sup>15</sup> The Rhodes and Bucharest figures, however, have curly hair rendered as a black

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<sup>11</sup>Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Art Museum #1960.327: Snowden, *LIMC* 415, no. 8, also with bibliography for this group; Snowden, *Image* 150, fig. 164. Other examples from the group: an alabastron with a black warrior and an Amazon, Beazley, *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 269; Beardsley, *Negro* 50-54; Snowden, *Blacks* 292-293, n.15.

<sup>12</sup>Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, IV 3724: Beazley, *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 280.9; Snowden, *LIMC* 415, no. 9.

<sup>13</sup>M. C. Miller, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century B. C.* (Cambridge 1997) 212-213.

<sup>14</sup>Rhodes 13448: *CVA* Italy 10, Rhodes 2 (G. Jacopi) III IC pl. 6.3; Miller (supra n. 13) 212, n. 152, fig. 137. Louvre G100: W. Raeck, *Zum Barbarenbild in der Kunst Athens im 6 und 5 Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Bonn 1981) 180, N636; Miller (supra n. 13) 212, n.152, fig. 142.

<sup>15</sup>Black-figure lekythos, Diosphos Painter: *CVA* Roumania 2, Bucharest 2 (P. Alexandrescu, S. Dimitru)

surface with a scalloped outline.

### Anthropomorphic head vases

Anthropomorphic head vases probably contain some of the earliest examples in Greek art of artistic experiments in the portrayal of the Black in a three dimensional medium. Heads with somatic characteristics of the Black are a popular theme in terracotta vases of the 6th - 4th centuries B.C.<sup>16</sup> In the 6th c. B.C. Athens is the major producer of the head vases, while several examples of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. are found in Etruria.<sup>17</sup> Mostly kantharoi, rhyta, and ointment vases, the vases take the form of single heads, janiform heads, and janiform contrasting heads of the Black and “somatic norm” types.

The portrayals on these vases contain somatic characteristics that conform very closely to physical characteristics attributed to Aethiopians in the ancient literary sources.<sup>18</sup> The skin colour of the representations on the vases is always black, faces are prognathous, noses are flat and broad, lips are thick, and hair is rendered as small raised

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pl. 39.2, 7-9.

<sup>16</sup>Beardsley, *Negro* 23-30, nos.30-56; J. D. Beazley, "Charinos. Attic Vases in the form of Human Heads," *JHS* 49 (1929) 41-78; F. Croissant, "Collection Paul Canellopoulos (IV). Vases plastiques attiques en forme de têtes humaines," *BCH* 97 (1973) 205-225.

<sup>17</sup>Etruscan vases: Snowden, *Blacks* 27, figs. 27a-b, 28, 29, 32.

<sup>18</sup>See references to descriptions of Aethiopians in Chapter 1.

dots to represent tightly curled hair. This combination represents the fullest range of distinct somatic features of the Aethiopian/Black in one figure.

An Attic kantharos of the second half of the 6th c. B.C. in Boston (Fig. 6) is a fine example which shows not only the full range of distinct somatic features of the Black, but also crowsfeet and wrinkles, elements that are not portrayed in “somatic norm” figures during that period.<sup>19</sup> The wide-lipped upper section of the kantharos is decorated with Dionysus and satyrs in black-figure. The lower portion is in the shape of a male head. The hair is executed as small raised dots clustered closely together, and is reserved in the red of the clay. The face is in shiny black glaze with “crowsfeet” at the eyes and wrinkles in the forehead reserved in the clay; the eyebrows are thin and are also reserved, as are the lips which are very thick. The eyes are heavily lidded, the balls painted white with black irises and red pupils.

A female head with the full range of somatic features of the Black is conjoined with that of a female with “somatic norm” features rendered in a conventional manner on a janiform kantharos of the late 6th century B.C.<sup>20</sup> The wide lip of the kantharos is decorated in white ground, with black palmettes below a checkerboard pattern. A “KAAOS” inscription appears along the bottom of the palmette frieze. The handles are attached between the lip and the sides where the heads meet. The head of the Black has

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<sup>19</sup>Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 00.332: Snowden, Image 140, fig. 154.

<sup>20</sup>Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 98.926: Snowden, Image 146, fig. 160.



an earring. Effective contrast is achieved in the juxtaposition of the black-coloured face and the white-coloured one, and between the broad flat nose, thick lips, and dotted hair of the Black, and the thinner pointed nose, very small thin lips, and wavy hair, of the “somatic norm” representation.

A red-figure janiform kantharos of the 5th c. B.C. in the Vatican presents an interesting variation on the usual contrasting janiform head vase.<sup>21</sup> It juxtaposes a head of the Black with a head of Herakles (identified by the lion skin knotted under the chin) in what may be an allusion to the Herakles and Busiris myth.

### Figure-group vases

The most popular figure-group vase type incorporating the figure with physical characteristics of the Black was that which depicted a crocodile attacking a youth. A group of vases attributed by Buschor to the 5th century potter Sotades, of which many have been found at Thasos, bears the theme of the crocodile attacking a youth.<sup>22</sup> Several 4th century Apulian vases on the same theme must derive from 5th century attic prototypes. One example is a 4th century red-figure rhyton from Apulia with a lip decorated with satyrs, and the moulded body of the vessel in the form of a nude youth on

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<sup>21</sup>Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, #16539: Snowden, Image 167, fig. 193.

<sup>22</sup>E. Buschor, "Das Krokodil des Sotades," MüJb 11 (1919) 1-43. See also F. Salviat, "Le crocodile amoureux," BCH 91 (1967) 96-101, figs. 1-2.

one knee struggling with a crocodile.<sup>23</sup> The youth is painted black, and his hair, lips and eyes are reserved in the red of the clay. The crocodile is also reserved in the colour of the clay, but painted fancifully with black stripes and dots. The motif of a human struggling with a crocodile has Egyptian associations and survives into the Nilotic repertoire of Roman art.

Several small vases of the 4th century employ the theme of the Black also in a generic manner. Squatting figures of various types and boys with animals or birds are the form of many of these small vases.<sup>24</sup>

### Jewelry and Metalwork

Images with somatic characteristics of the Black appear also as decoration in jewelry and plate in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.<sup>25</sup> In these media the representations are mainly heads: for example, a ring of the late 5th c. B.C. with a female head in intaglio, and a gold male head pendant of the 5th c. B.C. from Canusium (Figs. 7, 8).<sup>26</sup> The female head has very curly hair bound in a scarf, with tufts escaping around the forehead and wisps at the back. She has a snub nose and thick lips of which the lower is quite

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<sup>23</sup>Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, GR 58.1865: Snowden, Image 176, fig. 214.

<sup>24</sup>Snowden, Image 176, 183, figs. 223-224 (squatting figures), 226 (boy with goose).

<sup>25</sup>For examples in jewelry see Beardsley, Negro nos. 231-243.

<sup>26</sup>Intaglio (Boston MFA 23.581) and pendant (London, British Museum #1872.6-4.659): Snowden, Image 200, figs. 201 (intaglio) and 202 (pendant).

pendulous. The male head follows the iconography of head types seen previously, with a broad flat nose, thick lips, and hair rendered by small raised dots. Multiple male heads of a similar type, in relief, decorate a late 4th century repoussé gold phiale from Panagyurishte in southern Bulgaria.<sup>27</sup> It has been suggested that the decoration of this phiale may have been derived from an original held in the right hand of the statue of Nemesis at Rhamnus, made by Pheidias.<sup>28</sup> In the description by Pausanias (1.33.3) the statue bore a phiale decorated with figures of Aethiopians.

### Summary

The artistic evidence comes mainly from Greece in the archaic and classical periods, and from Etruria and South Italy in the fifth and fourth centuries. Representations showing somatic characteristics of the Black appear in terracotta head vases, black-figure vase painting, red-figure vase painting, and figure vases of the crocodile-and-boy group. Medium and context often provided the artists with the opportunity and justification to break out of the strict conventions governing representation of the human figure, to explore physical difference. The black glaze characteristic of black-figure vase painting was exploited by vase painters as well as coroplasts, because it lent itself well to the depiction of the perceived skin colour of the

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<sup>27</sup>Plovdiv, National Archeological Museum, #3204: Snowden, Image 183, figs. 221-222.

<sup>28</sup>Snowden, Blacks 149.

Aethiopian/Black. Episodes from myths; Herakles and Busiris, the sacrifice of Andromeda, and the Trojan cycle, because of their Aethiopian and Egyptian elements, also provided a context in which the vase painters could depict figures with somatic characteristics of the Black. Although the mythological context was mostly favoured for the representation of the Black, the Black is also found in a sympotic context and in the female toilette.

Although the black glaze of the black-figure technique was conducive to the representation of the skin colour of the Black, artists nevertheless had to confront the challenge of differentiating the image of the Aethiopian/Black from that of the “somatic norm”/Greek. For in black-figure vase-painting both somatic types would be rendered in the same black colour. The challenge was met by depicting the Aethiopian/Black with distinct somatic features: short tightly curled hair, snub nose, full or thick lips, and sometimes sub nasal prognathism. Red-figure vase painters sometimes took advantage of the black glazed areas of the vase and outlined the figure of the Aethiopian against that. The figure might also be reserved and the distinct somatic features added on. In other media like gold and bronze where colour was not added, difference is portrayed mainly through the other distinct somatic characteristics.

Despite the almost life-like quality achieved in a few representations, it is unlikely that the majority of Greek artists and craftsmen would have had the opportunity to use actual black persons as models. The recurrent themes and stock appearance of the vase

paintings and figure vases point to a tradition that required the artists to produce the image of the Aethiopian/Black in a particular manner. It is significant that there also existed a literary tradition that described Aethiopians as having the distinct somatic characteristics the artists portray on the vases.

## II. Hellenistic Art

One characteristic of art in the Hellenistic period is the vigorous exploration of themes that had been hitherto avoided or only marginally represented in Greek art. Thus although deities, heroes, mythological figures, and idealised mortals are still depicted, a new vogue, dubbed realism, shows representations of ordinary subjects taken from the contemporary world: persons of humble status, the elderly, hunchbacks, cripples, dwarves, and foreigners. The artists' interest in rendering physical difference, to which the portrayal of the Black in the archaic and classical periods testifies, increases dramatically in the Hellenistic period. Because realism favoured subjects from the contemporary world, the artists no longer needed the framework of the mythological theme to provide justification for their interest in the portrayal of the Black. The artists were able therefore to expand beyond the anthropomorphic head vases and limited figure group vases and create small-scale full-figure sculptures in terracotta, bronze and hard stone. This expansion in medium and style is paralleled in a geographical expansion of the theme into the artistic repertoires of Asia Minor, Italy, and as far east as South Russia.

But it is Egypt that is believed to have played a major role in the dissemination of the image during the Hellenistic period.

### Problems

The study of Hellenistic art is complicated by several factors. One of these is chronology, which is especially difficult for the small-scale bronze sculptures. Another problem concerns the role of Alexandria, the city purported by some researchers to be the birthplace of Realism. The usage of the term “Alexandrian” is also problematic, for it has encompassed provenience, origin, style, subject matter, and inspiration. Usage of the term in those ways should probably be understood as a reflection of the problems involved in attributing to Alexandria a central role in the dissemination of themes during the Hellenistic period when in fact very little monumental evidence from that city has survived.

The study of the Hellenistic representations of the Black is affected by all the problems outlined above. These problems will be addressed mainly with reference to terracottas and bronzes, since the majority of representations of the Black are found in those two media.

### Chronology

The terracottas of the Hellenistic period are generally more securely dated than

bronzes. But there are a sufficient number of reasonably accurately dated objects from the two media that make it possible to identify the theme of the Black in various contexts: standing nudes, crouching, sitting, and sleeping figures.<sup>29</sup> In establishing chronological fixed points for the period Himmelmann distinguishes between early finds from the necropoleis of Sciabbi and Hadra which do not contain terracottas with Egyptianizing or realistic elements, and later ones from the Fayoum and Ras el Soda which do. A terracotta askos from Egypt, in the form of a youth with short curly hair, seated on the ground and leaning against an amphora, is one type of representation of the Black that can be reasonably accurately dated to early in the Hellenistic period.<sup>30</sup> The youth is portrayed with a broad nose and thick lips. He is naked except for a garment knotted under his chin, and he leans against an amphora with his chin resting on his hand. The vase is one of a series with the same theme in London (from Capua), Munich (unprovenienced), and New York (unprovenienced).<sup>31</sup> Himmelmann dates the vase from Egypt to ca.330-320 B.C. on the basis of the amphora which the youth leans against,

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<sup>29</sup>Crouching figures: Beardsley, *Negro* nos. 179, 184, 190, 192, 194, 198 (terracottas); 202, 209, (bronzes). See also Snowden, *Image* 206 figs. 222-223. Sleeping boys: Beardsley, *Negro* nos. 184, 197, 203 (terracottas). For a specialised discussion of the portrayal of the Black in the period, see U. Hausmann, "Hellenistische Neger," *AM* 77 (1962) 255-281.

<sup>30</sup>Vase from Egypt in Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum, 1495: Himmelmann, *Realismus* 88-89, pl. 62b.

<sup>31</sup>The vase from Capua, now in London, British Museum, G 154: Himmelmann, *Realismus* 88, pl.63a. Vase in Munich, Staatliche Antiken Sammlungen: Himmelmann, *Realismus* 88-89, pl.62a. Vase in New York, Metropolitan Museum 06.1021.268: Himmelmann, *Realismus* 88-89, pl. 63b.

which he considers late classical in form.<sup>32</sup> He dates the other vases with the same theme to shortly after 300 B.C., taking into consideration not only the theme but also stylistic comparisons between the hair, the figural proportions, and the facial expressions of the figures. Hausmann, who had studied some of the terracottas before Himmelmann, dated the askos from Capua in London, more generally, to the second half of the 4th c. B.C.<sup>33</sup> Other examples of askoi in the form of a black boy or youth beside a vessel can be found in Oxford, Würzburg, and Brooklyn.<sup>34</sup>

The dating of the bronzes has been so heavily dependent on stylistic analysis that suggested dates can vary by centuries, many attributed uncertainly between the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The most useful approach to the chronology, therefore, is to stress the continuity between the two periods. The well-known but controversial bronze figurine of a nude youth with physical characteristics of the Black, found at Chalon-sur-Saône in France (Fig. 9), probably best illustrates the difficulties in dating the bronzes.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Himmelmann, *Realismus* 88.

<sup>33</sup>Hausmann (supra n. 29) 263.

<sup>34</sup>Vases in the form of a naked boy sleeping beside vase: from Tarentum, Oxford Ashmolean Museum 1884.583, Snowden, *Image* 206, figs. 262-263; Würzburg, Wagner-Museum H4805, Hausmann (supra n. 29) 268; Brooklyn Museum #49.59, Hausmann (supra n. 29) 267.

<sup>35</sup>Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles #BN 1009: Hausmann (supra n. 29) 261; Himmelmann, *Realismus* 65-67; Snowden, *Image* 199, figs. 253-255 n.183. For a bibliography of the debate over the authenticity of the statuette, see M. Daumas, "Le nègre Caylus est-il vraiment un faux ?," *REA* 95 (1993) 191-206.



The youth is shown standing with his weight resting on the right leg, head inclined to his right, right arm bent at the elbow with fingers open but slightly curled, and left arm also bent at the elbow but crossing the torso at chest level. Because of this pose he is usually described as a musician playing an instrument. He has a hairstyle of short corkscrew curls crowning a head with a flattish forehead, prominent brow ridges, a broad nose, and thick lips. The lips are slightly parted with teeth visible.

The mystery surrounding the find of which this figurine was a part, the less than savoury reputation of the Comte de Caylus who acquired it, and the appearance of the statuette itself have led some scholars to view it with suspicion and others to pronounce it a fake.<sup>36</sup> Two aspects in particular of the statuette's appearance have caused its authenticity to come into question. One of these is the arrangement of corkscrew curls just above the forehead. Instead of lying flat on the forehead as is the usual manner in other bronzes of black youths, these curls are arranged vertically forming a fan shape. One must agree with Daumas, who points out that the fan of locks at the forehead, though not common, does appear elsewhere, on a bronze balsamarium in the form of a boy's bust, from Sammanud in Egypt (Fig. 10).<sup>37</sup> The other aspect casting doubt on the authenticity of the statuette is its gleaming patina. Daumas argues that the patina, which is believed by some to be a Renaissance feature, does not preclude an ancient dating since it is very

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<sup>36</sup>Daumas (*supra* n. 35) 191-206.

<sup>37</sup>Balsamarium, Providence, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 11.035. Daumas (*supra* n. 35) 199-200.

similar to that of two objects of secure Greco-Roman authenticity: a bronze figurine of a black youth wearing a mantle also from the Chalon-sur-Saône find, and a bronze balsamarium in the form of a head of a Black, in Florence.<sup>38</sup> Daumas does not go so far as to speculate on the origin of the Chalon-sur-Saône figurine (Fig. 9), being concerned merely to argue for a Hellenistic date in the 2nd c. B.C. Before Daumas, Hausmann had argued that the statuette from Chalon-sur-Saône was Roman, one of the “römische Nachklänge” of Alexandrian bronzes.<sup>39</sup>

Other bronzes depicting the Black but which are more securely dated (some more generally, others more specifically) to the Hellenistic period include a vase in the shape of a youthful head with short corkscrew locks (late 3rd or early 2nd c.B.C.) in Houston,<sup>40</sup> a statuette of a nude dancing youth with corkscrew locks from Erment (near Luxor) (2nd or 1st c. B.C.),<sup>41</sup> a damaged statuette probably from Egypt, now in Baltimore, of a youth with corkscrew locks, wearing a tunic, who appears to be dancing,<sup>42</sup> and a statuette in

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<sup>38</sup>Daumas (supra n. 35) 200-201. Bronze balsamarium in Florence, Museo Archeologico #2288, see Snowden, *Image* 190, fig. 242. Youth wearing a mantle, see R. Steiger, "Drei römische Bronzen aus Augst," in *Gestalt und Geschichte, Festschrift K. Schefold* (Berne 1967) 194-195.

<sup>39</sup>Hausmann (supra n. 29) 262.

<sup>40</sup>Fragment of a head vase, Houston, D. and J. de Menil Collection CA6387: Himmelmann, *Realismus* 91; Snowden, *Image* 188, fig. 237.

<sup>41</sup>Baltimore, MFA #54.702: Himmelmann, *Realismus* 91, pl. 42; D. K. Hill, "The Bronze Negro from Erment," *Studi Adriani* 4 (1983-1984) 182-184, pl. XXXIV.

<sup>42</sup>Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery 54.2372: Himmelmann, *Realismus* 91; D. K. Hill, "A bronze statuette of a Negro," *AJA* 57 (1953) 265-67, pl. 75; Snowden, *Image* 210, fig. 270.

Berlin, from Egypt, of a captive youth with corkscrew locks, wearing *bracae* (trousers), with his hands bound behind his back.<sup>43</sup> The one statue of a black that approaches a life-size image, a severely damaged bronze of a young boy found in a shipwreck off Bodrum in Turkey (Fig. 12), may also be very reasonably attributed a date (ca. 240 B.C.) in the Hellenistic period.<sup>44</sup>

Although bronze and terracotta are the media in which most representations of the Black occur in the Hellenistic period, two well known monuments of the period contain representations of the Black in marble relief and polychrome mosaic. The marble relief comes from Athens and is datable to the third or second century B.C.<sup>45</sup> It shows a youth with short curly hair and a snub nose attempting to control a restive horse. The youth wears a short tunic and holds a whip in one hand. Traces of black paint survive on the face and arms.

The mosaic is the well known Nile mosaic from Palestrina (Fig. 13) which

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<sup>43</sup>Berlin, Staatlichen Museen Antikensammlung #7456; Himmelmann, *Realismus* 91; Snowden, *Image* 204, fig. 264.

<sup>44</sup>Bodrum Archaeological Museum #756: 240 B.C. is the recent redating by C. Reinsberg, *Studien zur hellenistischen Toreutik: Die antiken Gipsabgüsse aus Memphis* (Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge 9, Hildesheim 1980) 92-93, 96, 144. Snowden, *Image* 204, fig. 265, and C. M. Havelock, *Hellenistic Art* (New York 1981) dated the statue to the second or first century B.C. See also, K. Erim, "De Aphrodisiade," *AJA* 71 (1967) 239.

<sup>45</sup>Athens National Museum #4464: Snowden, *Image* 184, fig. 231. For dates, see B. S. Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture I* (Wisconsin 1989) 350-51; W. -H. Schuchhardt, "Relief mit Pferd und Negerknaben im National-Museum in Athen N.M. 4464," *AntP* 17 (1978) 75-99. Another relief showing a youth beside a horse in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (#2807) has been cited as an example of a Black, see Snowden, *Image* 184, fig. 233. The figure, however, shows no clear distinguishing features of the Black.

contains the most detailed scene of Egypt and the Nile at the time of inundation in ancient mosaic.<sup>46</sup> Not only is it the earliest in the long vogue of Nilotic landscapes, but it also contains the earliest representations of the Black in mosaics in a Roman context.

The mosaic, which has been restored several times in its chequered history, was discovered by the latter part of the 16th century. It decorated an apsidal recess in the lower storey of the Archbishop's Palace behind S. Agapito at Palestrina. The mosaic appears to have been based on an Alexandrian/Egyptian original, and although a precise date for the mosaic is still the subject of scholarly debate, a late Hellenistic/late Republican date is generally put forward.<sup>47</sup>

In the upper apsidal portion of the mosaic which represents the Upper Nile and Aethiopia, groups of black hunters armed with bows and arrows, and shields and lances, attack herons, monkeys, and crocodiles in a harsh and rocky landscape devoid of any human habitation (Fig. 13a).<sup>48</sup> In the lower rectangular portion which represents Egypt, "somatic norm" figures boat and fish in the marshy landscape dotted with reed huts, or

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<sup>46</sup>Palestrina, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. For an informative and current analysis of the mosaic and references to relevant past and current research, see P.G.P. Meyboom, The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina (Leiden 1993).

<sup>47</sup>For a summary of the various dates proposed, see Meyboom (supra n. 46) 16-19, n. 58. Meyboom dates the mosaic to between 120 and 110 B.C. For the argument that the mosaic is based on an Alexandrian/Egyptian original, see Meyboom (supra n. 46) 97-106.

<sup>48</sup>This method of hunting is described as an Aethiopian practice in some of the literary sources: Diodorus III 8, 32-33; Strabo XVI, 17. Because of the presence of hunting dogs, the hunters are identified with the "Kynegoi", another Aethiopian ethnic group, by A. Steinmayer-Schareika, Das Nilmosaik von Palestrina und eine ptolemäische Expedition nach Aithiopien (Bonn 1978) 73.

worship and celebrate in temples. The black hunters in the Aethiopian landscape are clearly differentiated from the figures in the Egypt landscape by their black colour and their costume of short white garments resembling the exomis.

Several motifs of the mosaic had already appeared in Greek art of the 6th century B.C. For example, the figures shooting at the herons are strongly reminiscent of the motif of Pygmies fighting cranes that appears very early on in Greek art as a *geranomachy*.<sup>49</sup> The motif of hunters attacking a crocodile shown in the upper portion of the mosaic also remains popular in Nilotic scenes, and can be associated with the earlier motif of a black youth being attacked by a crocodile in the crocodile-and-boy group vases attributed to Sotades, and the South Italian coroplasts, that have already been discussed.<sup>50</sup>

#### Provenience: The role of Alexandria and Egypt

The problem of the birthplace of realism is probably unsolvable as even Himmelmann, one of the most influential voices in the debate, admits, although he makes a strong case for Alexandria against Asia Minor. Himmelmann's methodology for building the case for Alexandria is to analyse objects with secure Alexandrian or at least Egyptian provenience in order to identify material, stylistic, and technical features that

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<sup>49</sup>For example, on the foot of the François vase: Beazley, *ABV* 76, 1 (682). Other examples: *LIMC* 7 (1994) s.v. *Pygmaioi*, 595, nos. 1-16 (V. Dasen). Meyboom (supra n. 46) 226, n.17 for a bibliography of the theme of Pygmies fighting cranes. For the theme in literature: Diodorus 2.8.32-33; Strabo 16.4.17.

<sup>50</sup>See supra p. 47.

might act as criteria for Alexandrian origin in other monuments. This approach to provenience is an improvement on earlier ones that relied heavily on stylistic features such as sfumato surfaces, slightly off-balance poses, and torsion, supposed to be indicative of Alexandrian art, to indicate an Alexandrian provenience.

One of Himmelmann's technical criteria for Alexandrian origin is the dull wax-like surface on some bronzes. He argues that because Alexandrian bronzes are rarely polished after the casting process, they usually have a dull wax-like surface retained from the rough surface of the original model. Another criterion is size. The tendency towards bronzes of diminutive scale is attributed to a lack of large quantities of bronze metal in Alexandria. In the case of the terracottas, an analysis of the material itself (i.e. the type of clay) may point to an Alexandrian or other provenience. Alexandrian clay may be brown, reddish or yellowish, and is usually lighter than that of the Fayoum district. But Himmelmann urges caution, stating that many early Alexandrian terracottas were made with imported clay which was finer than the local type.

Employing this methodology, Himmelmann rejects an Alexandrian origin for the bronze figurine from Chalon-sur-Saône (Fig. 9) because of its patina. Rather he cites two other bronzes of Blacks, of which one (Fig. 11) has an Egyptian provenience (Memphis), and the other located in Münster, to be more typically Alexandrian because they display the rough surface he considers characteristic of Alexandrian technique.<sup>51</sup> The statuette

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<sup>51</sup>Himmelmann, Realismus 65-67. Bronze statuette from Memphis: Paris, Musée du Louvre #MNC 1645,

from Memphis represents a nude captive youth standing with his weight on his right leg, with his hands bound behind his back. He is shown with a broad nose, thick lips, and hair arranged in corkscrew locks. The other example is a damaged statuette, in Münster, of a nude youth with similar physical characteristics standing in a pose similar to that of the Chalon-sur-Saône figure.<sup>52</sup> Of Alexandrian provenience is a statuette of a vendor with corkscrew curls seated on the ground, asleep, with a tray of fruit before him and a small monkey on his shoulder.<sup>53</sup> Other bronzes of secure Egyptian provenience that portray the Black are: the youth with corkscrew curls wearing trousers, with his hands bound behind his back;<sup>54</sup> the nude dancing youth from Ermünt;<sup>55</sup> a boy with corkscrew locks in a short tunic crouching on all fours, from Egypt,<sup>56</sup> and a statuette in Leipzig of a nude standing woman with corkscrew locks.<sup>57</sup>

According to Himmelmann, “Die Negerdarstellung ist eines der umfangreichsten Themen der hellenistischen Kleinkunst, und Alexandria hat dazu offenbar den größten

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see Himmelmann, Realismus 65. Bronze statuette in Münster, Archäologisches Museum der Universität i.W.574, see Himmelmann, Realismus 65, pl.43a.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. a similar statuette, but of basalt, from Alexandria, now in the Athens National Museum, #22. Himmelmann, Realismus 65; Snowden, Image 199, figs. 256-58.

<sup>53</sup>Athens, Dimitriou Collection; Beardsley, Negro 93, no. 203.

<sup>54</sup>Supra n. 43.

<sup>55</sup>Supra n. 41.

<sup>56</sup>In the Collection Fouquet, Paris: Beardsley, Negro 95, no. 209.

<sup>57</sup>Leipzig, Theodor Graf Collection, see Beardsley, Negro 96, no. 210.

Beitrag geleistet.”<sup>58</sup> Although this statement sums up the general view of scholars regarding Alexandria's role in the dissemination of the image of the Black during the Hellenistic period, it is not supported by the material evidence. The evidence consists probably of only one bronze and one basalt statuette with a secure Alexandrian provenience that are reasonably dated to the Hellenistic period and have the Black as subject.<sup>59</sup> And although Himmelmann's criteria enable other objects of Egyptian provenience to be attributed to Alexandrian workshops, the problem still remains that the other objects do not actually have an Alexandrian provenience. Of the objects on which the Black is portrayed, a greater number of bronzes than terracottas do come from Egypt. In terms of absolute numbers, Asia Minor and Italy lay claim to the greatest numbers of objects depicting the Black.<sup>60</sup> But as the evidence from Asia Minor consists mainly of terracotta head fragments, it is to Egypt and Italy we must turn for a sense of the range of themes and media in which the Black appears: standing nude youths and dancers in bronze, youths crouched beside vessels in terracotta, head vases in bronze and terracotta, and Aethiopian hunters in mosaic.

The evidence suggests that realism was a trend embraced by artists all over the

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<sup>58</sup>Himmelmann, Realismus 64.

<sup>59</sup>The bronze statuette of a vendor (*supra* n. 53); and basalt statuette of a standing nude youth (*supra* n. 52).

<sup>60</sup>Terracottas from Smyrna, see H. Besques, Catalogue raisonné des figurines et reliefs en terre-cuite grecs, étrusques, et romains III. Époques hellénistique et romaine, Grèce et Asie Mineur (Paris 1972) 218-221, pls. 299-230. For examples from Italy see Beardsley, Negro nos. 168-169, 172-173, 184-185, 190-191, 197, 199, 212.



Mediterranean world in the Hellenistic period. “Realistic” images of the Black were incorporated into the artistic repertoires of the Mediterranean. These types of images of the Black do not appear to have been characteristic of Alexandria in particular, but rather of Egypt in general.

A crucial role played by Egypt in the development of the iconography of the Black during this period was the dissemination, or at the very least, inspiration of a new physical characteristic in representations of the Black. This new characteristic was the hairstyle of corkscrew locks, also referred to in modern literature as Libyan or Nubian locks. It consists of tiers of short corkscrew curls radiating from the crown of the head and falling on the forehead above the ears and the nape of the neck. At the crown there is usually an unadorned roundel around which the first tier of locks is arranged. Some present day African peoples who wear their hair in a similar style achieve the effect by taking small sections of hair and twisting them into corkscrew curls by means of a fixative such as pomade.<sup>61</sup> Variations on the curls may make them rounder, flatter, looser, or longer.

The frequent appearance of the hairstyle in Hellenistic portrayals of the Black prompted Picard's observation that,

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<sup>61</sup>Hausmann (supra n. 29) 261, n. 24; Steiger (supra n. 38) 194, n. 77 citing R. Gardi on this African practice, and pp. 192-195 for general discussion of hairstyle.

“L'enveloppement habile des mèches qui viennent former une sorte de `calotte' godronné sur le front et aux tempes, témoigne d'un goût soigneux; on pourrait dire qu'on le reconnaît comme une marque de fabrication, un signe distinctif, un label, du style hellénistique, dans l'expression du type negroïde.”<sup>62</sup>

The hairstyle of corkscrew locks is expressed particularly well on a head in grey marble (ca. 2nd c. B.C.) probably from southern Asia Minor, presently in the Brooklyn Museum (Fig. 14).<sup>63</sup> On this head of a young man, about four rows of short tightly twisted curls, starting at the crown, lie flat and fall forwards towards the forehead and around the crown. Five more tiers of slightly longer twisted locks cascade down about the face and lie heavy on the nape. The locks on the crown and those framing the face are well executed in deep drillwork, which shows the tight corkscrew shape of the curls, while the back is more summarily treated in the manner of many Hellenistic sculptures.

This characteristic hairstyle seems to have been derived from the Egyptian hairstyle of tiers of stiff braids or locks that appears on many figures, including representations of Kushites and other peoples who are portrayed with somatic characteristics of the Black, in Pharaonic Egyptian art. It appears, for example, on a limestone figurine of a kneeling male figure with a broad flat nose and full lips, with his

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<sup>62</sup>Ch. Picard, "Notes sur quelques statuettes en bronze de provenance `Alexandrine' au musée de Strasbourg (Château des Rohan)," *RAEst* (1961) 149.

<sup>63</sup>Brooklyn Museum #70.59; R. Kiang, "The Brooklyn Museum's new head of a Black," *Archeology* 25 (1972) 4-7; B. Von Bothmer, "A young Nubian immortalized," *The Connoisseur* 176 (1971) 131 notes that the provenience of the fragment is reported to be Southern Asia Minor.

hands bound behind his back, from Saqqara (Late VI dynasty c.2400-2200 B.C.);<sup>64</sup> on paintings of black and/or brown-coloured Kushite tribute bearers in the tomb of Huy in Thebes (XVIII Dynasty c. 1342-1333 B.C.),<sup>65</sup> and on the black captives in a relief of black and Asiatic captives on a footstool from the tomb of Tutankhamun at Thebes (XVIII Dynasty c. 1342-1333 B.C.) (Fig. 15).<sup>66</sup> On the figures of the Egyptian period, the hair is stylized, as it is also in some Hellenistic depictions.

Despite the great popularity of the hairstyle of corkscrew locks during the Hellenistic period, however, the close cap of small tight curls that had been prevalent in representations of the Black in the Classical period does not entirely disappear. It survives in the form of small impressionistic swirls and lumps on terracottas. This is evident on a terracotta head lamp from Egypt,<sup>67</sup> a flask in the form of a seated figure in Amsterdam,<sup>68</sup> and several figured vases of the youth-seated-beside-amphora type.<sup>69</sup> The different treatment of the hair in representations in terracotta was probably a response to the small scale of the figures (under 10cm high) and to the terracotta medium itself. For unlike hard stone and bronze which were conducive to the execution of the form of the corkscrew

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<sup>64</sup>Cairo, Egyptian Museum #JE 51729; Vercoutter, Image 36 fig. 3.

<sup>65</sup>In situ, Hall, north wall; Vercoutter, Image 58 fig. 24.

<sup>66</sup>Cairo, Egyptian Museum #JE 62045; Vercoutter, Image 70 fig. 37.

<sup>67</sup>Tübingen, #S.2944; Hausmann (supra n. 29) 273, fig. 80.2.

<sup>68</sup>Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum; Hausmann (supra n. 29) 274 fig. 80.3-4.

<sup>69</sup>See refs. supra n(s). 30-31, 34.

curl, terracotta was not. An exception to this is probably a terracotta head vase from Tarentum on which the corkscrew curls are rendered very well.<sup>70</sup> The vase appears to be of a better quality than the cheaper generic types.

### Concluding remarks

The number of objects depicting the Black that are found in Egypt, and the prevalence of the hairstyle of corkscrew locks in the representations, within as well as outside Egypt, suggests that Egypt more generally, rather than Alexandria, played an important role in the development and dissemination of the image of the Black during the Hellenistic period. It is also in Egypt that one finds for the first time many full-figure studies of the Black in the round. These developments should be understood in the context of the Hellenistic “realism” vogue in which artists no longer needed the mythological framework as a justification for representing the Black outside the anthropomorphic head vase tradition, and were thus able to take their interest in representing physical difference further.

### III. Roman Art

#### Geographical scope and media distribution

The image of the Black appears in the art of the Roman period over a wide

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<sup>70</sup>Unpublished vase in Baltimore, D. M. Robinson Collection: Beardsley, Negro 88, no.189.

geographical area which included Italy, Egypt, and Asia Minor (areas which collectively have furnished large numbers of representations of the Black in previous periods), as well as North Africa and north-west Europe. The largest number of representations of the Black comes from Italy, in a wide range of media, notably in mosaics, sculptures, paintings and sarcophagi. From North Africa comes a comparatively large number of lamps, some polychrome mosaics, and sculptures. In Egypt the corpus consists mainly of terracottas and bronzes. In the European provinces the subject is found in a large number of bronze balsamaria, while the eastern provinces have the smallest corpus, mostly mosaics.

Images of the Black appear on utilitarian objects such as lamps, vases, balsamaria, cups, bowls, furniture fixtures, and weights, as well as in more decorative media like mosaics, paintings, small-scale sculptures, and reliefs. The utilitarian objects, of which large numbers are extant, are vitally important to an appreciation of the pervasiveness of the theme of the Black in Roman art. For an appreciation of the range and variations of the theme, however, one must turn rather to mosaics, paintings, and sculptural reliefs, as these often contain images of the Black in identifiable contexts.

### Hellenistic-Roman themes

The continuity between the Hellenistic and Roman periods is evident when one considers the preponderance of “realistic” themes recurring in Roman contexts. Standing

nude youths, crouching, sitting, and squatting figures with diagnostic features of the Black recall the themes of the Hellenistic period, and, like the bronzes, are not always securely dated. Consequently, those types of representations are better identified as Hellenistic-Roman.

Some examples of representations of the Black in a range of themes previously encountered but occurring within a Roman context are: a bronze figurine of a standing nude youth found at Reims;<sup>71</sup> a grey marble statuette from Aphrodisias, now in the Gaudin collection in Versailles, of a youth dressed in an exomis carrying a situla (Fig. 16);<sup>72</sup> two bronze statuettes, now in Berlin, of a pair of seated youths with their hands bound behind their backs;<sup>73</sup> and a bronze inkwell of unknown provenience in Paris in the form of a crouching male carrying a goatskin over his shoulders.<sup>74</sup> More accurately dated examples are a silver pepperpot from the Chaourse silver hoard in the form of a seated old bearded man with corkscrew locks wearing a hooded cloak and carrying a lantern (2nd c. A.C.),<sup>75</sup> and a bronze figurine of a boyish lamp-bearer with corkscrew locks found

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<sup>71</sup>St. Germain-en-Laye, Musée des antiquités nationales, #818; Snowden, *Image* 224, figs. 295-296.

<sup>72</sup>A. Adriani, *Studi Miscellanei* 22 (1974-75) 18.6; Erim (supra n. 44) 238-239, pl. 70, figs. 19, 20; Snowden, *Blacks* 251, fig. 117.

<sup>73</sup>Berlin, Staatliche Museen, #Br10485 and #Br10486; Snowden, *Image* 213, figs. 276-277.

<sup>74</sup>Paris, Bibliothèque National, Cabinet des Médailles: Babelon et Blanchet, *Cat. des bronzes* no. 1013; Snowden, *Image* 232, fig. 309.

<sup>75</sup>London, British Museum, #1889.10-19.16; Snowden, *Image* 235, fig. 325.

near Tarragona (1st c. A.C.).<sup>76</sup>

### Roman Art

The anthropomorphic head vase continues to be a popular context in which the Black is represented. Two examples of drinking cups in the form of heads with short corkscrew curls, from Pompeii and London, are unusual only because of the glass medium in which they are represented, for glass has not been a medium that has yielded any representations until the Roman period.<sup>77</sup> The beaker from Pompeii is dated to the 1st c. A.C. Given the similarities between the two cups, the London example is also probably datable to the same period. Other unusual examples of the anthropomorphic head vase are two bronze bowls of the 1st or 2nd c. A.C. from Bayford (Kent), and Avenches (France), on which heads of the Black are carved in high relief on the surface.<sup>78</sup>

The so-called Negro-head balsamaria, small bronze aryballoi and lekythoi in the form of heads and busts with diagnostic features of the Black were also popular in the Roman period. Most of these vessels date to the 2nd c. A.C. There has been considerable

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<sup>76</sup>Tarragona, Museo Arqueologico Provincial, #527; Snowden, Image 224, fig. 290.

<sup>77</sup>Cup from Pompeii: Naples, Museo Archeologico #129404; Snowden, Image 221, Fig. 287. Cup from London: London, British Museum #P19737-2.386; J. Price, "A Roman mould-blown negro-head glass beaker from London," AntJ 54 (1974) 291-292. And also another glass drinking cup dated to A.D.140, from Caerleon, which is very similar to the one in London: Price (ibid) 292.

<sup>78</sup>Bronze bowl from Kent: J. W. Brailsford ed., Guide to antiquities of Britain (London 1964) 13, Figs. 5-11. Bowl from Avenches: Geneva, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, C 237; Snowden, Image 232, Fig. 315.

scholarly debate about the supposed Alexandrian influences on the balsamaria, influences that mainly involve the representation of the Black.<sup>79</sup> Certainly the hairstyle of corkscrew locks which appears on many of the balsamaria is an Egyptian inspired element; and the preference for using the bronze medium recalls the numerous small bronzes from Egypt. But these factors are insufficient evidence for an argument for Alexandrian influences, and the image of the Black is not an exclusively Alexandrian motif.

Perhaps the most serious problem in the argument for Alexandrian influences is the fact that only one balsamarium has an Egyptian provenience.<sup>80</sup> The rest are mainly from the lower Danube and the Rhine region,<sup>81</sup> and two from North Africa.<sup>82</sup> One explanation offered for the absence from Egypt of balsamaria with the image of the Black is that the balsamaria were produced in Alexandria and Egypt for export.<sup>83</sup> Boucher, however, argues that the balsamaria were not manufactured in Egypt, but rather in Europe.<sup>84</sup> She considers them to be a creative response to the appearance in the Danube

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<sup>79</sup>S. Boucher, "Problèmes de l'influence Alexandrine sur les bronzes d'époque romaine," *Latomus* 32 (1973) 799-811; M. Malaise, "A propos d'un buste-balsamaire en bronze du musée de Tongres. Sur les traces d'influences alexandrines à Atuatuca," *Latomus* 29 (1970) 142-156; Ch. Picard (supra n. 62) 147-152; L. Pressouyre, "A propos d'un balsamaire trouvé à Lamaurelle (Lot et Garonne)," *RA* (1962) 165-181.

<sup>80</sup>The balsamarium from Sammanud in the Rhode Island School of Design (supra n. 37).

<sup>81</sup>For the proveniences, see Malaise (supra n. 79) 144-145.

<sup>82</sup>See M. Euzennat, "Volubilis," *BAMaroc* 2 (1957) 187-188, pl. VII, 1-2; E. Thouvenot, *Publications du Service des Antiquités du Maroc* 9 (1951) 125.

<sup>83</sup>Arguing for Egyptian manufacture: Malaise (supra n. 79) 155.

<sup>84</sup>Boucher (supra n. 79) 805.



regions, on account of Trajan's wars, of contingents of foreigners “dont la figuration, sur la colonne de Trajan rapelle étrangement certains des prétendus nubiens avec leurs chevelure en boucles étagées, l'ossature marquée du bas visage, les yeux en amande.”<sup>85</sup> She attributes the stylisation evident in many of the balsamaria, and the fact that in many cases only the hairstyle is indicative of the exotic subject, to a disintegration of the schema set up for the iconography of the Black.<sup>86</sup> According to this view Alexandrian artists did not have to be the producers of this genre.

Unlike a balsamarium from Lamaurelle (France) in the form of a bust of a bearded male with corkscrew locks and somatic characteristics of the Black,<sup>87</sup> other balsamaria show no distinct characteristics of the Black other than corkscrew locks. Rather than attempting to argue for Alexandrian influences, the balsamaria with representations showing corkscrew locks should be understood as belonging to a vogue of objects depicting some Egyptian-inspired elements.

### The innovations of the Roman artists

The preceding evidence reveals that the artists of the Roman period were reproducing the Hellenistic and some of the earlier Greek themes that they had inherited.

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<sup>85</sup>Boucher (supra n. 79) 802.

<sup>86</sup>Boucher (supra n. 79) 802.

<sup>87</sup>Pressouyre (supra n. 79) 176.

But the innovation of the Roman artists regarding the iconography of the Black was to situate representations of the Black in identifiable contexts drawn from the Roman social milieu. Thus one finds images of the Black in 4<sup>th</sup> style frescoes from Herculaneum with scenes of Isiac worship (Figs. 17, 18), which appear to be inspired by religious celebrations occurring in a Roman social context.<sup>88</sup> In one scene (Fig. 17) three priests stand at the top of a short flight of stairs at the entrance to a temple.<sup>89</sup> The priest on the right is portrayed as a dark-skinned man with a shaven head. He wears an ankle-length, white garment girt up under the arms and he shakes a sistrum. The other priests are lighter coloured, and are dressed differently. Another priestly figure identical in appearance to the dark-skinned one at the top of the stairs stands at the bottom of the staircase holding aloft a sacred wand. In front of him a similar dark-skinned figure attends to a sacrificial fire. Another similar figure stands in the congregation holding up his hand in a gesture of acclamation. Egyptianizing elements in the scene include palm trees, a pair of recumbent sphinxes flanking the entrance to the temple, and ibises roaming the courtyard. In the other fresco (Fig. 18) a dark-skinned man dressed in a cuirass-like garment and a garland of greenery is shown dancing in the entrance to a

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<sup>88</sup>Frescoes dated to the 1st c. A.C.. Naples, Mus. Arch. Naz. #8924 and #8919; Snowden, "Ethiopians and the Isiac worship" *AntCl* 25 (1956) 112-116; Snowden, *Blacks*, 189-192, figs.288-289; Snowden *Image*, fig. 288; Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte des divinités orientales à Herculaneum* (Leiden 1971); R.E. Witt, *Isis in the Greco-Roman World*, (London 1971).

<sup>89</sup>Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale #8924.

temple.<sup>90</sup> On the right a dark-skinned figure with shaven head and priestly white garment shakes a sistrum in accompaniment. A group of celebrants watch and clap around a sacred fire in the courtyard. Two other dark-skinned priests play a wind instrument and a sistrum. Another kneels, lifting his arms in a gesture of supplication. Palm trees and ibises are Egyptianizing elements in this scene too.

Literary evidence also provides insights into a cultural phenomenon of increased familiarity with black African/Aethiopian types and other dark-skinned southern barbarians due to Rome's military imperial expansions. Terracotta statuettes of the 2nd or 3rd c. A.C. from Egypt show male figures with curly hair, broad noses, and full lips characteristic of the Black wielding shields and axes. Images such as these may have been inspired by barbarians who frequently rebelled against Roman domination, or by Rome's military auxiliaries who were recruited from among dark-skinned barbarian peoples.<sup>91</sup> This is not meant to imply that the artists of the Roman period were copying true life models, for in this period too the image of the Black is subject to artistic traditions, and fantasy themes flourish. As a number of the new artistic themes will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters, only a few will be mentioned briefly in this section to

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<sup>90</sup> Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, # 8919.

<sup>91</sup>Men wielding arms: Terracotta figurines from Egypt, Allard Pierson Museum #7316, Snowden, *Image*, 213, fig. 279; Houston, Menil Foundation Collection #72-628J(4), Snowden, *Image*, 213, fig.278. From Pompeii, man riding war elephant: Naples, Mus. Naz. #124845, Snowden, *Blacks*, 131, fig.82; and see discussion infra my Chapter 5 and Appendix II. Regarding black soldiers in the Roman army, might be cited the rather grim reference (*SHA Sev.* 22.4-5) concerning Septimius Severus' encounter with a black soldier at Luguvallum, which was considered a portent of the emperor's death.

introduce the range of themes and to examine some of the problems encountered by the artists.

### Themes and Problems

North Africa and Egypt were two regions in the Roman empire through which Rome would have had direct contact with black peoples. The artistic evidence from those two regions, as well as from Rome itself, seems to show, however, that the imperial expansion did not remove the challenges faced by artists in the representation of the Black. The physical characteristics of the inhabitants of North Africa seem to have created problems in the representation of the Black at Rome and in North Africa itself. The ways in which artists at Rome and in North Africa dealt with the unique North African problem is vital to an appreciation of the iconography of the Black in art of the Roman period. Egypt continued to inspire artistic themes in which the Black appeared, and does not seem to have presented the same types of problems for the artists that North Africa did. Rather, unlike in the Hellenistic period, when small scale sculpture was the dominant medium for the representation of the Black in Egyptian-inspired themes, in the Roman period mosaics, sculptural reliefs, and paintings are also exploited. The iconography of the Black in two especially important groups of Egyptianizing scenes will be discussed with selective examples from the various media after discussion of the North African iconography.

### The North African problem

It has been argued in previous scholarship that because of their separation from each other by the Sahara, Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa had very few, if any, contacts with each other, and that there were no indigenous Black peoples in North Africa. North Africa has not therefore been considered to be a disseminator of the image of the Black in antiquity, and iconographical discussion has focussed mainly on Egypt's role. Desanges' approach to the North African question is to argue for an indigenous Black population in North Africa and to examine the North African repertoire for any evidence that those peoples might be represented there.<sup>92</sup> Desanges, whose studies on ancient North African ethnic groups are central to the debate about North African Blacks, argues that black peoples did not migrate to North Africa from sub-Saharan Africa, that rather, there were "original agglomerations" of indigenous Blacks (Black African types) in parts of the areas that became the province of Africa during the Roman imperial period, particularly the southern edges of Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria.<sup>93</sup> He postulates that the indigenous black populations who inhabited these areas may have been pushed further back into the southern areas by waves of foreign migration and conflict, and may also

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<sup>92</sup>Desanges, Image 246-268.

<sup>93</sup>J. Desanges, Catalogue des tribus africaines de l'antiquité classique à l'ouest du Nil (Dakar 1962); Desanges, Image 248.

have been altered by mingling with the Libyco-Berber populations and producing Black and mixed Black/Libyco-Berber descendants. He makes this case by citing the evidence of pre-Saharan negroid skulls in Northern Africa and discounting theories that suggest a displacement of sub-Saharan Blacks through a traffic of gold and slaves from West Africa to North Africa during the Roman period.<sup>94</sup>

My approach to the iconography is to argue that because North Africa inspires as well as introduces a range of somatic variations into its artistic repertoire and that of Rome, it should be considered to be a major disseminator of the image of the Black under the empire. It is possible to distinguish between: (a) representations outside North Africa of figures meant to be identifiable as a type of North African; (b) representations within North Africa that are portrayed differently from the “somatic norm” for specific contexts; and (c) representations that appear to be attempts to create a composite type (types) to convey the notion of Africa.

(a). Among the representations of soldiers depicted on Trajan's column in Rome (dedicated in 113 A.D.) that commemorates his triumphant Dacian campaigns, is a non-Roman cavalry unit of men with corkscrew locks riding bareback on small horses (Fig. 19).<sup>95</sup> The facial features of the horsemen are difficult to discern from published photographs, but Boucher has noted they are depicted with almond-shaped eyes, and

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<sup>94</sup>Desanges, *Image* 246-258.

<sup>95</sup>S. Settis et al., *La Colonna Traiana* (Rome 1988) 134, 356, pl. 98, LXIV.

prominent bone structure.<sup>96</sup> The presence of the distinctive hairstyle of corkscrew locks, and the context of the history recorded on the monument, suggest that the artists intended the observer to identify these figures as representations of *Mauri* (Moors). The *Mauri*, one of the ethnic groups that inhabited North Africa, had been renowned for their fighting abilities from the early empire, and as early as 68 A.D. the governor of Mauretania Caesariensis had a band of *Mauri* among his troops.<sup>97</sup> It is clear that *Mauri* served in Trajan's Dacian wars, for after the execution in A.D. 118 of Lusius Quietus, a Moorish prince who had served in those wars, the *Mauri* were sent home.<sup>98</sup> A debate over the somatic appearance of Lusius Quietus, concerning whether he was black or not, has resolved little.<sup>99</sup> It has shown, however, that approaching the North African question from a purely racial anthropological standpoint is extremely problematic.

It is not clear whether by portraying the horsemen with corkscrew locks the artists were merely evoking the "non-Romanness" of the *Mauri*, or whether they were working from picture book portraits of actual Moorish types that may have shown the distinctive

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<sup>96</sup>Boucher (supra n.79) 802.

<sup>97</sup>Tacitus, *Histories* 2.58; P. Southern, "The Numeri of the Roman imperial army," *Britannia* 20 (1989) 92, 93-94. For references to the name *Mauri* in military contexts, see also R. Cagnat, *L'armée romaine de l'Afrique* (Paris 1912; repr. New York 1975) 268-269; M. Speidel, *Roman army studies* (Amsterdam 1984).

<sup>98</sup>SHA, Hadrian, 5.8; Southern (supra n. 97) 93.

<sup>99</sup>Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* 51, n. 167; Desanges, *Image* 312, n. 148; Snowden, *Blacks* 143; L. Petersen, "Der mauretische Reitergeneral Lusius Quietus," *Altertum* 14 (1968) 211-217; A. G. Roos, "Lusius Quietus again," *Mnemosyne* 3 (1950) 158-165, 336-338; V. Den Boer, "Lusius Quietus, an Ethiopian," *Mnemosyne* 3 (1950) 263-267, 339-343; *idem*. "The native Country of Lusius Quietus," *Mnemosyne* 1 (1948) 327-337.

hairstyle or from familiarity with the cavalry unit itself. The close attention to details such as the attributes of round shields, smallish horses, and the custom of bare-back riding suggests at least a familiarity with the reported norms of the *Mauri*. It is clear, however, that in the perceptions of the artists who created the images on Trajan's column, it was appropriate to depict the Moor as different from the "somatic norm".

(b). Two examples from North Africa of representations different from the "somatic norm" are a pair of herms from the Antonine Baths at Carthage.<sup>100</sup> The herms, dated to c. 150 A.C., are sculpted in black limestone. One herm has somatic characteristics of the Black: hair arranged in corkscrew locks, a broad nose, and full lips (Fig. 20).<sup>101</sup> The other has been identified as a representation of a Libyan or a Berber on account of the thinner nose and lips and the central plait ("choucha") down the middle of the otherwise shaven head.<sup>102</sup> It was a Libyan belief that supernatural power rested in the hair, which therefore had to be preserved in the form of a plait crowning the shaven head. On the Carthage herm the distinctive plait is adorned with the crescent shaped amulet ("Baraka"), sign of the North African goddess Tanit Caelestis. According to Picard, the

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<sup>100</sup> A. Ben Abed Ben Khader, D. Soren, *Carthage: A Mosaic of Ancient Tunisia* (New York 1987) 138, 181; G. Ch. Picard, "Tunisia: Archeological news, Classical Lands," *AJA* 52 (1948) 498 pl. XLVI; G. Ch. Picard, *Carthage* (London 1964) 27, pl. 2; Snowden, *Blacks* fig. 85.

<sup>101</sup> Bardo Museum , #3018: Ben Abed Ben Khader (supra n. 100) 181, no. 46; Desanges, *Image* 265, figs. 358-359. For other examples of herms in marble outside North Africa, see Schneider, *Bunte Barbaren* 157, nos. 11-14.

<sup>102</sup> Picard, *Carthage* (supra n. 100) 27.



herms of the Antonine Baths represent prisoners captured by the Romans during campaigns in the north of the Oran Sahara, but he also considers the Black herm as being representative of Aethiopian ethnic groups that lived and mingled with Libyans throughout the Sahara.<sup>103</sup>

The herms from Carthage are evidence at least that in the mid 2nd c. A.C. there existed a North African iconographical repertoire that distinguished between different types of African Blacks.

Another example of a figure depicted with characteristics of the Black is a black marble statuette of the 2nd c. A.C. from Sousse (Algeria), which shows a nude boy holding a dove against his chest (Fig. 21).<sup>104</sup> Both legs of the statue are missing from mid-thigh, but it is clear that he stands with his weight resting on the right leg. He holds the bird in his left hand. In this figure the artist has chosen to portray the full range of somatic traits associated with the Black: black skin colour, a broad flat nose, thick lips, and short curly hair worn in a cap-like style.

Desanges rightly rejects Foucher's argument that the inspiration for the subject was Blacks who had fought in the ranks of the Saharan rebels, but rather considers the sculpture as an "Alexandrian affectation", its theme having nothing to do with Roman

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<sup>103</sup>Picard (supra n. 102) 27.

<sup>104</sup>Sousse, Musée Archéologique: L. Foucher, *Hadrumetum* (Paris 1964) 170, pl. XII d; N. de Chaisemartin, *Sculptures de Sousse et des sites environnants* (Paris 1987) 47, no. 42.

campaigns in the Sahara.<sup>105</sup> Desanges' use of the phrase "Alexandrian affectation" is problematic in light of the problems discussed above concerning the term Alexandrian. The rest of his argument, however, is convincing since the subject is one that appears in contexts outside North Africa. The Sousse statuette finds a parallel in a Hellenistic bronze figurine also showing nude black youth holding a bird in his right hand, and standing in the same pose.<sup>106</sup> The main difference appears to be in the hair as the bronze figurine is depicted with wavy, rather than curly hair. The Sousse statuette seems to have been inspired by two genres: the child holding a bird, found so often in funerary art; and standing nude Black youth types popularised in the Hellenistic period. Examples of the first genre are a statuette of a child holding a bird, displayed in the Vatican museum, and two comparable statuettes in the Hermitage.<sup>107</sup> The evidence of the Sousse statuette suggests that artists in North Africa did not discard earlier iconographical traditions in representing the Black.

( c ). To the variety of figural types portrayed with determinative characteristics of the Black, we must add personifications of Africa. The personification of Africa can be identified by her primary attribute, the elephant-scalp headdress.<sup>108</sup> This iconography,

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<sup>105</sup>Desanges, *Image*, 265 n. 144

<sup>106</sup>Beardsley, *Negro* 93, n. 206; Reinach, *Rep. Stat.* IV 353, fig. 5. No provenience given.

<sup>107</sup>Child with bird: G. Lippold, *Vatican Museum III* 2 (1936) Candelabri VI; O. Waldhauer, *Die Antiken Skulpturen der Ermitage* (Berlin, Leipzig 1928-1936) 66 no. 268, Fig. 75, and p. 68 no. 198, fig. 78.

<sup>108</sup>*LIMC* I (1990) s.v. Africa, 250-255 (M. Leglay).

however, overlaps with that of the personification of Alexandria, who also wears the elephant-scalp headdress.<sup>109</sup> The elephant-scalp headdress was originally devised by Alexander, subsequently adopted by Ptolemy I, and then became an attribute of Alexandria. It was adopted in the late Hellenistic period by other African kings and eventually became the attribute of the province of Africa.<sup>110</sup> Secondary attributes of Africa are an elephant tusk, a cornucopia, a lion at her feet, and stalks of grain in her hand. The elephant tusk attribute is sometimes replaced by the cornucopia, symbolic of Africa's role as the bread basket of Rome. The lion is derived from her manifestation as the Goddess Africa whose iconography is based on that of Tanit Caelestis.<sup>111</sup>

Corkscrew locks appear on several examples of the personification of Africa found in North Africa: on a bronze bust of the 2nd-3rd c. A.C. from Berrouaghia in Algeria (Fig. 22),<sup>112</sup> on a bronze bust of the 2nd-3rd c. A.C. from Announa (Thibilis),<sup>113</sup> and on a bronze bust of unspecified provenience within North Africa.<sup>114</sup> All of these representations are in the bronze medium that does not allow for colouring of the flesh areas; therefore, the hairstyle is the defining somatic feature that signifies difference from

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<sup>109</sup>See Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 316, n.148; *LIMC* I (1990) 488-494, s.v. Alexandria (M.-O. Jentel).

<sup>110</sup>Leglay (supra n. 108) 255.

<sup>111</sup>Leglay (supra n. 108) 255.

<sup>112</sup>Leglay (supra n. 108) 252, no. 22.

<sup>113</sup>Leglay (supra n. 108) 252, no. 23.

<sup>114</sup>Leglay (supra n. 108) 252, no. 26.

the “somatic norm”. Other somatic features like nose and lips conform more to the “somatic norm” than to the Black.<sup>115</sup>

Two polychrome mosaics (c. 150-200 A.C.) discovered recently in a house at El Djem (Tunisia) contain representations of personifications of Africa which, although they occur within the same decorative program, present different somatic characteristics.<sup>116</sup> One mosaic contains a bust of Africa at the centre of a square panel, and a bust of each season within a medallion at each corner of the pavement.<sup>117</sup> Africa is portrayed as a swarthy-skinned, mature-looking woman with a broad nose and corkscrew curls crowned with the elephant-scalp head-dress (Fig. 23). The busts of the four seasons are portrayed with a much lighter skin colour and hair of the “somatic norm” type, but it is probably significant that they all have broad noses like the goddess Africa. The other mosaic consists of six hexagons enclosing a central hexagon containing a seated personification of Rome.<sup>118</sup> Rome wears a crested helmet, a cloak fastened over one shoulder, and carries the celestial globe in one hand, and a spear in the other. A large round shield decorated with a gorgoneion rests on the ground beside her. The surrounding hexagons contain

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<sup>115</sup>But see Snowden, *Blacks* 91, Fig. 67, that a marble statuette of the 1st c. A. C. or a little earlier from Lower Egypt, which shows a personification of Africa, has clearly negroid features. But note that since the hair is long and loosely flowing according to the “somatic norm”, it is unlikely that the artist was intending to stress any difference from the “somatic norm”.

<sup>116</sup>Blanchard-Lemée et al, *MRA* 18-34, figs. 3, 6, 8.

<sup>117</sup>Blanchard-Lemée et al, *MRA* 20, fig. 3.

<sup>118</sup>Blanchard-Lemée et al, *MRA* 26, figs. 6, 8.

three busts and three standing figures representing the provinces. One of the busts represents Africa. She is depicted wearing the elephant-scalp headdress with tusks, and is dressed in an ochre sleeveless tunic fastened above each shoulder. Her hair is rendered according to the “somatic norm” and flows down from a central part. Her lips are small and full, and her nose slightly broad. Another bust represents the province of Egypt, and is portrayed with a sistrum as her attribute.<sup>119</sup> Her hair, which is bare of any headdress, is arranged in corkscrew locks, which is significant. She also has a broad nose, although her lips are small and her skin-colour resembles that of Rome, Africa and the other provinces. The other figures might represent Asia, Spain, and Sicily, but the iconography of one other figure is difficult to interpret.<sup>120</sup>

Two examples of female personifications with somatic characteristics of the Black, found outside North Africa, are a 4<sup>th</sup> Style wall painting (Fig. 24) from the House of Meleager in Pompeii, and a floor mosaic dated to c. 310-330 A.C. in the villa at Piazza Armerina in Sicily.<sup>121</sup> The wall painting from Pompeii (Fig. 24) shows two female figures with attributes standing on either side of a central seated female figure. The seated personification is quite damaged, but she can be recognised as a mature woman with

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<sup>119</sup>Blanchard-Lemée et al, *MRA* 30, fig. 9.

<sup>120</sup>Blanchard-Lemée et al, *MRA* 32-33.

<sup>121</sup>Personifications from Pompeii, House of Meleager: Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale #8898; Snowden, *Image* 221, figs. 288-289; Leglay (supra n. 108) 254, no. 51. Personification at Piazza Armerina: Carandini et al, *Filosofiana* 230, 103-104, folio 31, pl. 60; Leglay (supra n. 108) 254, no. 54.

brown curly hair wearing a white cloak over a dark coloured himation. A younger woman stands behind her chair, holding a parasol over her. The personage to the right of the seated figure is fair-skinned, has dark curly hair, wears the elephant-scalp head-dress with tusks, and a long tunic fastened over the shoulders. The somatic characteristics of these figures are of the “somatic norm” type. The personification to the left of the seated figure has very brown skin, and black curly hair arranged in thick ringlets reminiscent of corkscrew locks. She wears a floor-length long-sleeved tunic and carries an elephant tusk. She appears to have fuller lips than the other two personifications, but her nose is of the “somatic norm” type. Her very dark skin and curly hair identify her as somewhat different from the “somatic norm”. There is very little agreement on which provinces the figures personify. The elephant scalp head-dress belongs to the iconography of Africa, as well as Alexandria, and consequently the personification with that attribute could be either of the two entities. The three personages are also identified as Europe or Alexandria sitting between Libya (on the left), and Africa (on the right), or Asia (on the left), and Africa (on the right).<sup>122</sup>

The thick black hair arranged in ringlets, the dark skin colour, and the elephant tusk attribute of the personification standing to the seated personification's left can be compared with aspects of the iconography of the seated personification on a mosaic

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<sup>122</sup>Meyboom, *Nile Mosaic* 67, 316-317 n(s). 148-149 summarizes the debates over the identification of the personifications.

pavement in the villa at Piazza Armerina (Fig. 25).<sup>123</sup> The mosaic located in the south apse of the “Great Hunt” corridor of the villa shows the personification seated in a rocky landscape. Among her attributes is an elephant tusk lying near her. She holds a cornucopia in her left arm and vegetation in her right. In the foreground are an elephant and a tiger. In the background a phoenix rises out of a nest of flames. The unusual combination of attributes, of which some can belong to either Africa or India, renders the identification of this personification difficult. The confusion or conflation of different attributes in the iconography of the personification is paralleled in the conflations between Aethiopia and India that occur in the literary tradition.<sup>124</sup>

Although the overlapping iconographies of the provinces leads in some cases to confusions as to their identities, it would appear that to the craftsmen it was appropriate to include some somatic characteristics of the Black in personifications of Africa and other southern provinces.

### Nilotic and Egyptianizing themes

Roman artists found ample opportunity to experiment with the iconography of the Black in Nilotic and Egyptianizing contexts. Associations between Egypt and the Black had already been made centuries earlier in Greek art in the myth of Busiris and Herakles

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<sup>123</sup>Carandini et al, *Filosofiana* 230.

<sup>124</sup>Cf. *supra* Chapter 1.

and the crocodile-and-boy group vases for example. In the Roman period Nilotic themes with Pygmies being attacked by crocodiles and other creatures of the Nile enjoy a great vogue,<sup>125</sup> and occasionally some Pygmies are portrayed with somatic characteristics of the Black.

Real Pygmies are a Negroid people of short stature (average height of 4 ft.) who inhabit the equatorial regions of Africa. To the ancients, however, Pygmies were a fantastic race of tiny people who inhabited the Nile in Egypt and Aethiopia.<sup>126</sup> The term for Pygmy was Πυγμαῖος meaning fist-sized man, the sense of which is paralleled in the iconography of Pygmies represented as diminutive figures. The Pygmies of the artistic repertoires of the Roman period are composite fantasy figures bearing no verisimilitude to actual Pygmy types. They appear as small figures with stunted limbs, disproportionately large heads, and huge genitalia characteristic of the iconography of the dwarf.<sup>127</sup> Occupying Nilotic landscapes of water, flora, fauna, and buildings, Pygmies fish and do battle with, or hunt cranes, crocodiles, hippopotami, and other creatures. The previously mentioned Palestrina mosaic is probably the first example of the Nilotic

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<sup>125</sup>Iconography of Pygmies in ancient art: LIMC 7 (1994) s.v. Pygmaioi, 594-601 (V. Dasen); A. Ballabriga, "Le malheur des nains. Quelques aspects du combat des grues contre les pygmées dans la littérature grecque," REA 83 (1981) 57-75; M. J. McKay, Pygmy Landscapes in Roman Art Diss. Univ. of Toronto 1985; Cèbe, Caricature.

<sup>126</sup>Homer Iliad 3.3-7; Herodotus 3.37; Aristotle Hist. An. 7 (85) 12. 597a; Strabo 2.1.9, 15.1.57, 17.2.1; Pliny N.H. 6.188, 7.26; Philostratus Im. 2.22; Juvenal 6.506, 13.168.

<sup>127</sup>For the iconography of dwarves, see M. Garmaise, Studies in the iconography of dwarfs in Hellenistic and Roman art Ph.D. Diss. McMaster University (1996).



landscape with Pygmies in art in the Roman context, but unlike subsequent examples it provides more naturalistic representations of Pygmies.<sup>128</sup>

In a mural painting from the Casa del Medico (c.70-79 A.C.) in Pompeii, several naked Pygmies of whom a few are very dark brown in colour inhabit a Nilotic landscape (Fig. 26).<sup>129</sup> One group battles a hippopotamus that is swallowing one of their number, another Pygmy lies dead close by. At another end of the composition one Pygmy attempts to frighten a crocodile away by striking two objects together, while another group uses ropes to drag another crocodile out of the river. The Pygmies of this painting, like many others, are small in stature and have heads too large in proportion to their bodies.

The artists of the Roman period seem to have been less concerned with the naturalistic representation of the Pygmy than they were with the idea of a Pygmy. In the artistic imagination when Egypt and the Nile are represented in exotic fantasy terms, the inhabitants too had to be as fabulous as possible. The theme becomes humorous with the introduction of the grotesque fantasy Pygmy. And it is among figures of this type that one finds Pygmies with some somatic characteristics of the black, these characteristics limited to very dark skin colour in the polychromatic representations.

An Egyptianizing scene depicted on an early 2nd c. A.C. marble relief found in a tomb near Ariccia (Italy), along the Via Appia (Fig. 27), contains figures of small stature

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<sup>128</sup>Palestrina mosaic: see supra p. 58.

<sup>129</sup>Pompeii VIII, 5, 24, Casa del Medico: Leclant, Image 278, fig. 377; Dasen (supra n. 125) 598 no. 46.

and others of normal stature that show somatic characteristics of the Black.<sup>130</sup> The scene shows a religious celebration, and is composed in three registers. In the topmost register, which is represented as a portico, a seated female figure, perhaps Isis, is flanked on both sides by two baboons confronting a Bes figure. At the far right of the portico, the Apis bull is mounted on a platform. Beside the bull are two standing figures of deities. A narrow frieze of ibises runs along the lowest register. In the main frieze, a group of five figures claps and gesticulates towards a group of dancers and musicians. Three female and four male figures are preserved in the group of dancers and musicians, and are depicted on a larger scale than the clapping group. A hand holding crossed staves is all that remains of another figure, probably male, in the dancing group. All the male figures are clothed in a knee-length piece of cloth draped around the lower body and knotted at the waist. Two of the male figures in the dancing group are short but not childlike and might therefore have been intended as dwarves. All the extant male figures are prognathous, have short, very curly hair, and snub noses.

The women dressed in flimsy clinging attire and dancing enthusiastically have been identified as Blacks on account of steatopygia.<sup>131</sup> This identification is problematic for several reasons. First of all, representations of women with the full range of physical

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<sup>130</sup>Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano #77255z: Leclant, *Image* 282, 285, figs. 383-384; K. Lembke, "Ein Relief aus Ariccia und seine Geschichte," *RM* 101 (1994) 97-102; R. Paribeni, "Ariccia - Rilievo con scene egizie," *Notizie degli Scavi* (1919) 106-112; Snowden, *Blacks* 189-191.

<sup>131</sup>Snowden, *Blacks* 191.

characteristics associated with the Black plus steatopygia do not seem to occur in Roman art. For apart from female figures with dark skin and curly hair that are intended as representations of Indians in scenes based on the myth of Dionysus' triumphant return from India, and personifications of Africa with corkscrew locks and dark skin, representations of black women are rare.<sup>132</sup> Primary somatic characteristics of facial features that might be consistent with the iconography of the Black cannot be examined in the Ariccia figures because of the positioning of the figures and damage to visible portions of faces. Furthermore the monochrome state of the medium precludes any analysis of skin colour which would have aided identification. In other monochrome media one determining characteristic of the Black that appears even in the absence of any others is hair which may be shown arranged in corkscrew locks, or very curly and worn short (as shown on the accompanying male figures in the Ariccia relief). But whereas representations of females with corkscrew locks occur in relief sculpture, the women depicted on the Ariccia relief have a hairstyle comparable to styles depicted on “somatic norm” female figures.

The scene on the Ariccia relief provides a more realistic context than the Pygmy landscapes for the inclusion of the Black. Medium, as well as context, appears to play a role in the choice of which kinds of distinctive somatic features are shown. For example,

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<sup>132</sup>For representations of women with dark skin and curly hair in scenes based on the myth of Dionysus' triumphant return from India, see *infra* my Chapter 6.

in the frescoes from Herculaneum (Figs. 17, 18) which contain representations of dark skinned officiants with shaven heads participating in an Isiac celebration, as well as in the Pygmy landscape fresco from the Casa del Medico in Pompeii, facial features are rendered in an extremely impressionistic manner that prevents any analysis of faces for distinct diagnostic traits.<sup>133</sup> It appears that a clearly Egyptianizing context and physical characteristics like dark skin colour and shaven heads are considered sufficiently indicative of an intent to portray figures significantly different from the “somatic norm”, and to create an aura of “Egyptianness”.

A 2nd - 3rd century mosaic pavement from the House of the Nile at Lepcis Magna (Tripolitania) shows two male figures with physical characteristics of the Black, in an Egyptianizing scene that is a blend of fantasy and “reality”.<sup>134</sup> In the mosaic the personification of the life-giving Nile, carrying a cornucopia, reclines riding on a hippopotamus. He is attended by ten children or putti representing the cubits of the swollen river. Two nymphs play crotala at the head of the procession of the Nile and the putti. Facing the Nymphs are two dark-skinned musicians in front of a nilometer on which appears the benevolent inscription ΑΓΑΘΗ ΤΥΧΗ. One musician stands playing a tuba. The seated one holds a long wand. They both wear the kilt-like garment knotted at the waist.

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<sup>133</sup>Frescoes of Isiac celebration, Herculaneum, see supra pp. 72-73; Pygmy landscape from the Casa del Medico, Pompeii, see supra p. 87.

<sup>134</sup>Aurigemma, 1960, 48, pls. 83-86; Desanges, *Image* 258, fig. 346.

The dark skin colour of the male musicians is especially noticeable when contrasted with paler skin colour of the female figures, the children and even the god Nile. A degree of prognathism is also apparent in the facial structure of the two dark-skinned musicians. Their heads are shaven just like the heads of some of the dark-skinned celebrants in the scenes of Isiac worship from Herculaneum (Figs. 17, 18). Similarities also exist between them and the dwarf figures of the Ariccia relief in the manner of dress.

The distinctive somatic traits of the two musicians, the Egyptian Nilotic context and similarities with other figures from Egyptianizing contexts suggest that they are intended to be recognisable images of Blacks.

### Concluding remarks

In the Roman period a range of Black types is portrayed through the depiction of figures with varying combinations of somatic characteristics associated with the Black. Thus at one end of the spectrum of types there is the 2nd century A.C. statue from Sousse (Fig. 21) of a boy with the whole range of somatic characteristics associated with the Black: black skin colour, very curly hair, a broad flat nose, and thick lips. At the opposite end of that spectrum is the personification of Africa from El Djem who, other than her broad nose has somatic features consistent with “somatic norm”. At mid-spectrum are the Moorish horsemen on Trajan's column in Rome (Fig. 19), the “Libyan” head herm from Carthage, and the personification of Egypt in the mosaic from El Djem. The

extension of somatic traits associated with the Black to types that are not recognisable as portrayals of “Black Africans/Aethiopians” is characteristic of the Roman period and is well represented in the North African repertoire. Also characteristic of the period is greater contextualisation achieved through the extensive use of media such as painting, mosaic, and relief sculpture, that allow for “narrative” scenes in which the image of the Black in its many forms, can be inserted. Inspiration for many contexts was taken from the Roman social and cultural milieu, although fantasy themes like the Pygmy landscapes and problems such as conflation in the iconographies of Alexandria, Africa, and India, serve as a reminder that artists were still working within traditions. The next chapters (2-5) will discuss the representation of the Black in the popular contexts of the Baths, domestic service, and public spectacle.

### CHAPTER 3

#### REPRESENTATIONS IN BATHS

Bathing in the Roman world was not merely the functional act of washing oneself to maintain good hygiene. It was a social and cultural habit borrowed from the Greeks that became so deeply rooted in the Roman way of life that it persisted as a social institution all over the Roman world. Visiting the baths each afternoon was an important and pleasurable part of a person's daily routine.<sup>1</sup> One testimony of the value attached to the institution is the number of bath establishments, the grand imperial public *thermae*, city and town baths, and even private baths in houses, that were constructed all over the Roman world.<sup>2</sup> The decoration of the baths themselves with sculptures, fine coloured marbles, and mosaic pavements, added to the beauty of the establishments and contributed immensely to patrons' enjoyment of the bath experience. The figural mosaic pavements adorning baths sometimes included swimmers, bath attendants, and other human figures with determinative characteristics of the Black among their human figural motifs.

Because they share a geographical and chronological proximity, a group of black-

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<sup>1</sup>On the virtues of bathing see K. M. D. Dunbabin, "*Baiarum grata voluptas: pleasures and dangers of the baths*," *PBSR* lvii, xlv n.s. (1989) 6-46, esp. 6-32.

<sup>2</sup>See I. Nielsen, *Thermae et Balnea* (Aarhus 1990) and F. Yegül, *Baths and Bathing in classical antiquity* (New York 1992).

and-white mosaics from the private baths of three Pompeian houses (Cat. nos. 1-3, 6, Figs. 28-30, 33) provide a good opportunity for an examination of some problems in the iconography of the Black in the black-and-white style. Mosaics from Este (Italy) and Constantine (Algeria) (Cat. nos. 4-5, Figs. 31-32) provide stylistic parallels for the Pompeian group, and a mosaic from Timgad (Algeria) (Cat. no. 7, Fig. 36) provides the latest secure example of the theme in baths.

## I. The Black-and-White Mosaics

### Swimming human figures

Motifs of swimmers appear on five mosaic pavements in the black-and-white style (black-coloured figures depicted against a white background): from Pompeii (Cat. nos. 1-3, Figs. 28-30), Este (Cat. no. 4, Fig. 31), and Constantine in north-eastern Algeria (Cat. no. 5, Fig. 32).

On the mosaic pavement of the *caldarium* in the Casa del Menandro in Pompeii (I.10.4) an ithyphallic swimmer is depicted among various marine motifs: fish, dolphins, a crab, and a man holding a trident and spear (?) fighting a sea-monster (Cat. no. 1, Fig. 28).<sup>3</sup>

The figures are scattered on a uniform white field around a central medallion containing a vegetal motif. In a swimming pose, the ithyphallic figure strikes out with his right arm, his left arm trailing behind, and his legs scissored and bent at the knee.

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<sup>3</sup>Touches of coloured tesserae appear in some of the motifs: dark orange and grey-green on the leaves of the vegetal motif, green-grey and grey in the dolphins, and dark red in the eel. See Clarke, Black-and-White 59-60.



Two other ithyphallic swimmers, one in a pose almost identical to the swimmer in the Casa del Menandro mosaic, appear on the mosaic in the *sudatio* of the Casa del Criptoportico (I.6.2) (Cat. no. 2, Fig. 29), across the street from the Casa del Menandro.<sup>4</sup> The pair of ithyphallic swimmers flanks a broken amphora. Two dolphins confronting each other occupy the opposite panel. The human and marine life motifs appear on either side of a large medallion with an elaborate rosette enclosed within a square border.

On the pavement in the *caldarium* of the Domus Caesi Blandi (VII.1.40), two pairs of ithyphallic swimmers are depicted at opposite ends of a mosaic with a central medallion featuring a rosette and radiate design (Cat. no. 3, Fig. 30). One pair flank an *askos*, the other, strigils on a holder. Their proximity to the equipment suggests an association with service in the baths.

A similar heraldic arrangement of swimmers can be found on a very damaged pavement from a building at Este in the Veneto (Cat. no. 4, Fig. 31), in which the swimmers flank a central arrangement of a covered crater between heraldically arranged dolphins.<sup>5</sup>

Another pair of swimmers confronting each other also appears on a mosaic from Constantine (Cat. no. 5, Fig. 32). The composition shows a central square panel containing a shield of concentric rows of curvilinear triangles, flanked at one end by the panel with swimmers and at the other by a polychrome panel on which are depicted two ships laden

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<sup>4</sup>The phalli, which are contained within the body contours of the figures, are outlined in red tesserae to make them visible. See Clarke, *Origins* 669.

<sup>5</sup>According to Clarke, the outline of the breasts of the figure on the right, as well as its fuller hips identify that figure as female. See discussion in J. R. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking* (Berkeley 1998) 137-138 .

with trophies. The swimming figures, executed in black tesserae, originally contained limited interior detail of white lines that rubbed off when the mosaic was cleaned, revealing black tesserae beneath.<sup>6</sup>

### Other human motifs

Two other human motifs appear in the Pompeian group. One is the man fighting a sea-monster from the *caldarium* mosaic in the Casa del Menandro (Cat. no. 1, Fig. 28). This figure is shown nude, in three-quarter view with head in profile. He stands with legs apart, left leg bent and resting on a rectangular object, keeping a sea-monster at bay with a spear(?) he holds in his left hand and attempting to pierce the creature with a trident he holds in his right hand.

A macrophallic figure carrying two *askoi* is depicted on a mosaic on the threshold to the *caldarium* (Cat. no. 6, Fig. 33) of the same house. The figure is crowned with a laurel wreath and wears a loin cloth which leaves his large phallus exposed. He is shown striding to the right, leading the viewer's gaze towards the *caldarium*. An arrangement of an *aryballos* between four strigils appears in the foreground of the composition. The attributes of *askoi* and the presence of bathing equipment suggest that this figure represents an *unguentarius* whose duties were to anoint and massage the bath patron with oil and scrape

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<sup>6</sup>A. Berthier, "Une mosaïque solaire trouvée à Constantine," in Mélanges d'archéologie, d'épigraphie, et d'histoire offerts à J. Carcopino (Paris 1966) 116.

him off before his bath.<sup>7</sup>

### Chronology

The group of mosaics from Pompeii can be dated to 40-20 B.C. on the basis of the late second style wall paintings that formed part of the decorative schema of the houses in which the mosaics are found.<sup>8</sup> The Pompeian group can also be placed early in the development of the black-and-white style because the polychrome touches in the mosaics are a style that marks the transition from the polychrome *emblemata* to the black-and-white style.<sup>9</sup>

Scholars have not been in complete agreement about the dates of the mosaics from Este and Constantine, however. The mosaic from Este appears, on stylistic grounds, to belong to the same period as the Pompeii group, although according to Blake, there is no means of judging its date.<sup>10</sup> Clarke, however, dates it to between 10 B.C.-20 A.D. with little elaboration, except for noting that tesserae are used to form stepped patterns in heads just as

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<sup>7</sup>Cf. Martial 7.32.6, that slaves could be hired to oil and scrape off a bather. But wealthy patrons might have their own attendants: Martial 12.70; Petronius, Satyricon 27-29.

<sup>8</sup>I. Bragantini, M. de Vos, F. Parise Badoni, Pavimenti e pitture di Pompei 1, Regioni I, II, III (Rome 1981) 130-31; Clarke, Black-and-White 61; J. Clarke, "Mosaic workshops at Pompeii and Ostia Antica," in P. Johnson, R. Ling, & D. J. Smith eds., Fifth International Colloquium on Ancient Mosaics held at Bath, England, on September 5-12, 1987 (JRA suppl.9.1, Ann Arbor 1994) 91.

<sup>9</sup>Clarke (supra n.8) 91, 96; Clarke, Black-and-White 58-62. Cf. M. de Vos, "Paving techniques at Pompeii," ArchNews 16 (1991) 48-52.

<sup>10</sup>Blake, MAAR 8 (1930) 80.

in the *caldarium* mosaic of the Casa del Menandro.<sup>11</sup> On the date of the mosaic from Constantine, Berthier, who first published the mosaic and proposed a solar interpretation for it, suggests the second or third c. A.C.<sup>12</sup> In his solar interpretation, the swimmers symbolized the dawn, the eagle in the central medallion, the zenith, and a bull diving off the ship, the sunset. Picard notes that although the swimmer motif in the Constantine mosaic has no parallels in North African mosaics, it is similar to the motifs in the Italian mosaics; but he proposes a date c. 50-30 B.C., slightly earlier than that of the Italian mosaics with which he compares the Constantine one.<sup>13</sup> His dating is also dependent on an interpretation of the iconography which sees the ships as an allusion to a victory of Sittius, a supporter of Caesar and leader of a mercenary army, who was awarded Cirta by Caesar in 47 B.C. Picard's dating is not shared by Dunbabin, who argues for a 1st c. A.C. date or one slightly later since the motifs, especially the geometric decor, are paralleled on Italian mosaics of the late 1st and early 2nd centuries.<sup>14</sup> Comparing the geometric shield and other features to those on mosaic examples in Italy, Parlasca also argues for a slightly later date, in the first half of the 2nd c. A.C.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Clarke, *Black-and-White* 62.

<sup>12</sup>Berthier (*supra* n. 6) 113-124. See also Desanges, *Image* 259-260, and pls. 356-357.

<sup>13</sup>G. Ch. Picard, "Une mosaïque pompéienne à Constantine et l'installation des Sittii à Cirta," *RA* (1980) 185.

<sup>14</sup>Dunbabin, *MRNA* 17, n.18, suggests that because of its uniqueness in the North African repertoire, the mosaic may have been a special commission for which craftsmen were imported.

<sup>15</sup>K. Parlasca, "Zu den italischen Beziehungen der frühkaiserzeitlichen Mosaikkunst Nordafrikas," in *Das 150 Jahr-Feier Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom (RM-EH 25, 1982)* 200.

### Determinative and diagnostic factors

The human figures in the group of Italian black-and-white mosaics being discussed are usually described by scholars as Negro, Negroid, or black, without further explanation or elaboration of these terms.<sup>16</sup> While it is clear that scholars are considering a set of somatic characteristics when the terms Negro or Negroid are used, it is not always clear whether the use of the term black simply refers to the colour of the figures in the medium, or to an ethnic identification. It should therefore be asked what somatic characteristics these figures contain that allow them to be described by the terms Negro, Negroid, or black (when an ethnic identification is intended), rather than to be identified as figures rendered according to the “somatic norm” but in black tesserae. The question is important because the limitations of the black-and-white style, in which the human figure is always executed in black tesserae, would have affected the way mosaicists depicted the human figure, as opposed to the polychrome style where different colours are available to the mosaicist to distinguish between “somatic norm” figures and the Black.

Both the ithyphallic swimmer and the man attacking a sea-monster with a trident and spear in the *caldarium* mosaic of the Casa del Menandro (Cat. no. 1, Fig. 28) are portrayed with a jagged hair outline that appears to be an attempt to represent tightly curled hair worn short. This jagged surface is achieved by a “sawtooth configuration of tesserae”

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. usage by Blake, *MAAR* 8 (1930) 80; Clarke, *Origins* 667-670; Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 43-44; Maiuri, *Casa del Menandro* 146.

created by halving tesserae diagonally into triangular shapes.<sup>17</sup> A similar jagged hair outline can also be seen on the pair of swimmers from the *sudatio* in the Casa del Criptoportico (Cat. no. 2, Fig. 29). The effect created by the hair surface in the Casa del Criptoportico figures is not as neat as that of the Casa del Menandro figures, but this may perhaps be due to the incompetence or inexperience of the artist, since the Casa del Criptoportico figures are generally not as accomplished as those in the Casa del Menandro.<sup>18</sup>

The treatment of the hair outline on the swimmers flanking strigils in the Domus Caesi Blandi (Cat. no. 3, Fig. 30) as a crestlike arrangement of widely-spaced, short spikes, is different from any other renderings encountered. Whereas the effect created by the jagged hair outlines of the other figures is comparable to that achieved earlier by scalloping or dots on heads of figures identifiable as representations of Blacks in Greek vase painting, there is no comparison for the spiky effect.<sup>19</sup> Certainly the much smaller size of the figures in the Domus Caesi Blandi, which is half that of the figures in the Casa del Menandro, would have made it much more difficult to execute such fine detail as the special hair outline using uniformly sized tesserae. But it is also possible that the spikes may have represented not hair at all, but rather a very stylized version of the laurel wreath such as worn by the *unguentarius* in the mosaic that paves the threshold to the *caldarium* of the Casa del

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<sup>17</sup>Clarke, Black-and-White 61; ead. (supra n. 5) .

<sup>18</sup>I am comparing the unrestored figures of the Casa del Criptoportico, not the restored ones, as seen in photographs by Pernice (after Clarke, Origins fig. 10), to the Casa del Menandro figures.

<sup>19</sup>See discussion supra Chapter 2.

Menandro (Cat. no. 6, Fig. 33). It is also probably significant that the spiky arrangement is omitted from the heads of the other pair of swimming figures in the same mosaic. Perhaps the mosaicist may have been intending to create, within the limitations of the style, two different somatic types.

The swimming figures on the mosaics from Este (Cat. no. 4, Fig. 31) and Constantine (Cat. no. 5, Fig. 32), like the pair flanking an *askos* on the mosaic in the *caldarium* of the Domus Caesi Blandi (Cat. no. 3, Fig. 30), are not portrayed with distinguishable hair. In these representations the artists have depicted a smooth, unbroken head surface. There is no visible distinguishable hair on the head of the *unguentarius* from the Casa del Menandro either, as instead he is crowned with a laurel wreath.

The swimming figures in the mosaic from Constantine (Cat. no. 5, Fig. 32) are portrayed with snub noses and full lips. These determinative characteristics of the Black do not appear in any of the other figures being discussed. The artists have decided to portray the figures in the mosaic in the *caldarium* of the Casa del Menandro (Cat. no. 1, Fig. 28), and those in the *sudatio* mosaic in the Domus Caesi Blandi (Cat. no. 3, Fig. 30) with long pointed noses, thin lips, and prominent chins. None of these features are determinative characteristics of the Black, nor are they compatible with those of "somatic norm" type figures. A comparison with the profile of the *unguentarius* in the mosaic on the threshold to the *caldarium* of the Casa del Menandro, which is more indicative of the method in which "somatic norm" profiles are rendered, reveals how exaggerated the features of the other

figures in the Casa del Menandro and Domus Caesi Blandi are. The exaggerated profiles are more suggestive of caricature.

Another determinative factor in the iconography of the Black is dark skin colour that is clearly distinguishable from that of Greco-Roman somatic norm figures. The human figures in the group of mosaics under discussion are all coloured black, which would appear to satisfy the diagnostic criterion of colour. However, because the black colour of the figures is intrinsic to the medium of black-and-white mosaic, in which all human figures are coloured black, black colour alone cannot be considered indicative in this case of a clear intention by the artist to represent a Black. The figure of the *unguentarius* from the Casa del Menandro (Cat. no. 6, Fig. 33), for example, which lacks any of the diagnostic features of the iconography of the black other than colour, but has a profile typical of the “somatic norm”, is a case in point. This figure is usually referred to as a representation of a Black, probably only on the basis of the black colour and other non-diagnostic (or external) features like the large phallus that appears also on some of the swimming figures in the group. But this is not enough to infer an intention on the part of the artist to portray a Black. In light of the foregoing, it is reasonable to conclude that the colour of the medium must have influenced the choice made by the mosaicists to add details like the jagged hair outline, or snub nose, and full lips, that gives some figures the appearance of representations of Blacks.

The group of mosaics from Pompeii are among the earliest of the Italian black-and-



white mosaics, and reveal some of the problems involved in translating the human figure from the illusionistic three-dimensional format of earlier Hellenistic polychrome *emblemata* in “*opus vermiculatum*” to the two-dimensional surface of the black-and-white mosaic style.<sup>19</sup> In its early development, the black-and-white style admitted only true silhouettes, i.e. “black tonally undifferentiated forms”,<sup>20</sup> and silhouettes with only minimal polychrome accents. For at that stage, the restrictions of the monochrome style did not admit the illusions of plasticity that internal detail and tonal modelling (through the use of graded coloured tesserae) brought to figures in “*opus vermiculatum*”. Clarke refers to the figures at the beginning of the black-and-white development as the “early silhouette style”.<sup>21</sup>

All the ithyphallic swimmers of the Pompeian group are true silhouettes, except for the swimmers from the Casa del Criptoportico (Cat. no. 2, Fig. 29) whose phalli are contained within the contours of their bodies. Red and orange tesserae are used to outline the phalli to make them visible within the otherwise black silhouette. The *unguentarius* in the mosaic on the threshold to the *caldarium* of the Casa del Menandro (Cat. no. 6, Fig. 33) is also depicted as a black silhouette, enlivened only by orange tesserae at the tip of the phallus and by the loincloth he wears, which is depicted in white tesserae within black outline. The one internal relieving detail of the silhouette form that is common to all the

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<sup>19</sup>For further discussion of this development, see Clarke, Black-and-White 57-62, and Clarke, Origins 662-688.

<sup>20</sup>Clarke, Black-and-White 60.

<sup>21</sup>Clarke, Black-and-White 61.

Pompeian figures, and which appears later in the figures in the Constantine mosaic, is the eye which is picked out in white.

Faced with the challenge of representing the “somatic norm” figure in silhouette form, the artists’ early response was to exploit the iconography of the black, by adding a distinctive hair outline to the human figure, which was already coloured black as required in the black-and-white style. The two elements of black form and distinctive hair outline were sufficient to create human figures that would be recognisable representations of the Black. By contrast, with the development of the convention of using white lines to delineate interior detail within the black-coloured figure, mosaicists were freed from the restrictions of the earlier silhouette form. And it is significant that later black-and-white Italian mosaics do not contain swimming figures recognisable as representations of Blacks. In fact, the later figures are clearly represented as “somatic norm” types. For example, by the 2nd c. A.C. human figures (swimmers and others) in the Neptune mosaic in the Terme di Nettuno (Fig. 34), and in mosaics in the Terme dei Cisiari in Ostia (Fig. 35), show extensive use of lines of white tesserae to create “somatic norm” facial characteristics, loose wavy hair, musculature, and other anatomical details.<sup>22</sup>

The human figure with diagnostic features of the Black in Italian black-and-white mosaics appears at the very beginning of the development of figural style in Italian black-and-white mosaics, when the human figure represented in black tesserae (as called for by

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<sup>22</sup>Neptune mosaic in Room B, Terme di Nettuno (Ostia II, IV, 2): Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 47-50. Mosaic from Terme dei Cisiari, frigidarium, Room C (Ostia II, II, 3): Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 39-40, 42-44.

the style) was in its experimental stage, and there were as yet no clear conventions for successfully adapting the “somatic norm” figure to the restrictive palette of the monochrome style.

## II. A polychrome bath mosaic from North Africa

A polychrome mosaic pavement probably of the 3rd century A.C. from the north-western baths at Timgad in Algeria (Cat. no. 7, Fig. 36) contains a figure that has the full range of determinative somatic characteristics of the Black, plus the element of the large phallus encountered in the figures of the Pompeian group. The mosaic shows a nude, muscular, macrophallic man carrying a shovel. Walking, he holds his phallus in his left hand, and appears to be discharging on the ground. The attribute of the shovel suggests that he is a *fornacator*, whose duties include shovelling coal into the furnaces for the heating of the *caldarium* and other warm rooms of the baths.<sup>23</sup>

The outline of the body has been executed in black tesserae and filled in with a dark brown colour which closely approximates a naturalistic Black African skin tone. Musculature is delineated in black, and some amount of tonal modelling is achieved through the use of three gradations of brown tesserae. The sclerotic of the eye is white with a black pupil. Black tesserae are used to outline a broad nose and thick lips, two conventional somatic features from the iconography of the Black. The hair is black and

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<sup>23</sup>See Nielsen (supra n. 2) 128, for function and duties of the *fornacator*.

outlined with tesserae arranged in a stepped pattern to suggest tightly curled hair.

The Timgad *fornacator* belongs to a tradition of striding figures that appear in baths. Some of those types of figures are coloured black, but without any other features that might identify them as representations of Blacks. They might be shown carrying shovels or bath equipment. North African examples include: a nude man striding to the right in a fragmentary mosaic formerly in the Labyrinth Baths at Thuburbo Maius;<sup>24</sup> a nearly nude male figure carrying a long object identified tentatively as a broom, in a mosaic from the Volto Baths at Cherchel;<sup>25</sup> and a naked figure described as black, carrying a shovel filled with burning coals in a damaged mosaic from a building (of unknown function) in Bir Chana.<sup>26</sup> Earlier examples in Italy are: a black-coloured figure wearing a loin cloth and carrying a shovel in a black-and-white mosaic from the Praedia of Julia Felix in Pompeii, erroneously inserted in recent times into a pavement from the Casa del Cinghiale; and a damaged nude figure of similar type in a black-and-white pavement now in Spoleto.<sup>27</sup> None of these figures, although iconographically similar, shares the phallic aspect of the Timgad bath attendant. That aspect appears rather in earlier figures like the *unguentarius* in the

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<sup>24</sup>CMT II *Thuburbo Maius* I (Tunis 1980) 26, no. 17.C. The mosaic is now destroyed.

<sup>25</sup>Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 43; P. Leveau, "Les maisons nobles de Caesarea de Mauretanie," *AntAfr* 18 (1982) 146-8, no. 32.

<sup>26</sup>Dunbabin, *MRNA* 249; Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 43; CMT II *Thuburbo Maius* 4 (Tunis 1994) 131, no. 431.C, pl.LXXI.

<sup>27</sup>For a history of the mosaic from the Praedia of Julia Felix, see M. de Vos, "Paving techniques at Pompeii," *ArchNews* 16 (1991) 36, n. 2; Clarke, *Origins* 673, fig. 20; F. Niccolini, *Le case ed i monumenti. II Descrizione Generale* pl.V. *non vidi*. For the mosaic in Spoleto, Museo Civico, see see M. de Vos (ibid) 36, n.1, and p. 38, fig. 3.

mosaic from the Casa del Menandro in Pompeii (Cat. no. 6, Fig. 33), in the swimmers placed beside bathing equipment in the mosaics of the Casa del Criptoportico and the Domus Caesi Blandi (Cat. nos. 2-3, Figs. 29-30), and in the swimming figure without bathing equipment in the Casa del Menandro *caldarium* mosaic (Cat. no. 1, Fig. 28).<sup>28</sup>

Swimming figures and figures carrying bathing equipment are thematically appropriate decoration for baths as they allude to services and pleasures of the baths. But why did the craftsmen and patrons choose to portray figures that contained determinative characteristics of the Black in bath mosaics? It has already been noted that the representations of the Black in the Pompeian group of black-and-white mosaics might have been created as an artistic response to the monochrome medium in its early development. However, some representations of the Black, especially those that occur in close proximity to bathing equipment, or that are depicted carrying the equipment, might have been based on the reality of black bath attendants. The Timgad *fornacator* is probably the best example of that type.

A passage in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* describing a vain youth who wants to show off by having an Aethiopian to attend him at the baths, ...[ut] *ab avunculo rogetur Aethiops qui ad balneas veniat* (4.50.63) is a case in point, even though the reference seems to be to a different kind of bath attendant than the *fornacator* who shovels coal. It may concern rather a well-groomed attendant of the type whose presence is a luxury decried by

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<sup>28</sup>Cf. Ithyphallic bath attendant "Buticosus" facing the entryway to Room C in the Terme di Buticosus in Ostia, who carries a pail and a strigil: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 29, no. 51, pl. LIX.

Martial (12.70).<sup>30</sup> The kind of luxury attendant Martial refers to may be the type shown on a Roman sarcophagus of the last quarter of the 3rd century A.C. in Ostia (Cat. no. 21, Fig. 37). It shows a youthful figure with corkscrew locks, wearing a tunic, with a towel over one shoulder, and carrying a curious swallow-tailed object, in a small procession of figures that appears to be a *dominus* and his retinue going to the baths.<sup>31</sup>

Figures with diagnostic features of the Black may also have been considered appropriate in the bath context when the figures had a phallic aspect. The reasons for this may be found in some ancient ideas and concerns about baths and bathing. Concerns were that bathing, although pleasurable and necessary for a regimen of good hygiene and beauty, could be a dangerous activity that required bathers to protect themselves. Dangers included the real possibility of accidents like drowning (Tertullian, De anima 32.6), suffocation or some other ill.<sup>32</sup> The ample testimony of inscriptions and other written sources can be seen as evidence of concerns about accidents that could result from human and demonic envy,

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<sup>30</sup>See discussion of costly long-haired slaves *infra* my Chapter 4. Also refs. *supra* n. 7.

<sup>31</sup>See also discussion of this group *infra* my Chapter 4. Cf. also a marble statue (Trajanic/Hadrianic) of a naked, chubby little bath attendant carrying an aryballos and strigils on a ring in one hand and a sponge in the other, which although not a portrayal of a luxury slave should be mentioned because the child is usually referred to in catalogues as a black bath slave. The head with short corkscrew curls, a snub nose, and thick lips, is a modern restoration which is of a different period than the body: Helbig<sup>4</sup>, 444, no. 563; G. Lippold, Die Skulpturen des Vatikanischen Museums III 2 text (Berlin 1956) 394-395, & III 2 plates, pl. 168, no. 32, pl. 169, no. 32; Snowden, Blacks 82, fig. 56.

<sup>32</sup>Inscriptions on children drowned in pools: from Rome, CIL VI 6740; Chieti, CIL IX 6318. Cf. also other parallels quoted in Dunbabin (*supra* n. 1) 35, n. 190. Also in apocryphal accounts concerning the atrocities committed by Hannibal are stories about an incident in which councillors of Nuceria were locked up in the warm rooms of the baths where they suffocated to death: Dio fr. 57.30; Zonaras 9.2; Appian 8, Pun. 63; Val. Max. 9.6. ext. 2 quoted in Dunbabin (*supra* n. 1) 36, n. 206.

malice, and the Evil Eye, and of protective measures that might be taken against those forces.<sup>32</sup>

The erect phallus was a common symbol to which was attributed the power to threaten and avert the malice of the Evil Eye.<sup>33</sup> Its presence in the figures of the black *fornacator* in the Timgad mosaic, the *unguentarius* in the mosaic on the threshold to the *calidarium* in the Casa del Menandro, and some of the figures in the other mosaics of the Pompeian group, suggests that an apotropaic significance be attached to those figures. Furthermore, the caricatural appearance of the Pompeian figures, i.e. the long pointed nose, exaggerated chin, and large phallus, also suggests an apotropaic significance. The location of the Timgad and Casa del Menandro bath attendants on thresholds only strengthens the argument for an apotropaic function to the figures, since the evidence of other protective signs on thresholds suggests that those locations were thought to be particularly vulnerable.<sup>34</sup> One example of a figure whose function is clearly apotropaic, and that appears on a threshold, comes from a bath-house in Oued Athmenia in Algeria.<sup>35</sup> The mosaic shows a black-coloured grotesque figure with a large head, hooked nose, a hump on his shoulder,

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<sup>32</sup>Discussed extensively in Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 36-46, and esp. 38 for the frequency of North African bath inscriptions and mosaics dealing with envy.

<sup>33</sup>K. M. D. Dunbabin, M. Dickie, "Invida rumpantur pectora. The iconography of Pthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art," *JbAC* 26 (1983) 31; *RE* 19.2 (1938) 1733-44, s.v. Phallos (H. Herter).

<sup>34</sup>On the frequent location of magical and protective images and signs on thresholds, see Dunbabin, *MRNA* 162-163.

<sup>35</sup>Oued Athmenia: Dunbabin, *MRNA* 267; Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 43. Note also the peculiar hump under the shoulder of the *unguentarius* in the Casa del Menandro mosaic (Cat. no. 6, Fig. 33).

and several huge phalli. The (i) negative symbolism attached to the colour black, which could extend to dark or black skin-colour, as well as (ii) superstitions about Blacks, may also have influenced the choice of figures identifiable as Black, and figures bearing some of the diagnostic features of the Black.<sup>37</sup> The superstitious view of Blacks as beings of ill-omen appears in the reaction of characters, for example, in the story about Brutus' standard-bearer meeting and murdering an Aethiopian before the battle of Philippi (Plut. Brut. 48.5), and in that about Septimius Severus' encounter, just before his death, with an Aethiopian soldier at Luguwallum in Britain who told the emperor to be a god, i.e. that he would die (SHA Sept.Sev. 22.4-5).<sup>38</sup> Superstitious fear of black or dark-skinned strangers can also be read in Juvenal's (5.52-55) insulting reference to a Moor whom one would be frightened to encounter on the streets and in the alleys near the Appian way at night.<sup>39</sup>

An allegorical association between the Aethiopian and demons also compounds superstitious fear of Blacks, and is evident in popular tales of the later Empire as well as in Christian didactic literature.<sup>40</sup> The association is based on the conception of demons as dark

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<sup>37</sup>On the symbolism of the colour black and negative connotations, see J. Winkler, "Lollianios and the Desperadoes," JHS 100 (1980) 157-166. Cf. also Thompson, Romans and Blacks 110-114.

<sup>38</sup>The circumstances surrounding the encounters are important and are elements that fuel the superstition and fear: the emperor was uneasy before his death, so in accounts of the story after his death, the Aethiopian appears as an omen. Cf. Winkler (supra n. 37) 162.

<sup>39</sup>See discussion infra my Chapter 4.

<sup>40</sup>Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 42; Thompson, Romans and Blacks 110-114; Winkler (supra n. 37) 161-162; J. M. Courtès, "The theme of Ethiopia and Ethiopians in patristic literature," in J. Devisse ed., The Image of the Black in Western Art II.1 (Lausanne 1979) 19-21; J. Devisse, "From the demonic threat to the incarnation of sainthood," The Image of the Black in Western Art II.1 (Lausanne 1979) 64-70; C. D. G. Müller, "Von Teufel, Mittagsdämon, und Amuletten," JbAC 17 (1974) 91-94; F. J. Dölger, Die Sonne der Gerechtigkeit und der



frightful beings whose darkness symbolises all that is evil. The leap from that concept to the equation of physically dark and black complexioned persons with demons becomes a small one for the superstitious mind. Particularly relevant for the baths context is a story in the Apocryphal Acts of Saint John, concerning the son of a priest who after being resurrected from death recounted how a demon resembling an Aethiopian had risen out of the pool in the baths and strangled him.<sup>40</sup> The belief in, and fear of, bath demons who were believed to inhabit the moist confines of baths<sup>41</sup> may have played a role in the choice of the iconography of the Black in bath mosaics, particularly for later examples like the Timgad *fornacator*. This may have been the case especially when grotesque apotropaic elements such as huge or abnormal phalli and fire shovels<sup>42</sup> are included in the iconography. Placed on pavements meant to be trampled underfoot, the figures, although they may be of ill omen, are nevertheless also "...capable of being used for protective purposes (through an ambivalence common in superstitions of this sort), and of being turned against the dangers [they personify]."<sup>43</sup>

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Schwarze (Münster in Westf. 1918) 49-75 (non vidi).

<sup>40</sup>Acta Ioannis 20 f. Zahn, 122f. Zahn, quoted in Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 35 n.194.

<sup>41</sup>Bath demons, see Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 35-36 with ref. to C. Bonner, "Demons of the Bath," Studies presented to F. L. Griffith (London 1932) 203-208.

<sup>42</sup>In another story from the apocryphal acts of John, when John was working in the Bath of Dioscorides near Ephesus, Satan or the resident bath demon appeared to him in the form of a bath attendant and threatened him with a shovel: Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 35, n. 194. Cf. also D. Levi, "The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback," in R. Stillwell ed., Antioch-on-Orontes III (Princeton 1941) 227, n. 80, on the possible apotropaic significance of fire-shovels in the iconography.

<sup>43</sup>Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 42.

### Concluding remarks

The figures in the group of mosaics from Italy and North Africa encourage an examination of a complex range of issues. We are confronted with an artistic tradition of depicting figures with determinative characteristics of the Black in bath mosaics. Representations of the Black in the Pompeian group are the innovative products of mosaicists working early in the development in the black-and-white style, when methods of representing the “somatic norm” figure had not yet been established. But a clear representation of the Black in the bath context can only be identified once in North Africa, where the black-and-white style never takes root. Rather North Africa provides the one instance of a figure with the full range of determinative features of the Black in the bath context. The image of the Black in bath contexts usually had an apotropaic significance when it appeared on mosaic pavements. However, this significance does not extend to the youthful bath attendant with corkscrew locks on the sarcophagus from Ostia (Cat. no. 21, Fig. 37), for in this case the sculptors were mainly concerned with conveying the prestigious lifestyle of the deceased through images of luxury slaves and other personal attendants. Finally, the artistic tradition may also have been influenced by a literary tradition that contains frequent references to black bath demons, and also presents black slaves as desirable indications of personal luxury at the baths.

## CHAPTER 4

### SCENES OF DOMESTIC SERVICE

Themes of domestic activity taken from contemporary life are widespread and popular in Roman art. The pictorial medium of mosaic as well as the plastic medium of sarcophagus reliefs are particularly relevant for the study of the iconography of figures of servants because they provide identifiable contexts. It is in these media that one finds some of the fullest expressions of themes of domestic activity since they afford the artists a space in which to develop the theme, allowing the inclusion of various realistic or naturalistic details relevant to domestic settings. The mosaics that decorated the houses of the wealthy and the elaborate sarcophagi with representations of slaves attending to their owner's needs were intended to reflect the lifestyle of the patrons. For in the Roman period wealth (which included slaves) had to be displayed openly if the prestige of the possessor was to be acknowledged.<sup>1</sup> The group of mosaics and sarcophagi to be discussed in this chapter contains, among representations of slaves in domestic contexts, some that show diagnostic features of the Black.

The artists of the Roman era were following and augmenting an iconographic and literary tradition of representations of black slaves and Blacks occupied with everyday

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<sup>1</sup>On Roman wealth and luxury: Friedländer, Sittengeschichte II, 263-379. For the importance and value attached to obvious displays of wealth, see Thompson, Romans and Blacks 146-147.

tasks that preceded the Roman period. As early as the 5th c. B.C. black attendants appear in red-figure vase paintings of scenes from the myth of Andromeda,<sup>2</sup> and in non-mythological genre scenes they carry objects and accompany “somatic norm” figures.<sup>3</sup> A bronze statuette of a black boy cleaning a boot also belongs to that period.<sup>4</sup> Later examples include terracotta figurines of a black lantern bearer, and a black boy with a lantern assisting a weary reveller, which belong to after 30 B.C. and the Early Empire respectively;<sup>5</sup> a bath attendant with corkscrew locks on a sarcophagus from Rome (discussed below) dated to the last quarter of the 3rd c. A.C.; and the previously discussed *fornicator* in the mosaic (probably 3rd c. A.C.) from the north-western baths at Timgad.<sup>6</sup> There are also the numerous generic representations from the Hellenistic and Roman periods of little black boys sleeping or crouched beside a vessel, as well as statuettes of jugglers and dancers and standing figures that are usually described as black slaves.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Supra Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup>See examples supra Chapter 2. Also a polychrome white-ground lekythos, in Vienna: black boy with turban, carrying a bird cage and a hare, walking behind a youth towards Charon's boat, Beardsley, Negro 64, no. 124; red-figure amphora, in Copenhagen: black boy out walking with an old man, Beardsley, Negro 63, no. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Bronze bootblack, dated to c. 460 B.C.: London, British Museum (no. inv. #); Snowden, Blacks 245, fig. 108; H. B. Walters, Catalogue of the Bronzes, Greek, Roman, and Etruscan, in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum (London 1899) 269, no. 1676.

<sup>5</sup>Black boy with lamp assisting weary reveller, from Alexandria, after 30 B.C.: London, British Museum #37561; Snowden, Blacks pl. 114. Black lantern-bearer, from Egypt, Early Empire: Alexandria, Graeco-Roman Museum #23100; Snowden, Blacks pl. 113.

<sup>6</sup>Cat. no. 7, Fig. 37, and discussion supra Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup>Supra Chapter 2, and see Snowden, Blacks 240-241, nos. 101-104. But caution is required in the identification of the representations in light of a modern tendency to label representations of Blacks as "Slave",

These latter examples, however, are stock types which tell the viewer only that the figures are representations of humble social types. The kind of service slaves might actually render is better exemplified by the statuettes of the bootblack and lantern-carrier which show figures engaged in a specific activity, or by the bath attendant on the sarcophagus, images that contain sufficient detail to allow a convincing interpretation.

While there is sufficient evidence to show that there existed an iconographic tradition of black slaves and attendants in the Greek period, the literary evidence for that period is scarce. The scarcity of literary evidence should be linked to the fact that the Black appeared mostly in mythological contexts, in which he is not referred to as a slave.<sup>8</sup> Exceptions probably are Helenos, an Aethiopian lamp-bearer named in the Zenon papyri,<sup>9</sup> and the Aethiopian attendant of the man of petty pride in Theophrastus (Char. 21.4).

In the Roman period the Black appears more frequently in non-mythological contexts, and a greater number of references are found to black slaves and servants. The characters Giton and Eumolpus in Petronius (Satyricon 102) argue over the plausibility of disguising themselves as *servi Aethiopes* in their bid to escape. While the Petronius reference illustrates that black slaves are present in the lives and imaginations of Romans,

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generally on no iconographic basis other than somatic characteristics.

<sup>8</sup>See discussion *supra* Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup>The Zenon papyri are a collection of records ascribed to Zenon, believed to be the business-manager of Apollonius, an official during the last fifteen years (c. 261-246 B.C) of the reign of Ptolemy II . See C. C. Edgar, Zenon Papyri.(Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire IV) (Cairo 1931) 59782 (a) 69; Snowden, Blacks 19.

authors appear to be evoking particular images for their audience when they introduce black slaves into their writings. For example, a gift of a maid from Aethiopia in Terence's Eunuchus (165-167, 470-471) is an expensive choice, and Aethiopian lamp-bearers provided for departing guests by Cleopatra after a sumptuous dinner are a final luxurious touch to an impressive evening (Athen. Deipn. 4.148b). Similar allusions to the high status associated with owning an Aethiopian slave are intended in the sentiments of the vain youth who wants an Aethiopian to accompany him to the baths (Rhetorica ad Herennium 4.50.63), in order to make the right impression. But the black slave could be an inappropriate choice in certain contexts: therefore, the black Moor who serves the guests of lower status (Juv. Sat. 5.52-55) is inappropriate because he is a *cursor* whose duties are out of doors, not in the dining room.<sup>10</sup> The black slave is not always a symbol of luxury, for the character Scybale described as a black African by the unknown author of the Moretum is the only help to a humble rustic.

The epigraphic tradition also provides references to black slaves. Two examples are a third c. A.C. funerary epitaph set up to a black slave by his master, found in Antinoe (Egypt); and a funerary inscription at Halicarnassus (south-western Asia Minor) to another black slave by his master and mistress, Chimaerus and Aelia Carpime.<sup>11</sup> In the

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<sup>10</sup> See later discussion *infra* p. 129.

<sup>11</sup> Antinoe, Egypt, 3rd c. A.C. funerary epitaph for a black slave: Musée de Berlin #13471, and see E. Bernand, Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte Gréco-romaine (Paris 1969) 143-147, no. 26. Halicarnassus, funerary inscription to a black slave, see SEG IV (1929) 192. For discussions of the inscriptions, see Snowden, Blacks 178; Thompson, Romans and Blacks 41-43; D. Wiesen, "Juvenal and the Blacks," ClMed 31 (1970) 132.

inscription from Antinoe, the author mentions that Aethiopia was the homeland of the deceased, and then compares the appearance of the deceased to that of Indians.

Apologetically the writer informs the reader that despite the blackness of the deceased's skin colour, his soul was white and beautiful. Frequent praises by the slave of the master's goodness and a prayer at the end interceding for a long and glorious life for the master, make the epitaph more of a tribute to the master than a remembrance of the slave. Equally apologetic of the slave's blackness is the funerary epitaph for their slave at Halicarnassus by Chimaerus and his wife Aelia Carpime. Yet the words "Farewell, good Blackface. Let this be your comfort, we brought you home from Patara here to lie" reveal a personal fondness that is absent from the Antinoe epitaph. These real life references to black servants provide an insight into the relationship between those slaves and their owners that is largely missing from the literary sources.

### The Iconographical Evidence

A series of Roman sarcophagi of the 3rd c. A.C., and 4th c. A.C. mosaics from North Africa and Sicily show the theme of black slaves serving in domestic contexts. The iconographical evidence will be discussed under the following headings: I. Attendants in dining scenes Wine-server (Cat. nos. 13, 29, Figs. 38, 42), Hand washer (Cat. nos. 30, 25, 26, 27, Figs. 43, 44, 45, 46), Fire-Blower (Cat. nos. 11, 12, Figs. 39, 40), Servant bearing food (Cat. no. 28, Fig. 47); II. Attendants in excursion scenes *Cursores* (Cat. nos. 35, 31, 32, 33, 34, Figs. 48, 49, 50, 51, 52); III. Attendants in other scenes *Capsarius*

(Cat. no. 36, Fig. 53), Bath Attendant (Cat. no. 24, Fig. 37). Due to the thematic association between the Wine-server and the Fire-blower the two will be discussed together.

### I. Attendants in dining scenes

The wealthy were prepared to go to considerable pomp and ceremony when dining and entertaining, for banquets provided an opportunity for a host to display his wealth, status and good breeding.<sup>12</sup> The quality of the food and wine he would serve, his servants, and his tableware played no small part in the intricate social ritual of the banquet. To pull off these social coups, large numbers of servants were usually required, each of whom carried out a specific task.<sup>13</sup> Seneca (Ep. 47.6) mentions a slave who mops up vomit, another who carves the poultry, yet another who serves wine, one who clears up leftovers spat out onto the floor, and the one who circulated, listening to the gossip pertaining to the master (so as to decide who will get an invitation to another banquet).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>For a general account of banquets from the time of Augustus to Vespasian, see Friedländer, Sittengeschichte II, 281-291. See also for entertainment and dining, W. J. Slater ed., Dining in a classical context (Ann Arbor 1991). Evidence of lavish tableware is provided by various treasure hoards: for example, Boscoreale, and that attributed to Sevso. See also F. Baratte, Musée du Louvre. Le Trésor d'Orfèverie Romaine de Boscoreale (Paris 1986); L. P. Stefanelli et al, L'Argento dei Romani (Rome 1991). Sumptuous banquets are also a historiographical motif, see G. Paul, "Symposia and Deipna in Plutarch's Lives and in other historical contexts" in Dining in a classical context 157-169.

<sup>13</sup>Friedländer, Sittengeschichte II, 366-367.

<sup>14</sup>At Trimalchio's dinner (Petr. 68) some remove tables, some scatter saffron. There was also the task of carrying in the lamps (Amm. Marc. 16.8.9). See also J. H. D'Arms, "Slaves at Roman Convivia," in Slater (supra n. 12) 171-183.



### Outdoor picnics with servants in hunting scenes

The black servant sometimes appears in outdoor picnics around a *stibadium*-cushion in hunting scenes. Hunting scenes gained popularity particularly during the 2nd - 4th centuries A.C. in many regions of the empire.<sup>15</sup> The great popularity of the genre may be ascribed to the patrons' desire to have decorative pavements containing representations of one of their favourite activities, hunting. The new genre departs from the existing forms by discarding the single viewpoint *emblema* type of mosaic with traditional heroic hunts or the royal lion hunt of the Hellenistic repertoire in favour of a narrative style in which successive stages of the aristocratic hunt are depicted within a single frame with multiple view-points. Details of dress and hunting technique are generally realistic, thus achieving some degree of verisimilitude with contemporary practice. This realism is evident in the mosaic of the Boar Hunt from Carthage, which is generally considered the earliest among the 3rd century mosaics in the new style.<sup>16</sup> In the mosaic hunters and servants wear contemporary dress, servants carry appropriate equipment such as ropes, sticks and a bucket for the hunt, and the quarry is trapped by being chased into a net. Although in keeping with realism the prey in the hunting mosaics are usually boars, antelopes, hares, and other animals such as are likely to be found on a North African

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<sup>15</sup>For the development of the hunting genre in North African mosaics and problems, see Dunbabin, MRNA 46-64.

<sup>16</sup>From the 'Hill of Juno'. Dunbabin, MRNA 48, n. 9 and pl. 21.

country gentleman's estate, sometimes realism is abandoned with the introduction of fantastic elements like griffins and tigers.<sup>17</sup> The inclusion of ostriches, lions, and panthers, as well as cages that indicate that the animals are being captured alive for the amphitheatre, in the mosaic of the Large Hunt from Hippo Regius (Algeria) discussed below, for example, reveals the influence of the iconography of the amphitheatre in some hunting scenes.

But whether attempting to portray contemporary reality or to aggrandize it, scenes of the hunt in the Roman era frequently include the hunters' picnic around the *stibadium*-cushion as the culmination of the endeavour. The picnic might be represented in great detail with all the equipment required in elegant dining and several servants carrying out different duties, or in an abbreviated form with only one servant and the most important dining accoutrements.

In the outdoor picnics servants with somatic characteristics of the Black (usually limited to dark skin colour on the mosaics, and corkscrew locks on the sarcophagi) are shown carrying out various duties: serving drinks, carrying appropriate vessels for hand-washing to diners, or blowing on the flames for water heating.

### The wine-server and the fire-blower

A wine-server with somatic characteristics of the Black appears in the picnic

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<sup>17</sup>For example, Hunt scenes from *Maison des Chevaux*: Dunbabin, MRNA 53 n.27; Salomonson, Mosaïque aux chevaux 26-28, pl. xiii.

scene on the Large Hunt mosaic, probably of early 4th c. date, from the Maison d'Isguntus at Hippo Regius (Cat. no. 13, Fig. 38). He is depicted as very dark-skinned, and his hair is rendered in short parallel rows of black tesserae that are possibly intended to represent corkscrew locks. Scenes of the hunt fill the mosaic. Well-dressed men on horseback and on foot, accompanied by servants, pursue antelopes, ostriches, an onager, leopards, and lions in a wooded landscape. The lions and leopards have been chased into an enclosure consisting of nets, shields and torches. Cows and sheep used as bait appear in small enclosures around the trap. The picnic after the hunt is crammed into the lower right area of the mosaic. In this scene, the group of hunters, of which only two are extant (the mosaic is damaged in this area), reclines on the ground around a *stibadium*-cushion under an awning stretched between two trees. They are served by the black servant. The servant carries a cup in his right hand and a pitcher in his left, and stands near a vessel being heated on a small fire.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the hunters who are dressed in long-sleeved tunics decorated with *clavi*, the servant wears a plain girt-up tunic with short sleeves. From the right side of the composition he approaches the group of picnickers to serve them.

Another servant with somatic characteristics of the Black appears in the picnic scene on the Small Hunt mosaic dated to ca. 310-330 A.C., from Piazza Armerina (Cat. no. 11, Figs. 39, 39a). The greater part of this figure is destroyed; only the head, arms,

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<sup>18</sup>The water heating apparatus is important to an understanding of the manner in which wine was served at banquets in general. For a discussion of heating vessels and custom in wine drinking, see K. M. D. Dunbabin, "Wine and Water at the Roman Convivium," *JRA* 6 (1993) 117-141. See also (infra) my discussion of the fire-blower motif.

feet and left lower leg have survived. The figure is that of a very dark-skinned boy or a youth crouched down low, blowing on the flames around an *authepsa* (water-heating apparatus).<sup>19</sup> His arms, which are stretched out on the ground before him, are encased in long sleeves with decorative bands at the wrists. It is clear from the sleeves that he is as well-dressed as the other servants and the hunters feasting nearby. The group of five hunters reclines around a *stibadium*-cushion under an awning, drinking and eating. Before them is a cooked bird on a large tray. Two other servants, both of the somatic norm type, wait on the group of diners; one, a wine server, holds up a cup, while another retrieves food from a hamper. The picnic scene in this mosaic is at the centre of the composition, surrounded by several hunting scenes. In the top registers, hunters and their dogs are engaged in a boar hunt. The success of the hunt, marked by the carrying of the carcass in a net, is accompanied by a sacrifice to the goddess Diana at a shrine. Flanking the central picnic scene are hunting dogs, hunters carrying bundles of sticks, a dog pursuing a hare and a mounted hunter about to spear a cowering hare. In the lowest registers, mounted hunters chase stags into a net enclosure, while in another scene the group of hunters on foot attacks a boar beside a wounded hunter lying on the ground.

The third example of an attendant from this group of mosaics is another youth with dark skin blowing on flames in a picnic scene on a mosaic with representations of the hunt from Tellaro in Sicily dated to after the mid 4<sup>th</sup> c. A.C. (Cat. no. 12, Fig. 40).

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<sup>19</sup>For *authepsa*, see discussion by Dunbabin (*supra* n. 18) 117-141, and *infra* my discussion.

Like the Piazza Armerina fire-blower, he too is shown in a crouching position, but the *authepsa* appears to have been hung from a tree. The poor quality of the printed photograph prevents a more detailed description. The picnic scene, which is rendered in full detail, occupies the lowest register of the composition. As in the Piazza Armerina Small Hunt, a group of well-dressed hunters recline around a *stibadium*-cushion under an awning to dine. They are attended by two well-attired servants; one serving drinks and the other holding a patera and pitcher for hand-washing. The picnic meal includes a cooked bird on a large platter, bread and a hamper with amphorae of wine. Other details of the scene include a servant in an *exomis* preparing the boar near the youth blowing on the flames from the *authepsa*. The usual hunting scenes occupy the other two registers.

A thematic connection can be observed between the black servants and the water heating activity in the mosaics. The water-heating scene represents the preparation of *calda* for mixing with wine. As the Romans did not usually drink their wine straight, hot water, usually prepared in an *authepsa*, was necessary for the drinking party.<sup>20</sup> In its basic form the *authepsa* was a vessel, usually made of bronze, which had an interior chamber to hold fuel, a compartment for water, a lidded spout or a tap on the outside, and a handle. In the *authepsa* water could be boiled and kept hot to be used for mixing with wine and other beverages as required. In the heating scene in the Piazza Armerina Small Hunt, the vessel in which the water is being heated is an ovoid *authepsa* with a neck and a lid. In

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<sup>20</sup>See Dunbabin (supra n. 18) 117-141, and P.-A. Février, "A propos du repas funéraire: culte et sociabilité," *CahArch* 26 (1977) 35-36.

the Tellaro mosaic the *authepsa* is round in form and has a long handle, by which it hangs from a tree. The boy in this case is very likely blowing on the flames issuing from the *authepsa* rather than on flames in a makeshift stove. But in the mosaic from Hippo Regius, the water heater appears to be an ordinary cylindrical cauldron being heated over a stove fire.

Two examples of *authepsae* found at Kayseri in Turkey are particularly relevant to the discussion of the motif of the black boy blowing on flames in the water heating scene.<sup>21</sup> Found in a 3rd c. A.C. context, one vessel is quite well preserved, while the other has not survived intact, but still has several of its constituent parts.<sup>22</sup> The surviving vessel is ovoid and stands on three composite legs, of which two are missing (Fig. 41). Both *authepsae* have decorative spigots in the form of heads of the Black. The heads have corkscrew curls, snub noses and thick lips; all characteristic features in the iconography of the Black, but greatly distorted because of the exaggeratedly wide open mouth that contains a short pipe for a spout. The use of ornamental heads of the Black on the two *authepsae*, probably a century before the depiction of black servants attending to the water heating in the mosaics, suggests an established iconographical tradition linking black servants and the *calda* preparation within a wider one that comprised mostly servants of the “somatic norm” type.

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<sup>21</sup>The Kayseri *authepsae*: Kayseri Museum Inv. nos. 86/9, and 86/10, 12, 13, 17. Also see M. Yazici, C.S. Lightfoot, "Two Roman samovars (*authepsae*) from Caesarea in Cappadocia," *Antiquity* 63 (1989) 343-49.

<sup>22</sup>Kayseri Museum Inv. no. 86/9 survives largely intact, Inv. nos. 86/10, 12, 13, 17 are the surviving parts of the second *authepsa*.

The wider tradition of fire-blowers occurs in hunters' picnics and other outdoor dining scenes with mythological and mortal subjects in various media from the 2nd c. A.C. to Late Antiquity. It occurs, for example, on the *missorium*, gilded and inlaid with niello from the 4th century treasure attributed to Sevso;<sup>23</sup> sarcophagus lids of the 2nd - 4th century from Basel,<sup>24</sup> Rome,<sup>25</sup> and Ostia;<sup>26</sup> and on a 5th century Coptic textile from Egypt.<sup>27</sup> On some sarcophagus lids<sup>28</sup> the motif appears in scenes of the preparation of the boar carcass after the boar hunt, and according to some scholars the fire-blower motif may have been derived from earlier scenes in which the boar preparation is depicted.<sup>29</sup> In the picnic scenes, however, the motif is employed in a different manner: toward *calda* preparation.

Perhaps the derivation of the fire-blower motif from earlier scenes featuring the

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<sup>23</sup>M. Mundell Mango, A. Bennet, *The Sevso Treasure I* (JRA Suppl. 12, Ann Arbor 1994) 55-97; H. A. Cahn, A. Kaufmann-Heinimann, K. Painter, "A Table Ronde on a treasure of late Roman silver," *JRA* 4 (1991) 184-191.

<sup>24</sup>Basel, Antikenmuseum, Sammlung Züst 434: G. Koch, *Die Meleagersarkophage* (ASR 12.6, Berlin 1975) 106-7, no. 73, pls. 74a, 117a.

<sup>25</sup>Rome, St. Cecilia: Koch (supra n. 24) 126, no. 128, pl. 114c.

<sup>26</sup>Ostia, Isola Sacra, Ufficio combattenti 5: Koch (supra n. 24) 126, no. 130, pl. 114f.

<sup>27</sup>New York, Brooklyn Museum # 44.143D; D. Thompson, *Coptic textiles in the Brooklyn Museum* (New York 1971); K. Weitzmann ed., *Age of Spirituality. Late antique and early Christian art, third to eleventh century* (New York 1979) 250-251, no. 230.

<sup>28</sup>Sarcophagus lid from Isola Sacra (supra n. 26) and another from Ostia, now in the Villa Aldobrandini (Frascati): Koch (supra n. 24) 87, no. 7, pl. 114e.

<sup>29</sup>R. Amedick, "Zur Motivgeschichte eines Sarkophages mit ländlichem Mahl," *RömMitt* 98 (1988) 205-234; Dunbabin (supra n. 18) 136 and n. 81.

preparation of the boar may account for some problems in the depiction of the fire-blower in the Tellaro mosaic (Cat. no. 12, Fig. 40). The water-heating activity is taking place on one side of a tree, while on the other side a man skins the carcass of a boar. Both the boar and the *authepsa* are hanging from the same tree, on opposite sides. In our series of mosaics, this is the only picnic scene in which the preparation of the boar appears, and is in such close proximity to the *calda* preparation.

The problem in the fire-blowing scene is the incongruity in the relationship of the fire-blower to the vessel. Although the artist has depicted the *authepsa* as hanging from the tree branch he does not put a standing figure beside it to blow on the flames, which would be the logical option; rather, the crouching figure is used because it is the standard motif. The youth can only crouch and blow if the *authepsa* is hanging from a branch so low that it allows the vessel to be very close to the ground, or if the handle by which the *authepsa* is hanging is extremely long. None of this seems to be the case in the picture. The artist of the Tellaro mosaic has, with limited success, combined the standard motif of the crouching fire-blower with the element of a hanging *authepsa*.

The role of the black wine-server in the mosaic of the Large Hunt from Hippo Regius (Cat. no. 13, Fig. 38), who holds a cup and pitcher, is reinforced by the nearby water-heating activity. Given the lack of space in this mosaic which precludes the depiction of several servants, one of whom may have been the boy blowing on flames, the artist has chosen to represent what the designers deem important: the water-heating activity and the wine-server. That the wine-server has been represented with diagnostic



characteristics of the Black suggests that the thematic association between the Black servant and the water-heating/drink service was present in the minds of the mosaicists. Furthermore, it appears that when given the choice of portraying only one servant in a picnic scene that was intended to convey the status and prestige of the patron, the appropriate mark of luxury was the black servant. The sculptor of a late 3rd c. A.C. sarcophagus lid in Naples (Cat. no. 29, Fig. 42) appears to have made the same choice. In the picnic scene which has only one servant, a youth who may have been intended as a Black, shown close to an *authepsa*, serves drinks to a group of three men feasting around a *stibadium*-cushion. The identification of the wine-server as a Black is based primarily on the appearance of his hair, which is treated differently from that of the other figures in the group who belong to the “somatic norm”. The wine-server has a short hairstyle consisting of parallel rows of vertical locks, probably the artist's attempt at rendering corkscrew locks. The diners have curly hair represented by circles, and wavy hair shown as curvy lines.

The popularity of the wine-server motif, like the fire-blower, is attested by its frequent appearance in other media including silver plate of the 4th c. A.C.,<sup>30</sup> Roman 2nd and 3rd c. A.C. sarcophagi,<sup>31</sup> and catacomb paintings.<sup>32</sup> When the male wine-server

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<sup>30</sup>The *missorium* from Cesena: P. E. Arias, “Il piatto argenteo di Cesena,” *ASAtene* 24-26 n.s. 8-10 (1946-48 [1950]) 309-344. The *missorium* from the Sevso Treasure: see supra n. 23.

<sup>31</sup>For examples of the motif in indoor and outdoor dining scenes, see Amedick, *Vita* 183 s.v. “Diener”.

<sup>32</sup>The Christian meal with male and female wine-servers: Catacomb of SS Pietro e Marcellino, J. Deckers, H. R. Seeliger, G. Mietke, *Die Katakombe Santi Marcellino e Pietro. Repertorium der Malereien* (Roma

occurs, he is usually portrayed as a young beardless male of the “somatic norm” type. He may be plainly or richly dressed and may carry a towel; he holds up a cup in his right hand and sometimes a flask in his left; and he may approach the diners either from the left or right.

What governed the artists' choice to portray the fire-blower and the wine-server in our group of mosaics with somatic characteristics of the Black? The answer may lie as much in the kind of ideas the Romans and the patrons had concerning what were considered appropriate visible signs of luxury and etiquette as in the artistic medium in which these signs appeared.

The written evidence in sources like Petronius and Seneca in the 1st c. A.C., and Juvenal in the 2nd c. A.C., suggests that the office of wine-server was one of considerable prestige in the hierarchy of serving duties.<sup>33</sup> These servants paid close attention to their hair, which they wore long or in curls or some other fetching manner like women, and they dressed quite richly.<sup>34</sup> Seneca (Ep. 47.7) refers to one of them as *alius viniminister in muliebrem modum ornatus*. The effect of their appearance on guests is summed up in the same writer's comment: *nam si pertinere ad te iudicas quam crinitus puer et quam*

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sotteranea cristiana 6, Città del Vaticano, Münster 1987) nos. 39 (pp. 255-257), 45 (pp. 266-270), 47 (pp. 27-273), 50 (pp. 278-281), 75, (pp. 336-338), 76, (pp. 338-340), 78 walls 2 & 3 (pp. 343-348); See also Dunbabin (supra n. 18) 138-140; Février (supra n. 20); and J. Balty, "Paedagogiani-pages, de Rome à Byzance," in Rayonnement Grec. Hommages à Ch. Delvoye (Brussels 1982) 299-312, for occurrences of the motif.

<sup>33</sup>Petr. 68.3; Sen. Ep. 47.7, 119.14; Juv. 5.52-55. See also D'Arms (supra n. 14) 171-183.

<sup>34</sup>Hor. Sat. 2.8. 69-70; Sen. Ep. 47.7.

*perlucidum tibi poculum porrigat, non sitis* (Ep. 119.14). Servants such as these were visible signs of luxury and wealth that conveyed the owner's status. Although the black wine-server in the mosaic from Hippo Regius (Cat. no. 13, Fig. 38) does not have long hair and is not richly dressed, he is intended to be seen as a luxury servant. The distinction appears to be one of etiquette or of what was appropriate in a particular situation, since as has already been shown there existed a parallel literary tradition that portrayed black servants as status symbols.<sup>35</sup>

Let us take, for example, the situation described in Juvenal's Fifth Satire, in which the indignant guests are served wine and water, not by the luxury table slave - the *flos Asiae* who serves the master and his friends, but rather by a *cursor Gaetulus* or a black Moor with bony hands.<sup>36</sup> Although it has been argued by some that the guests were affronted because the servant assigned to them was a Black,<sup>37</sup> it seems more likely that they were upset because he was a hardy, masculine outdoor servant - a *cursor*. For although *cursores* were also considered to be luxury servants, their duties lay outdoors, which meant that they would have been considered inappropriate in the *triclinium*. The guests, therefore, were insulted by the discriminatory breach of etiquette, which was probably additionally stinging because they could not make sexual advances towards the

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<sup>35</sup>Theophr. Char. 21.4; Athen. Deipn. 4.148b; Rhetorica ad Herennium 4.50.63.

<sup>36</sup>"... tibi pocula cursor/ Gaetulus dabit aut nigri manus ossea Mauri/ et cui per mediam nolis occurrere noctem/ clivosae veheris dum per monumenta Latinae." (Juv. 5.52-55).

<sup>37</sup>Wiesen (supra n. 11) 139-140. See Thompson, Romans and Blacks 38-9, for the argument that the slight was not because of the substitute's ethnicity.

tough-looking *cursor* as they might have towards the effeminate *flos Asiae*.<sup>38</sup> Also Juvenal identifies the servants as *Gaetulus* and *Maurus*, menacing semi-barbarians from the fringes of the Empire, and therefore frightening to his early 2nd century audience, rather than as *Aethiops* which would have conjured up mainly exotic associations.

The iconographic tradition may provide extra clarification for the etiquette problem. In the Mosaic of the Large Hunt from Hippo Regius (Cat. no. 13, Fig. 38) and the relief from Naples (Cat. no. 29, Fig. 42), the artists have considered it appropriate to depict the wine-server as a Black, which suggests that a different set of rules applied to wine-servers when outdoor dining was concerned.

Seneca's statements regarding the appearance of wine-servers, however, would better suit wine-servers of the "somatic norm" type as well as other servants, both "somatic norm" and black, depicted in indoor banquet scenes, rather than the black wine-server in the mosaic from Hippo Regius (Cat. no. 13, Fig. 38).<sup>39</sup> For even though the youthful appearance and in some cases the rich dress of wine-servers in the hunting picnic scenes cannot be disputed, they do not sport long hair or seem particularly effeminate. Balty has argued that the effeminate long-haired type of servant is chosen for representation in banquet scenes, more common on sarcophagi, where the diner reclines

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<sup>38</sup>On the seamy side of banquets, see D'Arms (supra n. 14) 171-183.

<sup>39</sup>Servants depicted in indoor banquets: mosaic from Chahbba, J. Balty, *Mosaïques antiques de Syrie* (Bruxelles 1977) 38; mosaic from Dougga, Dunbabin, *MRNA* 123, pl. 114; fresco from the House on the Caelian in Rome, P. du Bourguet, *La peinture paléo-chrétienne* (Paris 1965) fig. 100; Dido's Feast in the *Vergilius Romanus*, Weitzmann (supra n. 27) pl. 13, p. 57; Roman sarcophagi, Amedick, *Vita* 16-24.

on a *kline*, because in these the emphasis is on one banqueter, the deceased, whose wealthy and prestigious lifestyle was reflected in the banquet scene, whereas in banquets around the *sigma*-couch,<sup>40</sup> where none of the diners is given any particular pre-eminence over the others, the short-haired type is favoured.<sup>41</sup> These arguments are not entirely satisfactory, for there are examples of *kline* banquets on sarcophagi which also show the short-haired type of servant.<sup>42</sup> It appears more likely that in the iconography, the distinction is between what is appropriate in scenes of outdoor dining and indoor ones: short-haired types and the Black are favoured in outdoor scenes, and long-haired ones for the indoors.

### The hand-washer

A number of sarcophagi dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.C. from Rome are decorated with dining scenes containing processions of well-dressed servants (*servi tricliniarum*) with long hair carrying food and drink towards a couple or an individual reclining on a *kline*.<sup>43</sup> Although it was possible to set up *klinai* outdoors, the absence of

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<sup>40</sup>Actually a *stibadium*-cushion, since the examples provided show the diners outdoors reclining on the ground.

<sup>41</sup>Balty (supra n. 32) 302-303.

<sup>42</sup>Amedick, *Vita* cat. no. 138, pls. 11.2, 12.1 (Catacomb of Praetextatus); Amedick, *Vita* cat. no. 174, pl. 11.1 (Museo Nazionale Romano); Amedick, *Vita* cat. no. 264, pl. 19.3 (Vatican Storeroom); Amedick, *Vita* cat. no. 272, pls. 19.1,2, 64.2 (Museo Chiaramonti).

<sup>43</sup>For a comprehensive list of this type of sarcophagus, see Amedick, *Vita* 16-24. The processions of servants on the sarcophagi recall Seneca's reference (*Ep.* 95.24) to the crowd of servants at banquets, who move in to bring food when a sign is given for them to do so.

landscape elements like trees, suggests that these scenes are not meant to represent outdoor picnic scenes.<sup>44</sup> A number of fragments of sarcophagi of this type show figures of long-haired youths portrayed with the distinctive hairstyle of corkscrew locks, differentiating them from other servants on the sarcophagi (Cat. nos. 30, 25, 26, 27, Figs. 43, 44, 45, 46).

The youths with corkscrew locks bear attributes which identify them as hand-washers: the long-handled patera (*trulleus*) in which the diner placed his/her hand, the pitcher (*urceolus*) of water, and the towel (*lintea*) for drying hands.<sup>45</sup> Hand-washing is well illustrated in the picnic scene of the hunt mosaic from Tellaro (Cat. no. 12, Fig. 40), which shows the diner placing one hand (presumably the one to be used for eating) in the patera, and the servant with a towel over his shoulder, pouring water over the diner's hand. In the Satyricon Alexandrian slaves pour water over the hands of diners at Trimalchio's dinner for them to wash: *Tandem ergo discubuimus pueris Alexandrinis aquam in manus nivatam infundentibus...* (Petr. 31).<sup>46</sup>

A sarcophagus fragment in Ostia, dated to the end of the 3rd c. A.C. (Cat. no. 30, Fig. 43), shows a youth with shoulder-length corkscrew curls wearing a long-sleeved girt-

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<sup>44</sup>K. M. D. Dunbabin, "Convivial spaces: dining and entertainment in the Roman villa," JRA 9 (1996) 22, that wooden *klinai* could be set up out of doors.

<sup>45</sup>Identification of vessels and their names are taken from H. U. Nuber, "Kanne und Griffschale," BerRGKomm 53 (1972) 117-122, "trulleus" 140-141, "urceolus" 143.

<sup>46</sup>Other examples of references in the literary sources of the Roman period to hand-washing; Petr. 34; SHA Elagabal. 25.9; Varro 5. 118.

up tunic, carrying a pitcher in his right hand and a long-handled patera in his left.<sup>47</sup> The face is damaged. Ahead of him is a now headless figure in similar garb carrying a platter of poultry. Another fragment in Berlin dated to the third quarter of the 3rd c. A.C. (Cat. no. 25, Fig. 44) also shows a youth with shoulder-length corkscrew curls holding a long-handled patera in his left hand and a jug in his right. He also wears the long-sleeved girt-up tunic, but he has in addition a towel over his left shoulder. His face is smooth, and chubby, with heavily-lidded eyes and very full lips, but the nose of the figure is broken off. Less well preserved are two other figures with corkscrew locks on fragments from Naples (Cat. no. 26, Fig. 45) and Anacapri (Cat. no. 27, Fig. 46), dated to around 270 and 280 A.C. respectively. The figure in the Naples fragment carries a pitcher (the patera is lost). Like the figure in the fragment from Ostia (Cat. no. 30, Fig. 43), he walks behind a figure of the somatic norm type who carries a platter of poultry. In this fragment, however, the head of the servant in front survives, clearly differentiated from the black *triclinarius* by his long hair that is depicted as long, loose waves. The chubby face, smooth cheeks and long hair of these youths impart an effeminate look that is evident also on *servi triclinarii* and wine-servers of the “somatic norm” type in banquet scenes in mosaic and painting, discussed above.<sup>48</sup> Although the *triclinarii* with corkscrew locks are not wine-servers, their appearance brings to mind Seneca's comment regarding the

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<sup>47</sup>Although the *trulleus* the servant holds is very small and seems rather inadequate for its purpose as a vessel for hand-washing, his proximity to the youth carrying the dish of poultry suggests that he is to be on hand for hand-washing, and therefore, in spite of its size the *trulleus* is for that purpose.

<sup>48</sup>See supra p. 130.

effeminate looks of certain wine-servers.<sup>49</sup>

The banquet scenes with processions of servants approaching the reclining diner bearing food, drink, and water for hand-washing on sarcophagi are, like the scenes of outdoor picnics discussed earlier, expressions of luxury and prestige. The importance of conveying the right impression through appropriate slaves is revealed in Horace's satirical portrait of a host whose preoccupation is that all his slaves should be well dressed and neat.<sup>50</sup> That some hosts did not get the etiquette right, with disastrous results, must be the point to Petronius' hilarious account of a dinner party given by his fictional hero Trimalchio.<sup>51</sup> In that fantastical banquet the slaves in charge of hand-washing bring wine instead of water in a unique hand-washing experience: *Subinde intraverunt duo Aethiopes capillati cum pusillis utribus, quales solent esse qui harenam in amphitheatro spargunt, vinumque dedere in manus; aquam enim nemo porrexit.* (Petr. 34).

The hand-washers in Petronius' story, described as *aethiopes capillati*, have been the subject of much comment from scholars who have provided various interpretations of the phrase, and have argued that although the text mentions *aethiopes capillati*, the phrase should not be taken literally. Unfortunately some of the arguments supporting the sound premise have been seriously flawed. One scholar suggests, suprisingly, that since Blacks

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<sup>49</sup>Sen. Ep. 47.7.

<sup>50</sup>Hor. Sat. 2.8.69-70.

<sup>51</sup>Petronius, Satyricon.



do not have long hair, the reference cannot be to them.<sup>52</sup> According to another they are “[white] slaves got up as negroes”.<sup>53</sup> And according to Ville, who compares those slaves to children who carry wineskins in the arena “elle ne porte pas sur la couleur des serviteurs, mais sur le fait que ce sont des pueri, comme à l'amphithéâtre avec une outre sur l'épaule”.<sup>54</sup> While it is indeed the status of the slaves that is intended by the designation *capillatus*, the slaves should still be understood as *Aethiopes*. That the slaves are described as *Aethiopes* is not fortuitous, since the theme of the account is vulgar ostentation by a 'nouveau riche'.

Trimalchio goes overboard in his attempt to give a sumptuous banquet in the decor of his rooms, the foods and wines he serves, the entertainment he provides, and the slaves who carry out all his orders. Trimalchio has Aethiopian slaves because they are an appropriate mark of luxury, and he arranges for these luxury slaves to bring, instead of the customary water for hand-washing, wine, no doubt to show how wealthy he is. That his Aethiopians are *capillati* only points to their servile status, since *capillatus* is indicative of both the hairstyle which marked one as a slave, as well as the servile state itself.<sup>55</sup> Trimalchio himself used to be *capillatus* and boasts of his rise to wealth and

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<sup>52</sup>M. A. Sedgwick, *The Cena Trimalchionis* 2nd ed. (Oxford 1949) 94.

<sup>53</sup>W. D. Lowe, *Cena Trimalchionis* (London 1905) 25.

<sup>54</sup>G. Ville, *La gladiature en occident, des origines à la mort de Domitien* (BEFAR v. 240, Rome 1981) 377, n. 71.

<sup>55</sup>Long hair was worn also by young boys of free and even of noble birth, known as *camilli*, acolytes of Roman cults. It was also the hairstyle of the imperial guard, who should be seen as Germanic, on monuments

power since his days as a sexual favourite of his owners.<sup>56</sup> He was one of those *capillati* who were also *delicati*, the type referred to pityingly by Seneca (Ep. 95.24), who stood all through the banquet and then were required to satisfy the desires of their masters in the bedroom.<sup>57</sup>

*Capillatus* is not applied to an *Aethiops* elsewhere in the literary evidence, yet in the 3rd c. A.C. the iconographical representations of youths with corkscrew locks carrying water-pitcher, patera and towel to guests for hand-washing recall Petronius' *aethiopes capillati*.

The motif of the black hand-washer occurs only on sarcophagi, whereas "somatic norm" type handwashers appear in both funerary and secular contexts: for example, in the picnic scene on the hunting mosaic from Tellaro (Cat. no. 12, Fig. 40), also on the silver *missorium* from Cesena (Italy),<sup>58</sup> on a mosaic from Dougga,<sup>59</sup> and on sarcophagi in Berlin and the Vatican.<sup>60</sup>

Related to the youths carrying food, drink, and hand-washing equipment is the

of the 4th - 6th centuries A.C.: Balty (supra n. 32) 310-311. In all cases the hairstyle is linked to the idea of service.

<sup>56</sup>Petr. 75-76.

<sup>57</sup>Cf. a mocking reference to a black favourite: "...si fruitur tristi Canius Aethiope..." (Martial 7.87).

<sup>58</sup>Arias (supra n. 30) 309-44.

<sup>59</sup>Dunbabin, MRNA 123, pl. 114.

<sup>60</sup>Berlin: Amedick, Vita 124, cat. no. 21, pl. 22.5. Vatican: Amedick, Vita 164, cat. no. 286, pls. 15.2,4 and 17.4.

motif a youth with corkscrew locks carrying a platter of food, that appears on a sarcophagus of the last quarter of the 3rd c. A. C. in Copenhagen (Cat. no. 28, Fig. 47). In the scene three boats, each manned by a crew of three men, sail on a sea with tossing waves. In the water there are dolphins and a drowning person. At the extreme right end of the scene is a lighthouse, and at the opposite end there is a two-storeyed edifice from which two men stand watching the sailing vessels. The youth appears in the lower storey. Dressed in a belted tunic, and carrying a platter of food, he stands looking out of the open doorway at the sailing vessels. Outside the building stands a youth of the “somatic norm” type dressed in a tunic with a cloak thrown over his shoulders, and carrying a small basket in his right hand.<sup>61</sup>

The iconography of the youth carrying the platter of food is similar to that of the previously mentioned Black hand-washers on sarcophagi. His attribute of a platter containing food is also similar to that of the food-bearers accompanying the hand-washers, even though none of those food-bearers have been portrayed with attributes of the Black. Unlike the other Black servants and bearers of food, this youth does not appear in a scene of dining activity, but rather in the different context of a shipping scene which may reflect the occupation or interests of the deceased patron, or indicate how he died.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>He is identified as a *viator* through his attributes of basket and cloak, See Amedick, Vita 130, cat. no. 57. See also discussion of *cursores* infra this chapter.

<sup>62</sup>For other sarcophagi with shipping scenes, see Amedick, Vita 55-58.

## II. Attendants in Excursion scenes

### Cursores

Youths with long corkscrew locks appear not only in dining scenes as *servi tricliniarii*, but also as *cursores* or (runners) in excursion scenes adorning the lids of a number of late 3rd c. A.C. sarcophagi from Rome (Cat. nos. 35, 31, 32, 33, 34, figs. 48, 49, 50, 51, 52).<sup>63</sup> The duty of the *cursor* was to run ahead of carriage to facilitate the passage of the vehicle and its occupants by clearing the road of any obstacles or unwanted attention.

The excursion scene on the sarcophagi usually consists of a couple or a single person riding in a carriage, attended by a procession of *cursores* and outriders. The setting may in some cases be clearly indicated by shrubbery and city monuments. The excursion scenes reflected the wealth and status of the deceased, but could also be regarded as an allegory of the deceased's *cursus vitae*.<sup>64</sup> The excursions of the wealthy are a subject frequently addressed by poets, satirists and moralists of the empire.<sup>65</sup> Seneca (Ep. 87.9), decrying the decadence of the times, wishes that Cato, who had been a man of simple tastes, could meet one of these wealthy parties on the road:

*O quam cuperem illi nunc occurrere aliquem ex his trossulis in via  
cursores et Numidas et multum ante se pulveris agentem. Hic sine dubio*

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<sup>63</sup>For a commentary on *cursores* and *viatores*, see W. Weber, Die Darstellungen einer Wagenfahrt auf römischen Sarkophagdeckeln und Loculusplatten des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. (Rome 1978) 56-59.

<sup>64</sup>See Amedick, Vita 54.

<sup>65</sup>Friedländer, Sittengeschichte I, 341-342.

*cultior comitatorque quam M. Cato videretur, hic, qui inter illos apparatus delicatos cum maxime dubitat, utrum se ad gladium locet an ad cultrum.*

Seneca (Ep. 123.7) fulminates again:

*Omnes iam sic peregrinantur, ut illos Numidarum praecurrat equitatus, ut agmen cursorum antecedit, turpe est nullos esse, qui occurrentis via deiciant, aut qui honestum hominem venire magno pulvere ostendant.*

The mention of Numidian outriders riding ahead of the carriage in the excursions of the wealthy recalls the reputation North Africans had of being excellent horsemen.<sup>66</sup> A sarcophagus fragment in Stockholm (Cat. no. 34, Fig. 52), discussed below, and others of the Tetrarchic period show riders accompanying carriages of the wealthy, but on those the riders are not distinguishable from other figures of the “somatic norm”.<sup>67</sup> It is rather among the *cursores* that one finds figures that are distinguishable from the “somatic norm”.

In a fragment from the catacomb of S. Callisto in Rome (Cat. no. 35, Fig. 48), the *cursor* is a youth with nape-length corkscrew locks who carries a pitcher in his right hand and runs behind a carriage which has only one visible occupant. In another fragment, in Turin (Cat. no. 31, Fig. 49), a youth with the same kind of hairstyle is shown running, in this case in front of the carriage which has two occupants. He carries not a pitcher, but rather a baton in his left hand. The two occupants are shown in conversation, while a third

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<sup>66</sup>See discussion supra Chapter 2.

<sup>67</sup>Fragment, Ostia, Museo Nazionale, (A.D. 300): Amedick, *Vita* Cat. no. 106, pl. 42.4. Fragment, Valkenberg, Museum der "Katakombe", (end of 3rd c. A.C.): Amedick, *Vita* cat. no. 255, pl. 44.6.

individual controls the horses. The heads of one occupant and of the carriage driver are missing. The outdoor setting is clearly indicated by a building and a tree.

In the third example, in Ostia, three *cursores* are present (Cat. no. 32, Fig. 50). The lid fragment shows three youths with corkscrew locks in front of two horses. Any attributes they might have carried are lost, but the *cursor* in the middle of the group has a towel over his left shoulder.

Multiple *cursores* are found on two more sarcophagus fragments. One fragment now in the Museo Nazionale Romano (Cat. no. 33, Fig. 51), shows a *cursor* with corkscrew locks carrying a baton, standing in front of the horses, while beside him runs a *cursor* of the “somatic norm” type, carrying a fan (or shell) and a towel. The fragment in Stockholm shows a very detailed excursion scene with two *cursores* of the “somatic norm” type, a figure with corkscrew curls who might also be a *cursor*, a carriage driver, an outrider, and a seated couple (Cat. no. 34, Fig. 52). Only the head and shoulders of the *cursor* with corkscrew locks are clearly visible, the rest of his body hidden by the horses and by one of the other *cursores*. The *cursor* is portrayed with a beardless yet mature-looking face that is different from the smooth, chubby faces of the other figures on foot. Although attributes like towels, batons, or pitchers have not survived, it can be deduced from the context of the carriage ride and the effeminate and well-groomed appearance of the two “somatic norm” figures in front of and behind the horses that all are *cursores*. The presence of figures with corkscrew locks who are *cursores* in the other excursion scenes also suggests that the figure with corkscrew locks in the Stockholm

sarcophagus might, in spite of his mature-looking face, have been intended as a representation of a Black.

The objects, pitcher, towel and baton, carried by the *cursores* were for the purpose of ensuring the comfort of the person or persons riding in the carriage.<sup>68</sup> The pitcher contained water for refreshment, the towel probably was for freshening up, and the baton was used to clear the way of unwanted interference.<sup>69</sup> The pitcher and towel are attributes shared with wine-servers and hand-washers discussed earlier.

It has been argued that the *cursores* might have been *servi triclinarii* doing double duty.<sup>70</sup> But this is unlikely, for although the long hair and well-groomed appearance of *cursores* do recall that of the *servi triclinarii*, the two types of servants performed separate and different functions. The inappropriateness of a *cursor* waiting at table has already been noted in regard to the *cursor Gaetulus* serving wine at a dinner party.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, although on the sarcophagi the two types share a similar iconography as luxury slaves, the *cursor* would have had to be a hardy type with the stamina to run ahead of the carriage and shove unwanted interferers out of the way. Seneca, however, makes it clear that *paedagogia* (luxury indoor servants) were carried: *Omnium paedagogia oblita facie vehuntur, ne sol, ne frigus teneram cutem laeda; turpe*

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<sup>68</sup>Other attributes of *cursores* were a torch and a small basket or pouch for money, see Amedick, *Vita* 50.

<sup>69</sup>Balty (supra n. 32) 304 and n. 28.

<sup>70</sup>Balty (supra n. 32) 303-304.

<sup>71</sup>Juv. 5.52-53.

*est neminem esse in comitatu tuo puerorum, cuius sana facies medicamentum desideret* (Ep. 123.7). The hothouse appearance of these latter, as opposed to the hardness of the *cursores*, is emphasised in the observation that they covered their faces with ointment to protect their complexions.

The evidence of the foregoing examples allows one to recognise an established iconography for the black *cursor* in excursion scenes on sarcophagus lids of the late 3rd c. A.C. He shares with *cursores* of the “somatic norm” type the knee-length belted tunic and attributes of pitcher, baton and towel, but his distinguishing feature is his hairstyle of corkscrew locks, which differentiates him from the “somatic norm” figures. It is this hairstyle which suggests that the artist intended that figure to be seen as a representation of a Black.

Seneca and Juvenal had decried the excesses of the wealthy who paraded their splendid servants, pretty and exotic boys, and Numidian outriders before the public, but the importance of displaying one’s wealth and status is evident in the choices of the patrons in the Tetrarchic period who commissioned sarcophagi decorated with excursion themes.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Sen. Ep. 87.9; 123.7; Juv. 7.136ff. The popularity of the theme of *cursores* is borne out by the numbers; see Amedick, *Vita* 46, for a list of excursion scenes on sarcophagi, the majority of which contain



### III. Attendants in other scenes

#### Capsarius

A figure with somatic characteristics of the Black appears in the role of *capsarius* on a sarcophagus from Rome (Cat. no. 36, Fig. 53), now in the Louvre, dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.C.<sup>73</sup> The scenes on the sarcophagus represent a youth's curriculum vitae or episodes from his life. The *capsarius* wears a short belted tunic and carries a small basket in his left hand. He is shown standing behind his smaller charge who reads to his *paedagogus* from a scroll. The middle portion of the sarcophagus is taken up with a scene of mourners around the laid-out deceased youth; and on the right end his birth is depicted. The lesson scene at the left end of the composition brings to life literary references in the sources to the education of boys. Some authors mention the *capsarius*, a slave, often a boy himself, who accompanied the child to his lessons and carried all his academic paraphernalia for him.<sup>74</sup>

Like the other distinctive figures in some Roman sarcophagi of the 3rd c. A.C. and the Tetrarchic period, the youth in the lesson scene is probably to be identified as a Black by his hair, which is styled in short corkscrew locks close to his head. But he also has full lips and a broad nose, two somatic characteristics of the Black which do not

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representations of *cursores*.

<sup>73</sup>For a discussion of "curriculum vitae" on sarcophagi see Amedick, *Vita* 60-81, and N. Kampen, "Biographical narration and Roman funerary art," *AJA* 85 (1981) 47-58.

<sup>74</sup>Juv. 10.117; Suet. *Gramm.* 23.

always appear so clearly in the other figures with corkscrew locks on the sarcophagi.

These latter characteristics, in combination with the hairstyle of corkscrew locks, convey quite clearly the intent of the artist to create a recognisable image of a Black.

The attribute which identifies him as *capsarius* is the small basket he carries in his left hand, while his presence in the lesson scene, and his proximity to the reading boy further reinforce the identification.

The only other figure of a *capsarius* standing behind a reading boy appears in another lesson scene on a sarcophagus from Agrigentum dated to between 120-130 A.C.<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, since the head is missing, it is unclear whether the figure is intended as a Black or a “somatic norm” type. A few differences occur in dress and attribute between the two representations of the *capsarius*. Unlike the *capsarius* on the sarcophagus in the Louvre (Cat. no. 36, Fig. 53) who wears a simple short-sleeved belted tunic, the Agrigentum one wears a cloak over a knee-length tunic. Instead of the small basket his attribute is a satchel slung across his chest. The *capsarius* depicted on the sarcophagus from the Louvre (Cat. no. 36, Fig. 53) is, therefore, a unique example of a Black in this role. It acquires even greater significance when we consider that out of the number of examples of lesson scenes on sarcophagi, only two depict the *capsarius*, of which the Louvre example is one.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Agrigentum, Museo Regionale. Amedick, *Vita* 121, cat. 2, pl. 53.1-3.

<sup>76</sup>For examples of sarcophagi without *capsarius* in the lesson scene, Cf. Amedick, *Vita*, cat. no. 114, pl. 54.2, 55.3-4; cat. no. 171, pl. 55.1; cat. no. 236, pl. 55.2 (muses and Hermes accompany the child); cat. no. 107, pl. 57.3; cat. no. 178, pl. 59.1 (classroom setting with other children); cat. no. 94, pl. 61.5; cat. no. 179,

### Attendant in bath procession

A male figure with corkscrew locks portrayed in a group of two men and a child, on the previously mentioned sarcophagus from the Isola Sacra dated to the last quarter of the 3rd c. A.C. (Cat. no. 24, Fig. 37) is another example of a Black in a domestic context.<sup>77</sup> The scene is depicted to the right of the *tabula ansata* of a sarcophagus lid. The various attributes of the figures include a money purse carried by the older bearded man, a patera by the child, and towels by all four. Although it has been suggested that the group consists of the deceased husband and his entourage going into the city, it seems more likely that the group is going to the baths.<sup>78</sup> The proximity of this scene to that which shows the *domina* at her toilette attended by her serving-maids, suggests that we interpret the other group as the *dominus* and his attendants going to attend to his own ablutions. In the more luxurious group of figures attending the *domina* at her bath depicted on the silver casket of Projecta, another figure carries a patera just as the child in the scene on the Isola Sacra sarcophagus does.<sup>79</sup>

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pl. 62.7, 63.2; cat. no. 301, pl. 61.7; cat. no. 125, pl. 62.5.

<sup>77</sup>See discussion *supra* Chapter 3.

<sup>78</sup>For the interpretation that the group is setting out for the city, see Amedick, *Vita* 108-109. That interpretation is based on her identification of the child carrying patera and towel, whose hairstyle she suggests is the *cirrus*, as a *cursor* type, as well as on the presence of the money purse carried by the older man which suggests a short trip. Amedick notes that it has also been suggested that the hairstyle identifies the child as female, perhaps the daughter of the bearded man: S. Episcopo, *QuadChieti I* (1980) 57 (*non vidi*).

<sup>79</sup>K. Shelton, *The Esquiline treasure* (London 1981) pl. 6. .

Long-haired youths of the “somatic norm” type appear in scenes of the toilette of the *dominus* and *domina* in the sumptuous mosaics in the baths complex at Piazza Armerina,<sup>80</sup> and in a fragment of a fourth century mosaic from Baths D at Antioch.<sup>81</sup> It is not clear whether the youth with corkscrew locks on the Isola Sacra sarcophagus (Cat. no. 34, Fig. 37) has long hair. If he did he would be comparable to the long-haired *servi tricliniarum* discussed above, and would therefore belong to the larger tradition of luxury long-haired slaves, including those of the fourth century examples mentioned above. Nevertheless the parallel between the sentiment in the reference from the Rhetorica ad Herennium, about the vain youth wishing to have an Aethiopian to accompany him to the baths (4.50.63), and the sarcophagus relief with a Black in a bath procession is significant.

### Conclusions

Unlike the groups of a black youth curled up or sleeping beside a vessel or carrying an object that are typical in Greek and Hellenistic art, representations of black servants performing specific duties in fairly detailed scenes offer clearly recognisable contexts for studying the iconography. In these scenes we recognise the wine-server, youth blowing on flames for heating water, youth bearing food, or carrying vessels for the

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<sup>80</sup>*Domina* accompanied by servants (Corridor 14), *Dominus* accompanied by servants (*frigidarium*, exedra B): Carandini et al, Filosofiana 354, folio LIX, 140, pl. II.

<sup>81</sup>D. Levi, Antioch Mosaic Pavements (Princeton 1959) 285, pl. LXV .

washing of hands, the *cursor*, the *capsarius*, and the personal attendant accompanying the *dominus* to the bath. The largest number of representations of servants showing determinative elements from the iconography of the Black appears on sarcophagi. The main determinative feature in these representations, which are monochrome at least in the present state, is the hair, which is depicted as corkscrew locks, and which suggests that the artist intended the figure to be identified as a Black. In representations in polychrome mosaic, however, skin colour, depicted clearly and significantly darker than that of “somatic norm” figures, is the principal basis, sometimes reinforced by hair-type, for identifying a figure as a Black.

Comparisons between the iconographic and literary traditions suggest that the type of subject or theme being represented also influenced the choice of which types of diagnostic features the artists chose to stress. The literary sources speak mainly of *Mauri*, *Gaetuli*, and *Numidae*, in the context of domestic slaves like *cursores*, of which there are so many examples on sarcophagi, and of the wine-server.<sup>82</sup> It is surely significant that the substitute wine-servers referred to by Juvenal as *Maurus*, and *cursor Gaetulus* (5.52-55), are described as black; that the wine-server in the mosaic from Hippo Regius is depicted with very dark skin colour; and that the *cursores* on the sarcophagi are portrayed with corkscrew locks. This raises again the question of the overlapping or merging of the

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<sup>82</sup>Juv. 5.52-53; Sen. *Ep.* 87.9, 123.7.

iconography of the Black/Aethiopian and the North African.<sup>83</sup>

Of the other types of servant - hand-washers, bath attendant, and *capsarius* - only the *capsarius* is not mentioned in the literary sources in any instance as a Black. Black hand-washers, who constitute another major group depicted on the sarcophagi, are mentioned once in the literary evidence where they appear as two Aethiopian slaves in Trimalchio's banquet.<sup>84</sup>

The servants depicted with features of the Black, like the servants rendered according to the "somatic norm" in the 3rd century Roman sarcophagi and the 4th century mosaics from North Africa and Sicily, belong to a wider iconography that was intended to convey the patrons' luxury and status. Finally, although servants of the "somatic norm" and Black types occur in scenes of outdoor picnics, the Black was considered the most appropriate choice in that context, for when it was possible to depict only one servant in the picnic scene, the artist's choice is the Black.

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<sup>83</sup>See discussion of overlapping or merging of the iconography of the Black/Aethiopian and the North African, *supra* Chapter 2.

<sup>84</sup>Petr. 34.4.

CHAPTER 5  
REPRESENTATIONS IN SPECTACLE

When Juvenal (10.78-81) observed that the overriding interests of the Roman people were *panem et circenses*, and Martial (Spect. 3.10) wrote that even peoples from the most distant barbarian lands came to the spectacles, they were addressing the importance of public entertainment in Roman civic life. *Ludi*, and *ludi circenses*, were games and theatrical performances played out in the circus and elsewhere, while *munera* usually consisted of gladiatorial fights and wild beast hunts or *venationes*. There were also athletic *agones* (competitions), which took place in the stadium and circus, among other places. But in Rome athletic competitions were never as popular as *munera* and chariot races.

Four circus factions, *Albata*, *Russata*, *Veneta*, and *Prasina*, controlled the operations of the races, providing the horses, *aurigae*, trainers, and the numerous staff that made the races possible. Furthermore, the factions, each sporting its colour, provided a rallying point for the loyalties of the fans.<sup>1</sup> But it was not only the faction colours that drew such passion from their fans. Victorious charioteers were adored by their fans,

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<sup>1</sup>The intense loyalties of the fans to the colours is commented on by Pliny (Ep. 9.6).

among whom were emperors.<sup>2</sup> Statues were erected in honour of the victors (Lucian Nigrinus 29), and they were extolled in verses (Martial 10.53).<sup>3</sup> The winning horses of the teams were equally popular, and some favourites were even immortalised in art.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to gladiatorial combats, *venationes*, and wild animal tricks, the executions of public enemies such as criminals and, later in the imperial period, Christians, were also part of the *munus*. These public enemies were condemned to be thrown to the beasts (*damnatio ad bestias*), or beheaded or even burned alive (*ad flammam*). And sometimes the executions of the condemned were staged as part of theatrical performances.<sup>5</sup>

The *munus*, which may have originated in the 3rd c. B.C., flourished until about the 5th c. A.C.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the Augustan period a full day's spectacle of *venationes* in

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<sup>2</sup>Eutychus, a charioteer, was given 2 million *sesterces* by Caligula (Suetonius, Caligula 55.2).

<sup>3</sup>Martial's epigram (10.53) has Scorpus lamenting his own death, but we are also provided with an idea of the high esteem accorded Scorpus as a successful charioteer:

*Ille ego sum Scorpus clamosi gloria circi/ plausus, Roma, tui deliciaeque breves/ invida quem Lachesis raptum trieteride nona/ dum numerat palmas, credidit esse senem.*

I am Scorpus, glory of the clamorous circus, your applause, Rome, and brief darling.  
Envious Lachesis snatched me away before my twenty-seventh year, but counting my victories, believed me an old man.

<sup>4</sup>For example, a mosaic dated to the 4th or 5th c. A.C. from Oued Athmenia (Algeria), which showed among stables and other buildings, horses with their names inscribed beside them, and the inscription VINCAS NON VINCAS TE AMAMUS POLYDOXE ("Win or lose, we love you Polydoxus"). See Dunbabin, MRNA 267.

<sup>5</sup>See K. M. Coleman, "Fatal Charades: Roman executions staged as mythological enactments," JRS 80 (1989) 44-73.

<sup>6</sup>For general overviews on the development of the *munus*: J.-C. Golvin & C. Landes, Amphithéâtres et Gladiateurs (Paris 1990); G. Ville, La Gladiature en Occident, des origines à la mort de Domitien (BEFAR 240, Rome 1981); Friedländer, Sittengeschichte II, 50-112.



the morning, midday entertainments, and gladiatorial combats in the afternoon, was performed in the amphitheatre or its equivalent.<sup>7</sup>

Although at Rome competitive athletics were denounced by the upper classes and by the moralists who found the nudity involved offensive, and the competition pointless, in the provinces the *agones* were popular.<sup>8</sup> The events of the *agones* included foot-races, boxing, pankration, wrestling, and other athletic contests.

The popularity of the spectacles is evident in the development and spread of mosaics, reliefs, sarcophagi, terracottas and works in other decorative media, with scenes based on that theme. The artistic evidence is found throughout the empire, especially in Italy, North Africa, Spain, France, but with the greatest concentrations in Italy and North Africa.<sup>9</sup>

Earlier researchers have argued that the circus and amphitheatre are two contexts

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<sup>7</sup>Midday entertainments included executions of criminals, the carrying out of sentences also against those condemned to the beasts, acrobatics, parades, and animal tricks: See Golvin and Landes (supra n. 6) 189.

<sup>8</sup>See Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte* II, 145-159. Cf. Cic. *Mar.* 713; Cic. *Tusc.* 4.33.1; Plutarch, *Moralia* 274; Sen. *Ep.* 80.2-3. On popularity of athletic competition in North Africa, see M. Khanoussi, "Les spectacles des jeux athlétiques et de pugilat dans l'Afrique Romaine," *RM* 98 (1991) 315-322. On Greek and Roman sport: M. Poliakoff, *Combat sports in the ancient world* (Ann Arbor 1987); J. P. Thuillier, *Le sport dans la Rome antique* (Paris 1996); ead., review of *Combat sports in the ancient world* in *JRA* 1 (1988) 97-103.

<sup>9</sup>See the following publications which collectively provide an excellent overview of the monuments and include good references and photographs: S. Brown, "Death as decoration. Scenes from the Arena on Roman domestic mosaics," in A. Richlin ed., *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (Oxford 1992) 180-211; Golvin and Landes (supra n. 6); M. Junkelmann, *Die Reiter Roms. Reise, Jagd, Triumph und Circusrennen v.I* (Mainz 1990); *Les Gladiateurs. Musée archéologique de Lattes. Exposition Lattes 26 Mai - 4 Juillet 1987, Toulouse 13 Juillet - debut Septembre 1987* (Lattes 1987); J. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses: Arenas for Chariot Racing* (London 1986); A. Hönle and A. Henze, *Römische Amphitheäter und Stadien, Gladiatorenkämpfe und Circusspiele* (Freiburg 1981); A. Cameron, *Circus Factions, Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford 1976); Dunbabin, *MRNA* 65-108; L. Vogel, "Chariot race scenes in the Early Roman Empire," *ArtBull* 51 (1969) 155-160.

in which the ancient literary sources and the artistic traditions frequently introduce the Black.<sup>10</sup> A re-examination of the evidence, however, requires that these earlier assessments be revised. Also, while representations of the Black in athletic themes have received very little attention from previous researchers, the evidence appears to indicate that the athletic theme was another area in which artists chose to depict figures with somatic characteristics of the Black.

The iconographic and literary evidence pertaining to Blacks will be examined according to the following categories: I. Ludi Circenses (Cat. nos. 14, 15, 16, Figs. 56, 57, 58); II. Munera (Cat. nos. 17, 53, 56, 54, 55, 18, Figs. 59, 60, 62, 63, 71, 64); and III. Athletic Agones (Cat. nos. 9, 8, 10, 51, 52, Figs. 66, 67, 68, 69, 70).<sup>11</sup>

## I. LUDI CIRCENSES

### Background: Expressions of the Circus Theme in Art

The three examples (Cat. nos. 14, 15, 16, Figs. 56, 57, 58) with figures in circus scenes that show somatic characteristics of the Black are mosaics, a medium in which the circus theme frequently appears. In mosaics the circus theme is expressed in artistic styles which may be broadly categorized as serving: (a) a narrative or illustrative purpose, where races are shown in progress in the circus and setting is represented by various

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<sup>10</sup>Beardsley, Negro 103, no. 227; Bugner, Image 18; Snowden, Blacks 163, 166-168; Thompson, Romans and Blacks 147.

<sup>11</sup>Although athletic competitions sometimes took place in the circus, I separate the athletic evidence from the circus scenes, because the group of circus scenes I discuss are primarily concerned with chariot-races.

elements of the physical circus such as the *spina*, *meta* (turning post), *ova*, and *carceres* (starting gates); (b) a commemorative intent, in which isolated motifs from the repertoire, usually horses and charioteers, are simplified or schematized and suggest, or stand in place of, fuller and more detailed composition and glorify a favourite; and (c) a symbolic purpose, when the circus theme alludes to the beneficent character of victory, or when the circus theme is an allegory of the cosmos.<sup>12</sup>

The narrative/illustrative rendition of the circus theme occurs on the Mosaic of the Great Circus at Piazza Armerina that shows a circus race in progress, in great detail (Fig. 54).<sup>13</sup> The various faction charioteers are racing in the circus. One *quadriga* has been involved in a *naufragium* (accident). The others are racing around the *spina*, which shows the *euripus*, *metae*, *delphines*, *ova*, obelisk, statue of the Magna Mater on her lion, as well as several other elements. Porticoes and temples in the circus building are evident. *Sparsores* and other circus functionaries are also represented.<sup>14</sup> A victory palm and prize bag are presented to the charioteer of the Greens by a magistrate accompanied by a trumpeter.

Not all depictions of the circus theme using the narrative format are as detailed in

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<sup>12</sup>See Dunbabin, *MRNA* 88-108: the categories are given and discussed with particular reference to the North African mosaics.

<sup>13</sup>Carandini et al, *Filosofiana* 335-342, figs. 201-206, pls. LVI-LVII; Dunbabin, *MRNA* 90, 208 and pl. 207. For a summary of the debate over the date of the Piazza Armerina mosaics see Dunbabin, *MRNA* 243-245. For other examples of monuments that attempt a factual rendition of circus scenes, see Dunbabin, *MRNA* 90; Vogel (*supra* n. 9) 155-160.

<sup>14</sup>The *sparsor* refreshed the overheated horses with water, shouted acclamations and encouragements to his

the representation of setting and action as the Piazza Armerina “Great Circus” mosaic. In less detailed representations the various elements of the physical circus might be pared down to a greater or lesser extent. For example in the “Small Circus” mosaic from Piazza Armerina, where the circus race is parodied by children racing bird *bigae* in the arena, the physical circus has been reduced to a *spina* with *metae* on each end and an obelisk in the centre of the *euripus*.<sup>15</sup> A similar reduction of elements occurs on a mosaic of the end of the 2nd c. A.C. from Lyons, which shows the race taking place inside a circus that is represented only by the *spina* and the *carceres*.<sup>16</sup>

Isolated motifs or figures taken from the circus repertoire and placed within a setting more or less devoid of elements of the circus building, are another expression of the circus theme. In the monuments which employ this kind of format for a commemorative purpose, representations of victorious charioteers and favourite horses are popular.<sup>17</sup> The Mosaic of the Charioteer Eros at Dougga, dated towards the end of the 4th century, is illustrative of the commemorative type of circus scenes.<sup>18</sup> The victorious charioteer of the Green faction, with his winning team of horses, is shown frontally,

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faction charioteer and team, and may have performed other duties in the faction.

<sup>15</sup>Dunbabin, MRNA 91; Carandini et al, Filosofiana 335-342, figs. 201-206, pls. LVI-LVII.

<sup>16</sup>Dunbabin, MRNA 90; H. Stern, Recueil général des mosaïques de la Gaule II: Lyonnaise I (Paris 1967) no.73, pp. 63-69, pls. XLVII-LIV.

<sup>17</sup>For a discussion of representations of victorious charioteers, see K. M. D. Dunbabin, "The victorious charioteer on mosaics and related monuments," AJA 86 (1982) 65-86.

<sup>18</sup>Inv. Tun. 540; Dunbabin (supra n. 17) 74-75.

holding a wreath and his whip in his raised right hand, and in his left, the palm of victory.<sup>19</sup> The names of two of the horses are inscribed above them; AMAND[V]S and FRVNITVS. Above the charioteer is the acclamation EROS OMNIA PER [TE]. The only indication of the circus building is a schematized depiction of a row of *carceres* at the upper right corner of the mosaic.

Conceived in the same spirit is a mosaic of the 3rd century from a house at Sousse (Fig. 55).<sup>20</sup> It is composed in two registers, and features four horses, very likely favourites, one pair in the upper and the other pair in the lower register, each accompanied by an attendant wearing a tunic in his faction colour. Each horse-and-attendant group represents one of the circus factions. The horses' association with the circus is evident from their bandaged forelegs, beribboned tails, the crests of palm branches on their heads, the blankets on their necks and the whips carried by the attendants. Each horse, PVPILLVS, AMATOR, CVPIDO, and AVRA, has its name inscribed above it.

Arguments that there was a complicated mysticism and symbolism behind the use of the circus theme are not convincing, for the symbolism in the monuments appears rather to be of a simple beneficent nature.<sup>21</sup> The arguments for an involved symbolism are

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<sup>19</sup>The frontal pose becomes the preferred scheme for depictions of the victorious charioteer from the mid third century onwards. See Dunbabin (*supra* n. 17) 65, 74-75. For the charioteer in the frontal chariot, see also A. Cameron, *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (Oxford 1973).

<sup>20</sup> Dunbabin, *MRNA* 95.

<sup>21</sup>Dunbabin (*MRNA* 98) questions the arguments of A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, the foremost proponents of

based on a theory in literature that regarded the circus as a representation in miniature for the universe, in which all the various physical elements of the circus building had a symbolic interpretation.<sup>22</sup>

### Mosaics with representations of the Black

From the Maison des Chevaux in Carthage comes the well-known Mosaic of the Horses which was situated in the oecus of the house.<sup>23</sup> The pavement, datable to shortly after 300 A.C., consists of alternating panels of *opus sectile* and figural mosaics arranged in a chequerboard pattern. Although some of the mosaic panels are either totally or partially destroyed, the majority are well preserved and contain representations of various circus functionaries and horses. *Sparsores*, wearing the faction colours and holding amphorae, appear in four panels at the sides. In the top row there is a victorious charioteer of the red faction, holding a palm and whip, running. Behind him is a small figure that could be a *sparsor*. Salomonson suggests that the charioteers of the other factions could have been the subject of three missing panels.<sup>24</sup> The rest of the figured panels each contain a horse accompanied by a human figure, possibly a groom, or accompanied by a

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that theory. For the arguments, see A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, "Factions du cirque et Saisons sur des mosaïques de Tunisie," in Mélanges Picard (RA 1949) 732-745.

<sup>22</sup>P. Wuilleumier, "Cirque et Astrologie," MEFR xlv (1927) 184-209; for a summary of the question, see Dunbabin, MRNA 88-89.

<sup>23</sup>Salomonson, La Mosaïque aux chevaux 31-32, 52-126.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Dunbabin MRNA 95 and n. 24.

small vignette which might have a mythological or realistic theme.<sup>25</sup> The composition appears to commemorate favourite race-horses of the day. All the subjects of this mosaic: victorious charioteer, *sparsores*, and horses are taken from the circus.

On one of the figural panels of the Mosaic of the Horses is a very dark-skinned man standing beside a dark brown horse (Cat. no. 14, Fig. 56). The association of the horse with the circus is evident in the horse's bandaged forelegs and in the palm frond on its head. It also bears a black stable mark on its flank. The male figure wears a yellow and brown striped tunic. He stands with his right leg outstretched and the left one bent. With his right hand he leads the horse by the bridle. In his other hand he held a thin stick or a crop (now damaged). A large area of his torso, his right arm, and right leg are damaged.

This male figure is differentiated from the figures in the other panels by his very dark colouring and by the treatment of his hair. Unlike the hair of the other figures, which is rendered in smooth outlines formed by more or less regular lines of tesserae, his has been rendered in an uneven, almost jagged manner. This treatment of the hair represented very curly hair, and recalls that of the figures in the group of black-and-white mosaics discussed previously.<sup>26</sup> The published photograph does not allow for close examination of other features of the attendant beside the horse, but Salomonson, taking into consideration all somatic features, skin colour, the lower part of the broad nose, and the

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<sup>25</sup>For other mosaics with winning horses, see M. Ennaïfer, "Le thème des chevaux vainqueurs à travers la série des mosaïques africaines," *MEFRA* 95 (1983) 817-858.

<sup>26</sup>See discussion *supra* Chapter 3.

fragmentary mouth, identifies this figure as “un nègre”.<sup>27</sup>

The identification of the dark male figure standing beside the dark brown horse, like that of the other figures beside horses in the mosaic, is considered crucial to the interpretation of the mosaic. This is because, according to Salomonson, the panels of the Mosaic of the Horses constitute a kind of erudite naming game in which the nomenclature of the horses is alluded to through the association of human and divine figures with the horses. So for example, one of the names “Neptunus”, “Neptunius” or “Poseidon”, would be appropriate for a horse accompanied by the figure of Neptune holding his trident.<sup>28</sup> The small scene of the She-Wolf suckling Romulus and Remus that accompanies another horse would suggest the names: “Lupus”, “Romulus”, “Remus”, “Roma” or “Luperculus”, *inter alia*.<sup>29</sup> If this method for interpreting the mosaic is correct, the Mosaic of the Horses would be an innovative departure from the usual type of mosaic in which horses' names are simply inscribed in the pavement.

In accordance with the spirit of the game, therefore, the dark-skinned man standing before the horse would suggest that the horse's name might be “Maurus”, “Maurusius”, “Mauriscus” or “Aethiops”<sup>30</sup> since these names contain allusions to the dark colouring of the *Maurus* and the *Aethiops*. Names of the kind mentioned above, that refer

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<sup>27</sup>Salomonson, La Mosaique aux chevaux 96.

<sup>28</sup>For the panel containing Neptune and horse, see Salomonson, La Mosaique aux chevaux 94-95, fig.7.

<sup>29</sup>Salomonson, La Mosaique aux chevaux 97-98, fig. 10.

<sup>30</sup>Salomonson, La Mosaique aux chevaux 95-96, fig. 8.



to a horse's colour or to its origin, are quite common throughout the empire.<sup>31</sup> But the name "Maurus" in particular seems appropriate, since allusions to the reputation of Moors as excellent horsemen might also have been recognised in it by ancient viewers.<sup>32</sup> That the artist has chosen to stress several of the distinguishing somatic traits of the Black in the figure beside the horse (Cat. no. 14, Fig. 56), is characteristic of a tradition in which the iconography of the Aethiopian is sometimes extended to, or conflated with, that of North Africans.

Other examples of the man-and-horse motif in a circus context can be found in the previously mentioned Mosaic of the Circus Factions from Sousse (Fig. 55), and in the Mosaic of the Faction Charioteers from Baccano (Italy).<sup>33</sup> But the black attendant accompanying the horse on the Mosaic of the Horses, who, unlike the figures in the two previous examples, wears neither the faction colours nor the costume of a charioteer, appears to have been derived from an earlier tradition of the black groom and horse, and

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<sup>31</sup>See Salomonson, *La Mosaïque aux chevaux* 86-89 for lists and additional references. One question that arises from this enquiry is whether, since horses were given names of this type, it might have been the case that charioteers too may have taken on names that referred to their ethnic origin? Such nomenclature would obviously be relevant for charioteers who were sufficiently different from the mass in colour or for those who would have wished to proclaim their ethnicity, since charioteers seem generally to have had ordinary names (Scorpus, Porphyrius, Marcianus), or names of divine heroes (Eros, Liber), or of good omen (Fortunatus). The charioteer Crescens, discussed below, proclaims his ethnicity as "natione Maurus" (ILS 5285) while Diocles, another charioteer, is referred to as being "natione Hispano" (CIL XIV 2884). While the names obviously refer to regions, it is not clear if Crescens would have been perceived as sufficiently different from the Mediterranean somatic norm.

<sup>32</sup>On the theme of the Moorish horsemen, cf. the Moorish horsemen on Trajan's column discussed supra Chapter 2; and also in a circus context, the Moorish charioteer Crescens discussed below.

<sup>33</sup>Sousse mosaic see refs. supra n. 20. Baccano mosaic: Junkelmann (supra n. 9) 132, Fig. 129; M. P. Tambella in G. Becatti et al, *Mosaici antichi in Italia, Reg. 7a, Baccano: Villa romana* (Rome 1970) 71-79,

transposed into the circus context.<sup>34</sup>

A fragment of a crudely executed mosaic from Seville (Spain), probably slightly later than the Mosaic of the Horses, contains the figure of a charioteer that may have been intended as a representation of a Black (Cat. no. 15, Fig. 57). The fragment is part of a pavement on which a chariot race in the circus is depicted in the narrative or illustrative format. The mosaic, which is datable probably to the 2nd half of the 4th c.A.C., shows a dark-coloured charioteer driving a *quadriga* in the circus. With his left hand he controls the reins of the four horses, and with the right holds aloft the characteristic whip. A *sparsor* stands beside a *meta*. The rounded end of the *spina* is also visible. Another fragment of mosaic from the same building also contains the figure of a charioteer driving a *quadriga*. It is possible that both fragments belong to the same mosaic.<sup>35</sup> In both fragments the figural elements appear against a neutral background above a geometric design of rosettes.

The figure of the charioteer (Cat. no. 15, Fig. 57) is executed in brownish-black tesserae for the whole body with white for the eyes and a hint of red for the mouth. The crude execution of the mosaic renders anatomical details such as hair, and other elements like costume, impossible to decipher. Nevertheless a comparison of the skin tones of the three extant figures in both fragments reveals that the very black colour of the charioteer

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nos. 26-29, pls. 22-25.

<sup>34</sup>See discussion of the marble relief from Athens showing a black groom and a horse supra Chapter 2.

<sup>35</sup>J.M. Blasquez, Mosaicos Romanos de Sevilla, Granada, Cadiz y Murcia (CMEsp IV, Madrid 1982) 19.

in the first fragment is clearly different from the lighter colour of the other figures.

Whether indeed this is indication of a clear intention on the part of the artist to depict a Black is open to question, for apart from colour there are none of the other diagnostic features that would allow a secure identification for the figure. Further impediments to a secure identification are the crude and impressionistic rendering of the figure and the fragmentary nature of the pavement as a whole.

Four dark-skinned male figures appear in a Late Antique (6th or 7th c. A.C.) mosaic with a circus theme from Gafsa in Byzacena (Tunisia)(Cat. no. 16, Fig. 58). They have been identified by previous researchers as possible representations of black grooms,<sup>36</sup> but a re-examination of the iconography shows that the so-called grooms are more likely to be representations of statues.

The mosaic, which is crudely rendered, follows the narrative or realistic format of other circus race mosaics. A chariot race with four teams (two very damaged) is taking place in the circus. Several elements of the circus building are represented. The *carceres*, shown here only as archways, are at the right end; the *cavea*, also rendered as arches supported by columns, appears at the top of the composition and is filled with spectators represented only by their heads; the *spina* with obelisk, *metae*, and statue of a lion is very schematically rendered, and one set of *metae* seems to pierce through one of the horses. In the arena one functionary carries a prize palm, while another carries perhaps a skin of

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<sup>36</sup>Desanges, Image 260.

water. There is also a *hortator* riding a horse and another figure holding an unidentifiable object. At the right end of the composition, standing in the *carceres*, are the four dark figures. They are all nude and shown in the same pose: right hand raised, left hand lowered and slightly bent at the elbow.

Desanges has argued, with some reservations, that the figures are representations of black grooms.<sup>37</sup> The crude style of the mosaic renders it difficult to decipher hairstyle or any physiognomical details, other than colour, that might have supported the identification of the figures as Blacks. The uniform, static pose of the figures and their dark brown colouring suggest that the figures be identified as statues; the brown colour may presumably have been intended to represent bronze.<sup>38</sup> They may be compared with other nude dark-coloured representations of athletes that adorn the *spina* or *cavea* in the Mosaic of the Great Circus at Piazza Armerina for example.<sup>39</sup> While nude athletes are the norm, nudity in grooms, attendants or other personnel associated with the races is unusual in Roman circus scenes. In the Gafsa mosaic the statues appear not on the *spina*, but rather in the *carceres*. The awkward situation of the statues may be linked to the schematic and crude execution of the composition, and perhaps also to the mosaicist's inability to properly fit all the figures into the available space. Situating the four statues in

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<sup>37</sup>Desanges, *Image* 260. References that are considered to be evidence for black grooms actually pertain to *cursores* and outriders in domestic contexts: Martial 12.24.6; Juvenal 5.52f; Sen. *Ep.* 87.9, 123.7.

<sup>38</sup>See also Dunbabin (supra n. 17) 80, for the identification of the figures as statues.

<sup>39</sup>For the Great Circus mosaic, see Carandini et al., *Filosofiana* 335-342, figs. 201-206, pls. LVI-LVII.

the *carceres* rather than on the *spina* where they would normally belong solved the artist's spatial problem.

The artistic evidence has yielded very few representations of figures from the circus repertoire that show somatic characteristics of the Black, and none that can be securely identified as a black circus charioteer. Of the three mosaics (Cat. nos. 14, 15, 16, Figs. 56, 57, 58) discussed, only the panel from the Mosaic of the Horses at Carthage (Cat. no. 14, Fig. 56) contains a recognisable representation of a Black, but it does not come from a chariot-racing scene. The mosaic from Seville (Cat. no. 15, Fig. 57) contains a representation of a charioteer with one somatic characteristic of the Black, dark skin colour. But given the poor quality of the mosaic and the difficulty in identifying any distinctive somatic characteristics other than colour, even that figure is a doubtful example.<sup>40</sup>

The literary and epigraphic evidence regarding black charioteers is equally scanty and problematic. One inscription records the name of a Moorish charioteer, Crescens:

*Crescens agit[ator]  
factionis ven[etae]  
natione Maurus...*<sup>41</sup>

But Crescens, who started racing at the age of thirteen and died in A.D. 124 having had a successful career, may or may not have had a physical appearance different from the

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<sup>40</sup>A curious marble relief from Herculaneum shows a clearly recognizable representation of a Black male figure driving a *biga*, accompanied by a "somatic norm" figure on foot. The black *auriga* has been documented as an example of a black circus charioteer, but see Appendix I.

<sup>41</sup>ILS 5285; Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte* IV, 196, no. 3.

Mediterranean somatic norm. For in the literary sources *Maurus* sometimes appears to be a synonym for *Aethiops*, while at other times it seems to refer to a people only slightly different from the Mediterranean somatic norm in respect to a somewhat darker skin colour.<sup>42</sup> An ambiguity of usage similar to that noted for *Maurus* and *Aethiops* is present in the use of *Aegyptus* in other sources.<sup>43</sup> For example, Luxorius, writing in Vandal Carthage, extols an Egyptian charioteer whom he describes as a Memnon in looks and as the son of Night in Poem 7.

*Quamvis ab Aurora fuerit genetrice creatus  
 Memnon, Pelidae conruit ille manu.  
 At te Nocte satum, ni fallor, matre paravit  
 Aeolus et Zephyri es natus in antra puer.  
 Ne<c> quisquam qui te superet nascetur Achilles:  
 dum Memnon facie<e>s, non tamen es genio.*<sup>44</sup>

The chronological distance separating the two ancient literary sources, as well as the uncertainty of Crescens' somatic appearance, leads to the conclusion that black charioteers of the circus are rarely mentioned. Furthermore, the absence of any monuments showing black charioteers of the circus, except the one doubtful example of the mosaic from Seville (Cat. no. 15, Fig. 57), clearly indicates that the Roman artists did not consider this context

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<sup>42</sup>See supra Chapter 2 for this problem; also Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (several references and discussion, index 248 s.v. *Maurus*, Moor).

<sup>43</sup>For the equation of *Aegyptus* with *Aethiops* in Romano-African writings see F. J. Dölger, *Die Sonne der Gerechtigkeit und der Schwarze* (Munster 1918) 52-53 (*non vidi*); *TLL* I, 963; Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* 80. See also infra this chapter, a discussion of the black *venator* Olympius.

<sup>44</sup>Memnon, though a son of Dawn, fell at the hands of the son of Peleus. But you, child of mother night, Aeolus, if I mistake not, begat and, as a child you were born in the caves of Zephyrus. Never will there be born an Achilles who will surpass you. Memnon you are in appearance, but in fate you are not. D. R. Shackleton Bailey ed., *Anthologia Latina* 1.1 (Teubner, Stuttgart 1982) 240, no. 288.

an appropriate one for the representation of figures identifiable as Blacks.

## II. MUNERA

### The amphitheatre theme

Gladiatorial combats, and *venationes* in particular, are very well represented in mosaics, especially those of North Africa. Some of these mosaics serve a commemorative purpose, recording the largesse of the *munerarius*, while others have an illustrative intent, like those with circus themes. Statuettes inspired by the spectacles of the arena appear to have only decorative purposes.

One example of the commemorative type of mosaic is the Mosaic of Magerius from Smirat, dated to c. 240-250 A.C.,<sup>45</sup> which contains scenes of combat between *venatores* and leopards. Spears are thrust into the bodies of the animals and their blood is shown forming pools around them as they die. The names of the *venatores*, SPITTARA, BVLLARIVS, HILARINVS, MAMERTINVS, are inscribed near them, as are those of the leopards, VICTOR, CRISPINVS, LVXVRIVS, and ROMANVS. The naturalism of the combat scenes is interrupted only by the figures of the deities Dionysus and Diana. A well-attired long-haired youth bearing a tray with money bags occupies the centre of the panel.<sup>46</sup> An inscription on the mosaic records the herald's appeal to the audience at the end of the show

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<sup>45</sup>Dunbabin, MRNA 66-67, 268, pls. 52-53.

<sup>46</sup>The well-dressed youth is most probably one of the *delicati* or *capillati* of Magerius' household. See Chapter 4 for discussion of the iconography of these slaves.

to pay a sum of 500 *denarii* per leopard to the Telegenii and the acclamations of the crowd applauding the largesse of Magerius.<sup>47</sup> The inscription MAGERI appears twice on the pavement, once above a richly dressed figure who might be Magerius, giver of the *munus*, and also beside Diana.

The Mosaic of the Gladiators from the villa at Dar Buc Ammera, in Zliten (Tripolitania) (Cat. no. 17, Fig. 59), which will be discussed shortly with reference to the iconography of the Black, provides one of the most detailed records of the different events that might unfold during a full day's *munus* in the amphitheatre.<sup>48</sup> It contains scenes of *venationes*, animal-versus-animal combats that usually took place in the morning, midday entertainments of criminals *damnati ad bestias* being mauled to death, and gladiatorial fights which pitched opponents against each other that occupied afternoon pride of place.<sup>49</sup> Musicians providing musical accompaniment are also portrayed. The scenes form a border frieze surrounding a central arrangement of squares of *opus sectile* alternating with circular *emblemata* showing fish.

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<sup>47</sup>The Telegenii were a *familia venatorum* in Africa, to which *venatores* like the four represented in the Mosaic of Magerius may have belonged. See Dunbabin, *MRNA* 67-68 and n.14.

<sup>48</sup>Aurigemma, *Mosaici* 131-201.

<sup>49</sup>Although combatants were usually male, gladiatorial combats occasionally pitched women against women for novelty: Cassius Dio, 61.17, 63.3. Other combinations of combatants: dwarfs against women, Cassius Dio, 67.8; Stat., *Silv.* 1.6.51f; Blacks against Blacks, Cassius Dio, 62.3.1. See also Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte* II, 53.



### Representations of the Black

These examples form a very heterogeneous group as they include mosaics from North Africa, terracotta statuettes from Pompeii, and an ivory knife handle from Avenches (France). A gladiator represented in a terracotta statuette of uncertain date from Egypt (Cat. no. 53, Fig. 60) is recognisable as a representation of a Black by the broad nose, thick lips, and hair that is rendered in small round balls to suggest tight curls. He wears a helmet, and a long-sleeved tunic of mail fringed above the knee and belted at the waist. He carries a rectangular shield on his left arm and a short dagger in his right hand. Poor workmanship of the legs renders any identification of footwear impossible. Although his outfit is suggestive of gladiatorial costume it is difficult to ascertain which type of gladiator he is.<sup>50</sup>

Many types of gladiators wear a helmet, as this figure appears to, and some types such as *contra-retiarii* (gladiators who are usually pitted against net fighters) also wear a tunic like the black gladiator (Cat. no. 53, Fig. 60). But gladiators usually wear the *subligaculum* (a special kind of loincloth), which this figure does not. Several gladiator types, *sammites*, *secutores*, and *myrmillones*, also carry the large shield or *scutum*, and *gladius* (dagger). If it were not for the *scutum*, the black gladiator statuette might be identifiable as a representation of a *contra-retiarius*, since the *armatura* (arms) of this type of gladiator includes a protective tunic and *gladius*, but no *scutum*. As the evidence stands, this figure represents a type of gladiator yet unknown in the iconography of the various gladiatorial

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<sup>50</sup>For classifications and definitions of different types of gladiators see Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte IV*, 260-267; Ville (*supra n. 6*); Golvin and Landes (*supra n. 6*) 155-170.

types, or it might have been invested with a variety of *armaturae* of different gladiatorial types by an artist who did not fully understand gladiatorial categories. Such an artist, or one who was not particularly concerned with accuracy, would still be capable of producing a portrayal of a “generic” gladiator.

The closest parallel for the statuette of the black gladiator is a heavily armed gladiator fighting against a *retiarius*, depicted in a relief from Tomis in Romania (Fig. 61).<sup>51</sup> This figure is clad in a tunic of mail, and a helmet. The mail is indicated by criss-cross markings. He is shown attacking his opponent with a short dagger. Elements common to both gladiators are the dagger and the tunic. The mail of the tunic worn by the Egypt gladiator is indicated by a series of “V”s, which do not form a criss-cross pattern such as on the Tomis gladiator, but achieve a similar effect. A large rectangular shield lying behind the Tomis gladiator might belong to that figure, in which case an even greater similarity would exist between the Tomis figure and the statuette from Egypt.

The handle of an ivory knife of the 2nd century from Avenches, is in the form of a *retiarius* engaging a *secutor* (Cat. no. 56, Fig. 62). The *retiarius* is portrayed with several somatic characteristics of the Black: short curly hair, broad flat nose, and full lips. He is shown wearing the *subligaculum* (loin cloth), footwear, and the *galerus* (sleeve with the raised shoulder piece) that is typical of the *retiarius*. The left leg of the sculpture is broken off just below the knee.

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<sup>51</sup>Hönle and Henze (supra n. 9) 166.

The artistic evidence has yielded only two representations of gladiators that show somatic characteristics of the Black.<sup>52</sup> The literary evidence concerning black gladiators is also limited. Perhaps the most direct reference is to be found in Dio's account that in honour of Tiridates the Parthian king, Nero held a *munus* in which all the participants were Aethiopians.<sup>53</sup> Another source mentions that in the 3rd c. A.C. Probus presented after his triumph 300 pairs of gladiators, among whom were Blemmyes.<sup>54</sup> But since it is not entirely clear whether or not the Blemmyes were considered by the Romans to be Blacks, this reference is inconclusive.

A marble statuette from Rome, possibly of Roman date, which portrays an acrobat doing a handstand on the back of a crocodile (Cat. no. 54, Fig. 63) may also be a subject inspired by spectacles from the amphitheatre. The acrobat is depicted with the hairstyle of corkscrew locks, full lips and a broad nose; the latter feature recognisable in spite of some damage to that part of the face.<sup>55</sup> The somatic features of the figure indicate the artist's

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<sup>52</sup>But recently brought to my attention, - a dark-brown/black figure of a *retiarius* on a damaged polychrome mosaic from Aix-en-Provence. The *retiarius* is discussed briefly, but with no mention of his skin colour, in H. Lavagne, "Mosaïque de Gladiateur à Aix-en-Provence," *BSAfr* (1994) 29-32.

<sup>53</sup>Cassius Dio, 62.3.1. Although according to Dio, men, women, and children took part, it is more likely, as Ville argues, that the children carried out duties like raking the sand in the arena, rather than fighting. See Ville (supra n. 6) 263, n. 74 for this interpretation of Dio's reference, and for children in the arena.

<sup>54</sup>*SHA* Probus 19.8. The Blemmyes are listed by Strabo (17.1.53) as one of Aethiopia's ethnic groups. See also discussion supra Chapter 1.

<sup>55</sup>This statuette may be compared to a similar one from Rome, now in London, which shows a youth performing a handstand; Beardsley, *Negro* 104, no. 230, and illustration in Snowden, *Blacks* 79, 166, fig. 51. Differences between the two statuettes are large curls lying close to the scalp on the London statuette, the position of the hands, and the base that does not show a crocodile. The lack of clear determinative characteristics of the Black leads me to conclude that the London figure was not intended as a representation of

intention to create a recognisable representation of a Black.

Although the black youth-with-crocodile group is a well established theme in Greek art, the uniqueness of the marble statuette of the acrobat on a crocodile (Cat. no. 54, Fig. 63) becomes evident when we consider that in Roman art the theme of Blacks and crocodiles appears only in the form of dark-coloured Pygmies battling crocodiles in the popular Nilotic landscapes.<sup>56</sup>

The exoticism of dangerous tricks like balancing on a crocodile, performed in the arena by foreign-looking persons with equally exotic animals, would have been appreciated by the audience, even though wild beasts, trained to obey the commands of their trainers, were a regular part of the entertainments of the arena.<sup>57</sup>

The ancient commentators mention black trainers of wild beasts, for example, elephant trainers.<sup>58</sup> Commenting on the wonders of the arena, Seneca states: *elephantum minimus Aethiops iubet subsidere in genua et ambulare per funem*.<sup>59</sup> Martial, also commenting on the skills of trainer and beast notes: *molles dare iussa quod choreas nigro belua non negat magistro*.<sup>60</sup> Achilles Tatius (4.4.1) also mentions the Ἀνὴρ Αἰθίοψ who

a Black, therefore I do not include it in my catalogue.

<sup>56</sup>For the theme of Blacks and crocodiles in Roman art, see discussion supra Chapter 2.

<sup>57</sup>For different types of entertainments featuring trained animals, see Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte II*, 86-87.

<sup>58</sup>Polybius 1.40.15.

<sup>59</sup>Sen. *Ep.* 85.41: "The tiny Aethiopian orders the elephant to sink to its knees or to walk the rope".

<sup>60</sup>Mart. 1. 104. 9-10: "...the elephant bid lightly to dance dares not refuse his black master".

sits on an elephant like a kind of elephant horseman, and is feared and obeyed by the elephant.

A terracotta statuette from Pompeii shows a man with a snub nose, thick lips, prominent jaw, and short closely-moulded hair, riding on an elephant bearing a tower on its back (Cat. no. 55, Fig. 71). The rider is clothed in a short belted tunic. He offers some food to the animal who reaches for the morsel with its trunk. The elephant's back is covered by long heavy-looking drapery, on top of which, fastened by chains to its back, is a brick crenellated tower reinforced by a round shield. Although the figure seems to be identifiable as a Black, the association with the arena is uncertain, and the terracotta is introduced here on account of the subject, for it recalls a reference by Suetonius to tower-bearing elephants that appeared in a *munus* given by Caesar.<sup>61</sup> According to that account, tower-bearing elephants with three men per animal were pitched against 500 infantry and 20 cavalry.

It has already been mentioned that the execution of criminals and persons condemned *ad bestias* formed part of the events of the *munus*. The successful carrying out of these death sentences depended on the aid of arena auxiliaries, like *bestiarii*. It was the *bestiarii* who would whip and goad animals to attack the condemned, or place the condemned in positions where they would be attacked by the animals.

A mosaic from the Villa du Taureau at Silin in Tripolitania, possibly datable to 212-217 A.C., shows a *bestiarius* in a scene of an execution *ad bestias* (Cat. no. 18, Fig. 64).

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<sup>61</sup>Suet. *Jul.* 39. But see also my Appendix II, for the theme of Blacks and elephants in the artistic and literary traditions.

Unlike the mosaic from Zliten (Cat. no. 17, Fig. 59) which records all the events in detail, this mosaic focuses on only one event. The intent of the mosaic from Silin appears to be commemorative, perhaps providing a record of a *munus* given by Filoserapis, presumed to be the owner of the villa.<sup>62</sup>

The *bestiarius* is portrayed with dark brown skin and short black hair. He restrains a kneeling condemned man who is about to be charged by a white bull that has already dispatched two unfortunates. Their broken bodies lie nearby and the proceedings are overseen by a senior auxiliary wearing a long-sleeved tunic with *clavi*, and holding a stick. The inscription FILOSERAPIS.COMP (preceded by two letters now disappeared), is written at the top of the scene.<sup>63</sup>

The men *damnati ad bestias* wear trousers under a long-sleeved tunic and a headdress resembling the modern Arab 'keffieh'. They have been identified by this costume as Orientals; either Iranians or Arabs.<sup>64</sup> Picard describes the auxiliary and the *bestiarius* as "deux hommes d'Afrique, l'un portant son vêtement normal, l'autre un costume de bestiaire".<sup>65</sup> While all the figures are distinguished by their costume, the *bestiarius* is also

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<sup>62</sup>For the identification of the Filoserapis named on the mosaic as the owner of the villa and giver of the *munus*, see G. Picard, "La villa du Taureau à Silin (Tripolitaine)," CRAI (1988) 239-240.

<sup>63</sup>According to Picard (supra n. 62) 239-240, the abbreviation COMP in the inscription is for COMPOSIT, which refers to the constitution of pairs in combats. In the mosaic it refers to the bull and the condemned prisoner. Picard argues that although the name Filoserapis, which is inscribed in the mosaic, was an epithet of Caracalla, the giver of the *munus* may actually have been a private citizen and the owner of the villa, who had adopted the epithet Filoserapis as a cognomen to show his loyalty to the emperor.

<sup>64</sup>Picard (supra n. 62) 236.

<sup>65</sup>Picard (supra n. 62) 236. The costume of the Silin *bestiarius* is comparable to that of two *bestiarii*

clearly differentiated from the other figures by his noticeably darker skin colour. But since the artist has chosen to portray the *bestiarius* as differing only in one respect from the “somatic norm”, it is possible that the figure is intended to represent a swarthy North African.

The gladiator mosaic from Zliten (Cat. no. 17, Fig. 59) also contains representations of figures that differ from the “somatic norm”. These figures, all of which represent condemned prisoners, are: a condemned man, naked except for a brief loincloth, tied to a stake, being wheeled on a cart by two *bestiarii* towards a springing leopard; another condemned man, naked, bound and defenceless, being savaged by a leopard that has leapt onto his chest, and yet a third prisoner being whipped forward towards a rushing lion. A fourth man naked but unfettered, holding a prod, appears to be approaching a boar and a bull locked in combat (Fig. 65).

The naked man holding the prod and the condemned prisoner being whipped towards the rushing lion are portrayed with yellow skin colour. The other two prisoners have the usual pinkish brown colour, but shaggy unkempt hair. The unkempt appearance of one group and the yellow colour of the other identifies these figures as barbarians. But the barbarian approaching the bear and bull is differentiated from the others also by somatic characteristics of the Black: a snub nose, full lips, and a jagged hair outline suggesting tightly curling hair. These features contrast with the prominent noses and shaggy hair of the

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wheeling a condemned man on a cart towards a springing leopard in the gladiator mosaic from Zliten (Cat. no. 17, Fig. 59).

other barbarians. As to the unusual yellow colour, Ville suggests that it may represent a saffron paint applied to their bodies.<sup>66</sup> There is, however, no real evidence to support that theory. The sources do indicate that the arena was sometimes sprinkled with saffron, therefore it would be plausible to assume that some could rub off on those in the arena. But why would the artist not show all the figures, or at least all the prisoners, tinged with saffron, instead of only a few of the prisoners?

According to some scholars, the prisoners in the Zliten mosaic should be identified as Garamantes, an ethnic group inhabiting southern Libya and the Fezzan. The basis for the identification of these figures as Garamantes is the theory held by some, that the events of the Zliten mosaic commemorate a *munus* given after the Roman defeat in A.D. 70 of Garamantes in North Africa.<sup>67</sup> The prisoners taken after this skirmish would have been considered enemies of Rome and may have been condemned to die *ad bestias* like other prisoners.<sup>68</sup> But the argument that the mosaic records the *munus* after the Garamantian

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<sup>66</sup>G. Ville, "Essai de datation de la mosaïque des gladiateurs de Zliten," *CMGR* I, 147, n. 1. And Picard's contribution to the discussion, that the yellow colour represents bronzed skin. But this has no parallel.

<sup>67</sup>The defeat of the Garamantian incursion is recorded by Tacitus (*Hist.* IV. 50). The interpretation of the amphitheatre mosaic as a record of the *munus* celebrating the Garamantian defeat in A.D. 70 was put forward by Aurigemma (Aurigemma, *Mosaici* 269-278) as one of the arguments for a Flavian dating for this and the other major mosaics of the Villa. One must agree with Dunbabin (*MRNA* 235) who points out the uncertainty of this being a record of the celebration of the defeat of A.D. 70, considering that we cannot assume we know of every encounter in which barbarian captives would have been taken. Aurigemma's dating of the Zliten mosaics has been accepted on stylistic grounds by some, while others, notably D. Parrish ("The date of the mosaics from Zliten," *AntAfr* 21 [1985] 137), have proposed a Severan dating. See extensive discussions of these positions, except that of Parrish which appeared subsequently, in Dunbabin, *MRNA* 235-237.

<sup>68</sup>For example Josephus (*BJ* 9.418) recounts that in A.D.70 Titus sent Jewish prisoners into the provinces to perish by the sword and and by the beasts.



defeat of A.D. 70 is problematic. It is unlikely that we know of every hostile encounter in which barbarians might have been captured, for while some of the major Roman triumphs have been recorded, incursions of barbarians into the province were a fact of life, and a constant menace to Roman control.<sup>69</sup>

In amphitheatre scenes the non-Roman origins or “barbarianness” of condemned prisoners might be emphasized by the type of garb they wear, like the distinct costume of the condemned men in the mosaic from Silin (Cat. no. 18, Fig. 64). The craftsmen of the Mosaic of the Gladiators from Zliten, however, appear to have chosen other means of emphasizing the “barbarianness” of the condemned men: the unkempt appearance of several of the prisoners, the yellow skin colour of some, and the somatic characteristics of the Black in the male prisoner coming between the bear and the bull. Therefore, while it is clear that the figures can be identified as barbarians, it is not at all clear that they represent Garamantian barbarians. The craftsmen have depicted a variety of somatic characteristics ranging from those resembling the “somatic norm” to those associated with the Black.

The literary sources reveal similar ambiguity in comments on the physical description of Garamantes. To ancient writers like Solinus, Ptolemy, and Isidore, Garamantians were black in colour.<sup>70</sup> A pejorative Romano-African verse composed by an unknown author in antiquity also appears to conceive of Garamantes as black in colour:

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<sup>69</sup>Revolts and military encounters, see S. Mattingly, *Tripolitania* (London 1995).

<sup>70</sup>On the view that the Garamantes were black: Solinus 30.2; Ptolemy, *Geographia* 1.8.5; Isid., *Origines* 9.2.128.

*faex Garamantum iam nostrum processit ad axem  
 et piceo gaudet corpore verna Niger,  
 quem nisi vox hominem labris emissa sonaret,  
 terreret vivos horrida larva viros.  
 dira, Adramente, tu<u>m rapiant sibi Tartara monstrum;  
 custodem hunc Ditis debet habere domus. (Anth. Lat. I.1.173)<sup>71</sup>*

Black skin colour is also presumed when Luxorius contrasts the beauty of a girl from the Pontus with the ugliness of a Garamantian girl in Poem 43.<sup>72</sup> The beautiful/ugly contrast relies on Garamantian “darkness/blackness” and Pontic “paleness/whiteness”. But these relatively late observations differ from those of an earlier commentator like Strabo, who distinguishes Garamantes from black Aethiopians, and states that Garamantes were not black.<sup>73</sup> Modern scholars are not united on the issue of colour either, for according to Gsell they were Blacks, but to Desanges, the Garamantes were a people of “mixed race”.<sup>74</sup>

These comments on the skin colour of Garamantians are typical of observations on the skin colour of other North Africans like Moors.<sup>75</sup> North Africans are often described by ancient writers as black although they are usually distinguished from black Aethiopians.

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<sup>71</sup>D. R. Shackleton Bailey ed., *Anthologia Latina* 1.1 (Teubner, Stuttgart 1982) no. 173.

"The dregs of the Garamantians came up to our part of the world, and a black slave rejoices in his black body; a frightful spook who would scare even grown men by his appearance were it not that the sounds issuing from his lips proclaim him human. Hadrumetum, let the fearsome regions of Tartarus carry off for their own use this weird creature of yours. He ought to be standing guard at the home of the god of the underworld."

<sup>72</sup>See commentary of M. Rosenblum, *Luxorius. A Latin Poet among the Vandals* (New York 1961) 209.

<sup>73</sup>Strabo 2.5.33, 17.3.19.

<sup>74</sup>Desanges, *Image* 268; S. Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord I* (Paris 1921) 298.

<sup>75</sup>See previous discussion supra chapter 1.

And when represented in art they (Moors for example), might be portrayed with some of the somatic characteristics of the Black. But perhaps we should also consider that some of the ancient uncertainty about the colour and appearance of North Africans may stem from the range of colour in the inhabitants visible at least in modern times. Since the craftsmen chose to stress some of these characteristics in the figure coming between the bear and the bull (Fig. 65), that figure may be identified as a representation of a North African. The other figures certainly represent barbarians, but none have any of the determinative features of the Black. Finally, it cannot be proven that these captives were intended to represent Garamantes, since we do not know what the artists' perception of a Garamantian would have been.

The world of the amphitheatre inspired occasional portrayals of blacks in some type of association with the events of the arena: the gladiator, the acrobat who performed tricks with animals, perhaps the mahout riding an elephant, or the *bestiarius* who assisted in the carrying out of executions *ad bestias*, and even the captive condemned to die *ad bestias*. References in the literary sources to Blacks in some of these roles point to a literary tradition for Blacks in spectacle. According to Pliny (N.H. 8. 131), during the consulship of Marcus Piso and Marcus Messalla in 61 B.C., Domitius Ahenobarbus as curule aedile provided a hundred Numidian bears and the same number of Aethiopian huntsmen (*venatores Aithiopas*). In the Vandal era, Luxorius writes a poem mourning Olympius, an Egyptian *venator* (Poem 68). In poem 67 the emphasis is on Olympius' strength and black

beauty:

*Grata voluptatis species et causa favoris,  
fortior innumeris, venator Olympie, palmis,  
tu verum nomen membrorum robore signas,  
Alcides collo, scapulis, cervice, lacertis,  
admirande, audax, velox, animose, parate.  
nil tibi forma nocet nigro fu<s>cata colore.  
sic ebum ꝑpretiosasve ꝑ natura creavit,  
purpura sic ꝑ magno ꝑ depressa in murice fulget.  
sic nigrae violae per mollia gramina vernant,  
sic tetras quaedam commendat gratia gemmas,  
sic placet obscuros elephans inmanis ob artus,  
sic turis piperisque Indi nigredo placessit.  
postremum tantum populi pulchrescis amore  
foedior est quantum pulcher sine viribus alter. (Anth.Lat. I.1.348)<sup>76</sup>*

### III. ATHLETIC AGONES

The number of monuments inspired by athletic spectacles suggests that in spite of the generally negative attitudes of the moralists towards athletics at Rome, as a decorative theme athletics were popular in Rome as well as in the provinces. The mosaic medium, to which three of the four monuments I will be discussing belong, was exploited by the artists for the opportunity it afforded to depict the themes in various ways: in detailed narrative

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<sup>76</sup>D. R. Shackleton Bailey ed., *Anthologia Latina* 1.1 (Teubner Stuttgart 1988) no. 348.

"Pleasing sight of joy and reason for popular acclaim, stronger by your countless victories, animal fighter Olympius, you bear a fit name because of your bodily strength, a Hercules by virtue of your neck, shoulders, back, and limbs. O wonderful, O bold, O swift, O spirited, O always ready! Not at all does your swarthy body harm you because of its blackness. So did nature create black precious ebony. So does the purple deeply placed in the tiny murex gleam, so do violets of deepest shade bloom in the soft grass, so does a certain grace set off gems of somber hue, so does the huge elephant please because of its dusky limbs, so do black Indian incense and pepper give pleasure. Finally, you are as beautiful in the great love the people bear you as another man, handsome without strength, is ugly." (Translation: Rosenblum [supra n. 72] 151 follows a slightly different text).

style compositions, or in conventional pairs of boxers and wrestlers, or single standing athletes, and heads and busts. Mosaics with an athletic theme appear frequently in Baths, both public and private.

One example of a mosaic with athletic themes is the early 3rd or early 4th century A.C. Mosaic of the Athletes from the Baths of Caracalla in Rome.<sup>77</sup> It contains panels in which busts, heads, and standing nude boxers, wrestlers, and other athletes holding crowns or palms are depicted. From the baths at the south of the Forum at Gigthis (Tunisia) comes a mosaic of the mid 3rd c. A.C. which contains four panels showing pairs of wrestlers.<sup>78</sup> More detailed compositions appear earlier in black-and-white mosaics from Tusculum and Ostia.<sup>79</sup> The mosaic from Ostia for example, found in the Terme di Porta Marina, shows a pair of wrestlers about to engage, an athlete about to hurl a discus, a clothed figure in a radiate crown blowing a tuba, a pair of boxers one of whom makes a gesture of victory, the boxing referee, a long jumper holding barbells, and two other athletes carrying strigils. In the middle of the composition is a table holding a crown and a palm frond, and beside the table stands a herm surrounded by athletic equipment and a crater.

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<sup>77</sup>F. Yegül, Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity (New York 1992) 161, fig. 177.

<sup>78</sup>P. Gauckler et al., Catalogue du Musée Alaoui, supplément I (Paris 1910) A 300, 301, 301 bis, pl. XIX, 1-2. See also Khanoussi (supra n. 8) 317.

<sup>79</sup>Tusculum mosaic: Lo sport nel mondo antico. Ludi, munera, certamina a Roma (Rome 1987) 47, fig. 10; Blake, MAAR (1936) 164 pl. 38.1; Reinach, RPGR 279, 1; N.E. Gardiner, Athletics of the ancient world (Oxford 1930) fig. 70. For Ostia mosaic, see M. F. Squarciapino, "Nuovi mosaici Ostiensi," RendPontAcc 61 (1988) 110-112, figs. 16 & 17.

### The Black in Athletic themes: Mosaics and Terracottas

Unlike the parallel traditions that existed in literary testimony and iconographic evidence for Blacks in the arena, the literary and iconographic traditions diverge for Blacks in athletic spectacles. For while secure literary testimony on Blacks in athletics is non-existent, the iconography contains a number of images that might be identified as representations of Blacks.

The monuments to be discussed are three mosaics: two of which are from North Africa (Cat. nos. 9, 8, Figs. 66, 67), one from Vienne (France) (Cat. no. 10, Fig. 68), and a pair of terracotta statuettes from Italy (Cat. nos. 51-52, Figs. 69-70).

A 4th century polychrome mosaic depicting several athletic contests and prizes for the victorious athletes was discovered in a bath establishment at Batten Zammour, about 60km east of Gafsa in Tunisia (Cat. no. 9, Fig. 66). The mosaic is severely damaged in parts, with large lacunae. The preserved areas show a composition in four registers containing at least 13 scenes of wrestling, boxing, *pankration*, discus throwing, long jump, foot race, and torch race (*lampadedromia*). There are also bags of prize money, prizes of palms and crowns being awarded to victorious contestants, and various officials including a gymnasiarch. The competing athletes are young and beardless or mature bearded types. Some of them wear the *cirrus* or top knot often seen in depictions of athletes.

Three youths among a number of athletes contesting in a foot race, “l'épreuve

sportive par excellence”,<sup>80</sup> depicted in the top register of the mosaic (Cat. no. 9, Fig. 66), are portrayed with some of the somatic characteristics of the Black. Their skin colour is darker than that of the other athletes, they have broad noses, and full lips. The athlete behind the starting line closest to the official seems to have, in addition to the features listed above, a prognathous jaw, and receding chin. The difference between the appearance of these athletes and the rest prompts Khanoussi to describe them without further elaboration as being of “type negroïde”.<sup>81</sup> It would appear that in these figures the artist intended a recognisable representation of Blacks.

The mosaic from Batten Zammour is considered the most realistic and most complete iconographic record in the Roman era of athletic and gymnastic events.<sup>82</sup> The realism of its iconography has prompted Picard to suggest that certain figures, like the gymnasiarch who stands beside bags of prize money, are portraits of real people who participated in the organisation of the contests depicted in the mosaic, and that the mosaic commemorates an event that took place in actuality.<sup>83</sup> Picard's interpretation would be more convincing if inscriptions, such as are found on other commemorative mosaics, recording

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<sup>80</sup>M. Khanoussi, "Spectaculum pugilum et gymnasium. Un spectacle de jeux athlétiques et de pugilat figuré sur une mosaïque de la région de Gafsa (Tunisie)," *CRAI* (1988) 547.

<sup>81</sup>Khanoussi (supra n. 80) 547.

<sup>82</sup>Khannoussi (supra n. 80) 557.

<sup>83</sup>G.-Ch. Picard, in Khanoussi (supra n. 80) 561.

the name of the *editor*, appeared in the mosaic from Batten Zammour.<sup>84</sup> It is possible, however, that the tradition for commemorating gymnastic events in mosaic was different from that commemorating amphitheatre games, since in the latter type of mosaic the names of *munerarii*, *venatores*, wild beasts, and gladiators are often provided. But it is clear that the inspiration for the detailed and well executed mosaic from Batten Zammour was taken from real life, since the evidence of North African inscriptions reveals the popularity of athletic spectacles in the province.<sup>85</sup>

In one figure among a group of four pairs of nude, well-muscled wrestlers that appear in a late 3rd c. A.C. mosaic from the Great baths at Thina (Cat. no. 8, Fig. 67), the artist has stressed one feature that can be associated with the iconography of Blacks--dark skin colour.<sup>86</sup> The mosaic is divided into three registers: the topmost register a semi-circular panel, contains a table bearing two prize crowns and palms, while the two lower registers have pairs of wrestlers. In the lowest register a very dark-skinned man, clearly darker than any of the other figures, is locked in a wrestle hold with a lighter-skinned opponent.<sup>87</sup> Due to the absence of any somatic characteristics of the Black (other than dark skin colour) that might distinguish him from the other wrestlers, as well as another factor related to the

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<sup>84</sup>Cf. discussion of Magerius mosaic supra p. 165; Dunbabin, MRNA 67-69, pls. 52-53.

<sup>85</sup>F. Ghedini, "*Gymnasia in thermis...*," L'Africa Romana 9 (1991) 353-359; Khanoussi (supra n. 8) 315-317.

<sup>86</sup>Desanges, Image 260.

<sup>87</sup>Desanges, Image 260, also notes the figure's dark colour and absence of other identifying features of the Black.



iconography of wrestling, it is not certain that the dark wrestler was intended as a representation of a Black. For there appears to be a convention of representing, in some cases, one figure of a clinched wrestling pair as darker coloured than the opponent. The convention can be observed, for example, in the dark-skinned wrestler of a clinched pair, from one of the panels containing pairs of wrestlers, in the previously mentioned mosaic of athletes from Gigthis.<sup>88</sup> In examples that show the wrestlers merely facing each other, or not in full body contact, there is no such differentiation. This suggests that the artists might have portrayed one wrestler of a clinched pair as considerably darker than the opponent in order to bring into relief the figures, which would otherwise have appeared as a tangled mass of limbs.

A figure that is likely to have been intended as a representation of a Black is a wrestler in a mosaic (c.220 A.D.) with athletic and gymnastic themes from Vienne (Cat. no. 10, Fig. 68). The mosaic was found in Place Saint-Pierre in 1966, located in a room which may have been the *oecus* of a large house.<sup>89</sup> The composition consists of a circle containing eight octagons surrounding a central octagon in which Hercules wrestling the Nemean Lion is depicted.<sup>90</sup> Figures of victorious wrestlers, boxers, and other athletes with their prizes, appear in the octagons. The black wrestler occupies one of the octagons. He is described as

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<sup>88</sup>See refs. *supra* n. 78.

<sup>89</sup>Tourenco, *CMGR* II, 135.

<sup>90</sup>Hercules was a protective deity of athletes, worshipped in cults. See Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte* II, 150, for the "Guild of Athletes of the wreathed victors at the Sacred Games" who were granted a permanent place in the baths of Titus for their activities by Antoninus. See also, Yegül (*supra* n. 77) 175-177.

“..un lutteur, de type negroïde, qui porte les cheveux noués en tresses, et sur le sommet de la tête un petit toupet, le *cirrus in vertice*”.<sup>91</sup> Somatic characteristics that support the identification of the wrestler as a Black are a complexion darker than that of the other athletes in the mosaic, and a prognathous profile.

A pair of terracotta statuettes of boxers (Cat. nos. 51-52, Figs. 69-70) from Italy are clearly recognisable representations of Blacks. A date in the late Hellenistic period is ascribed to them, which, if accurate, would make these statuettes the earliest of the monuments being discussed.<sup>92</sup> The statuettes represent an older balding boxer (Cat. no. 51, Fig. 69) and a younger one (Cat. no. 52, Fig. 70), both wearing loincloths, and with *caestus* on their hands.<sup>93</sup> The artist has portrayed them with several of the determinative characteristics of the Black: tightly curling hair (rendered impressionistically as small swirls in the terracotta), snub nose, thick lips, and prognathous faces. Traces of dark paint have survived on the face of the statuette of the younger boxer.

The artistic evidence leads us to conclude that on occasion the craftsmen thought it appropriate to depict athletes with a few, or with several somatic characteristics of the Black. The terracotta boxers show the full range of distinct somatic characteristics, while the wrestler on the mosaic from Vienne (c.220 A.C.) has a sufficient number of the

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<sup>91</sup>Tourenco (supra n. 89) 137.

<sup>92</sup>For a Hellenistic date, see Beardsley, *Negro* 85, nos. 170-171; Snowden, *Blacks* 77, fig. 49; H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Terracottas* (London 1902).

<sup>93</sup>The *caestus*, a boxing glove made of leather thongs and metal supports, was worn wrapped around the forearm and hand with the fingers left free, see *DarSag* 4 (1887) 755, s.v. Pugilatus.

characteristics to allow us to conclude that a Black was probably intended. The athletes on the mosaic from Batten Zammour (1st quarter of 4th c. A.C) are also recognizable representations of the Black. Because of the problems already outlined, however, the identification for the wrestler in the mosaic from Thina (end of 3rd c. A.C.) must remain uncertain.

While the monuments show that the artists were portraying athletes with somatic characteristics of the Black, the literary sources do not contain any secure references to black athletes. In a few instances a character is described by an author in terms which suggest that the author might be referring to a Black. For example, in a scathing satire on the adultery of upper class Roman matrons, Martial (6.39.8-9) mentions that a flat-nosed, puffy-lipped child was the illegitimate offspring of a wrestler named Pannychus and a matron. The description of the child's facial characteristics has led some scholars to argue that Martial was describing the child of a black father.<sup>94</sup> It is possible that the athlete Pannychus may have been meant to be understood as a Black, whose child has inherited those distinctive somatic traits. Another reference, just as inconclusive, concerns African and Campanian boxers brought to Rome for exhibition games given by the emperor Caligula.<sup>95</sup> The Latin *Afrorum* which designates those boxers presumably refers to North Africa. Although black boxers are not mentioned specifically, it would be reasonable to argue, on the basis of some of the iconographical evidence (i.e. the terracotta boxers), that

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<sup>94</sup>For an identification of the character Pannychus as Aethiopian, see Snowden, Blacks 166.

the group could have included black boxers.

The athletic theme in mosaics may have been chosen for its general beneficent connotations, alluding to pleasure and entertainment, contest and reward. In the bath context the allusions to physical excellence would have been particularly appropriate. But are the figures of black athletes that appear in these contexts introduced primarily for variety and exoticism? Perhaps their presence can be linked to the great popularity of athletics in North Africa. In that case, the artists might have considered it appropriate to depict athletes with somatic characteristics of the Black in order to evoke a North African connection.

### Concluding remarks

The representations of figures with somatic characteristics of the Black discussed in this chapter are evidence of an iconographic tradition that depicted the Black in themes inspired by spectacles in the circus, amphitheatre, and athletic domain. This tradition dates from about the late Hellenistic to the beginning of the 4th c. A.C. But evidence for the Black diverges in the literary and iconographic traditions, and the various themes and contexts seem to be factors in the introduction of the Black. Thus, whereas there are no recognisable images of the Black as a circus charioteer, and there is only the one late reference to a black charioteer in the poem by Luxorius, in the amphitheatre context one finds a larger number of representations identifiable as Black, as well as more frequent

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<sup>95</sup>Suetonius, Gaius Caligula 18.1.

mention of Blacks in the literary sources. Lastly, in the area of athletic competition, the artists chose to depict figures identifiable as Black, whereas the literary sources are silent.

## CHAPTER 6

### INDIANS IN THE TRIUMPH OF DIONYSUS

The Triumph of Dionysus was one of the most popular of the Dionysiac themes in Roman art.<sup>1</sup> In scenes of the Triumph, Dionysus is shown riding in his chariot drawn by felines, elephants, or centaurs, accompanied by human and semi-divine followers. With the inclusion of barbarian captives, barbarian children, exotic animals, and booty in the Dionysiac procession, the triumph relates specifically to the myth of the god's return from India after his successful campaigns there. This interpretation appears to have been most popular during the late Antonine and Severan periods. A series of late Antonine and Severan sarcophagi from Rome - and provincial mosaics of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.C. provide an opportunity to examine some of the ways, within this specific theme, in which the iconography originally developed for the Aethiopian/Black is adapted to that of Indians, another dark-skinned people. It will be argued also that the conflation between Blacks and Indians in the iconography is paralleled in similar conflations and

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<sup>1</sup>See the following studies and bibliographical references: LIMC 3 (1986) 540-566, esp. 557-558, s.v. Bacchus (C. Gasparri); K. M. D. Dunbabin, "The triumph of Dionysus on mosaics in North Africa," PBSR 39 (1971) 52-65; Matz, I, II, III; R. Turcan, Les sarcophages romains à représentations Dionysiaques (Paris 1966); K. Lehmann-Hartleben & E. C. Olsen, Dionysiac sarcophagi in Baltimore (Baltimore 1942); H. Graeven, "Die Darstellungen der Inder in antiken Kunstwerken," JdI 15 (1900) 195-218; B. Graef, De Bacchi expeditione indica monumentis expressa (Berlin 1886).

uncertainties between the two peoples that appear in the written sources.

According to accounts in the ancient written sources, Dionysus went to India and fought the inhabitants of that country because they had refused to accept his religion. Having defeated them with his divine brew, wine, and the help of his followers maenads, satyrs, and Pan, he then taught them the cultivation of the vine, agriculture and worship of the gods.<sup>2</sup> He gathered a great amount of booty from the campaign and made his return journey to Thebes on an elephant.<sup>3</sup>

#### I.(i) The iconographic evidence

The themes relating to the myth of Dionysus and the Indians can be categorized according to three main subjects: (1) Indians in the triumphal procession; (2) battle between the god and the Indians; and (3) the Dionysiac *clementia* with defeated barbarians pleading for mercy at the feet of the enthroned god.<sup>4</sup> For greater clarity I subdivide GROUP 1 into two groups according to their compositional format: Subgroup 1a comprises those examples showing Dionysus in his chariot accompanied by Victory, satyrs, a maenad, and preceded by the rest of his thiasos and barbarian children and prisoners. Subgroup 1b is comprised of exceptions to the format described above.

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<sup>2</sup>Arr. Ind. 5; Diod. 2.38; Philostr. VA. 2.9, Nonnos, Dionysiaca 15.1-150.

<sup>3</sup>Diod. 3.65.7-8.

<sup>4</sup>I follow the categories set up by Graeven (*supra* n. 1) 216-218.

The Dionysiac Indian Triumph with barbarian captives occurs on at least 15 sarcophagi from Rome, and three mosaics from North Africa and Cyprus. These should be distinguished from the wider group of a more generic Dionysiac triumph theme without captives. In the scenes with barbarian captives, the barbarians are usually portrayed with some somatic characteristics of the Black, the choice of which seems to be dictated (as observed in other themes) by the medium in which the figure is represented. Excluding three sarcophagi on which severe damage prevents any assessment of the physical characteristics of the human figures,<sup>5</sup> only one example showing the Dionysiac Indian Triumph contains figures of captives without any somatic characteristics of the Black.<sup>6</sup>

Barbarian children with corkscrew locks appear in most scenes of the Indian Triumph with captives on sarcophagi. But children are omitted altogether from similar Indian Triumph scenes on mosaics, and from scenes of the battle between Dionysus and the Indians on mosaics and sarcophagi. A barbarian child appears in one scene of the Dionysiac *clementia* with defeated barbarians kneeling before the enthroned god. Two mosaics from Tusculum (Italy) and Fuente Alamo (Spain), and five sarcophagi from Rome show the battle. The Dionysiac *clementia* appears on three sarcophagi and perhaps

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<sup>5</sup>Rome, Palazzo Giustiniani: Matz II, 237-238, no. 98, pl. 121. Naples, Museo Nazionale #647/6596: Matz II, 243-244, no. 103, pl. 123. Rome, Villa Medici: Matz II, 269-271, no. 130, pl. 158.

<sup>6</sup>Fragmentary sarcophagus in the Palazzo Albani Del Drago, on which are portrayed satyrs, Silenus, and two male captives, one riding an elephant, another in chains seated beside a large crater, on a cart drawn by panthers; Matz II, cat. no. 136, pl. 159.



once in the mosaic from Cyprus.

GROUP 1a,b: Indian captives and children in the Dionysiac triumphal procession.

GROUP 1a (Cat. nos. 37-45, 47-48, 20-21, Figs. 72-80, 81-82, 83-84).

The sarcophagi in this group follow a compositional format showing Dionysus in his chariot accompanied by Victory, a maenad, and two satyrs, preceded by a procession of other members of the thiasos, captives, camels, elephants, felines, and a giraffe, that proceeds from left to right. Dionysus' chariot may be drawn by a pair of panthers (Cat. nos. 37-43, Figs. 72-78), by a pair of centaurs (Cat. no. 44, Fig. 79), or by elephants (Cat. nos. 45, 47-48, Figs. 80, 81-82).

Barbarian children with corkscrew locks are usually shown riding the yoke animals (Cat. nos. 37, 39-40, 42-44, Figs. 72, 74-75, 77-79). The children are replaced by older youths with corkscrew curls on other sarcophagi (Cat. nos. 45, 47-48, Figs. 80, 81-82). Children with corkscrew locks also walk in the procession (Cat. nos. 42-43, Figs. 77-78), and in one instance ride a camel (Cat. no. 42, Fig. 77).

At the centre of the procession, seated back-to-back, are usually two male captives with their hands bound behind their backs, riding on elephants (Cat. nos. 37-41, Figs. 72, 72a,- 77, 77a-79) or camels (Cat. no. 45, Fig. 80). They are clothed in the conventional oriental attire of long-sleeved tunic, chlamys, and anaxyrides (trousers).<sup>7</sup> Captives on foot

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<sup>7</sup>This type of attire is described by Strabo 15.3.19, and Arrian Ind. 16.1-5.

also appear in some scenes (Cat. nos. 38, 44, Figs. 73, 79). Captives are omitted entirely from two examples (Cat. nos. 47-48, Figs. 81-82).

A polychrome mosaic from Sétif in Algeria (Cat. no. 21, Fig. 84), dating to the 4th century A.C., follows a format similar to that outlined above for the sarcophagi of the late Antonine and Severan periods. Dionysus rides in a tiger-drawn chariot accompanied by the usual retinue of human or semi-divine followers, and an elephant, a lion, camels, and a giraffe. Two male captives near the front of the procession are bound back to back, and are being conveyed on a camel. Another male captive, wearing only a chlamys, and a diadem around his hair, precedes a female captive in chains. She wears a long robe, and carries a cloak in her arms.

A male and female captive seated on an elephant appear in one medallion of a mosaic with Dionysiac subjects from El Djem (Tunisia) (Cat. no. 20, Fig. 83) datable probably to the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.C. Elephant tusks and a round shield are also carried as booty on the elephant. Although the scene dispenses with the other elements in the larger compositions, it clearly alludes to the Dionysiac Indian triumph.

With a few exceptions, to be mentioned below, all the captives in this group (1a), are portrayed with corkscrew curls on the sarcophagi, and black curly hair in the mosaics. Only the foremost captives of the pairs on the sarcophagus from the Casino Rospigliosi (Cat. no. 38, Fig. 73), the one from Cliveden (Cat. no. 41, Fig. 76), and the male captive in the Mosaic from El Djem (Cat. no. 20, Fig. 83), are portrayed with the shaggy hair and

beard which is typical of conventional portrayals of western barbarians. It is the attributes of corkscrew locks, and oriental attire on the sarcophagi, and curly hair, dark skin colour and eastern dress in the mosaics, that identifies the barbarians as Indians and differentiates them from the other human and semi-divine characters in the Dionysiac Triumph scenes.

GROUP 1b. (Cat. nos. 46, 19, Figs. 85, 86)

The compositional format encountered in GROUP 1a does not appear on the Dionysiac Indian Triumph on a sarcophagus previously in the Palazzo Albani Del Drago, known only from a drawing (Cat. no. 46, Fig. 85),<sup>8</sup> or in the Antonine mosaic from Nea Paphos (Cat. no. 19, Fig. 86).<sup>9</sup> The scene on the sarcophagus shows Dionysus standing in his elephant-drawn chariot in the centre of the procession. He is accompanied by a satyr. Behind them two naked male figures ride horses. One of them wears a diadem (?). They are accompanied by satyrs, and another male figure riding a mule. At the front of the procession, two women with corkscrew locks, wearing long robes, ride camels.

In the scene on the mosaic, the god is the focal point of the composition, as the other figures look towards him. Therefore the processional format breaks down. Dionysus

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<sup>8</sup>Caution is indicated in analysing the details of the drawing, as the details may not be very reliable.

<sup>9</sup>A date in the Antonine period with a terminus ante quem of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.C. is given in C. Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysus* (Ithaca 1995) 136. This is questioned by G. Hellenkemper Salies, "Römischer Wohnluxus im griechischen Osten," a review of C. Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine*, in *JRA* 10 (1997) 524-536, who suggests a date in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.C.

is seated in his leopard-drawn chariot at the centre of the composition while satyrs, maenads, Silenus, and dark-skinned Indian captives are set spaciouly apart from each other against a neutral background. One of these captives is a naked male figure with his hands bound behind his back standing between a satyr and a maenad. Another captive, naked but for a leopard-skin draped around his shoulders, lifts his fettered hand to his head in a gesture of distress.<sup>10</sup> The third dark-skinned figure, who has a garment around his waist, kneels before the chariot of the god proffering a diadem.<sup>11</sup>

In the Nea Paphos mosaic (Cat. no. 19, Fig. 85) the Indians are identified and differentiated from the other characters by dark skin colour, but unlike the figures of Indians in GROUP 1a mosaics, these are not portrayed with curly hair. While the women riding camels on the sarcophagus (Cat. no. 46, Fig. 86) may be identifiable as Indians by their corkscrew locks, only the diadem on the head of the male figure on a horse suggests that an Indian might have been intended.

### Children in scenes of the Dionysiac Indian Triumph

While the context of the procession and the characteristic hairstyle of corkscrew

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<sup>10</sup>It is not clear why this captive wears a leopard-skin, which in Dionysiac contexts is an attribute of the god or his followers. See next page for identification of children in the triumph who wear the *nebris*, as members of the thiasos.

<sup>11</sup>For other identifications of this object see: W. Daszewski, D. Michaelides, Mosaic floors in Cyprus (Ravenna 1988), identified as a thong held by a wild beast trainer; Kondoleon (supra n. 9) 202, as a sack. Kondoleon also suggests that because of the kneeling figure's reddish-brown skin colour he might be of a different race than the Indians who are shown with grey skin.

locks suggest that the children are also intended to be seen as Indians, it is not always certain whether the children who walk (rather than ride the yoke animals) are captives or converts of the god.<sup>12</sup> For example, the child with corkscrew locks, wearing a chlamys and walking before the elephant carrying the captives (Cat. nos. 42-43, Figs. 77-78), might have been intended as a captive too. The identification is even more problematic in the case of the child, without corkscrew locks, but wearing oriental dress, who is given a drink by a half-nude woman (probably a maenad) on the sarcophagus in the Museo Capitolino (Cat. no. 39, Fig. 74). The child in the company of adult captives in one scene of Dionysiac *clementia* (Cat. no. 49, Fig. 92) on a sarcophagus fragment in Frankfurt am Main, to be discussed below, is very likely a captive.

The children and youths who ride Dionysus' yoke animals are clearly not captives transported in fetters, and may rather be identified as followers of the god, as revealed by the *nebris* they wear, and by the protection Dionysus extends to them, which is manifested in permission to ride his animals. The attribute of the *nebris* and permission to ride the animals echo those of the Dionysus *Pais*.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, children always had a place in the Dionysiac mysteries, being initiated into the rites as *bacchoi*, - thus their presence in the thiasos is appropriate.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Other children and babies in the Dionysiac Triumph scenes may be identified as erotes and bacchic children who usually appear in representations of the Dionysiac thiasos.

<sup>13</sup>See Dunbabin, MRNA 173-181 for iconography of the Dionysus *Pais* riding a feline.

<sup>14</sup>Lehmann and Olsen (supra n. 1) 27; M. P. Nilsson, The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman

While most scholars have identified the children as Indians, according to Snowden, those on the Baltimore sarcophagus (Cat. no. 37, Fig. 72) are Aethiopian.<sup>15</sup> He bases this identification on the hairstyle of corkscrew locks which is characteristic of the iconography of the Aethiopian. He also argues that Aethiopians are appropriate symbols of Dionysiac piety since in legend Aethiopians had a reputation for being a pious and just people. And he quotes Diodorus (3.64.7-3.65.3), that piety was one of the reasons for Dionysus' inability to triumph over the Aethiopians. It is possible, however, that the iconography of the children could have been influenced by other factors: for example, the conflation and confusions between India and Aethiopia concerning the geography of the lands and the physiognomy of the inhabitants of the two regions.<sup>16</sup>

The mosaicists have employed different means from those used by the sculptors of the sarcophagi in differentiating the Indians from the other characters in the Indian Triumph. Since the polychromy of the medium allows the artists to employ colour, colour becomes the primary distinguishing feature for the Indian figures in the mosaics. Thus, the skin colour of the Indians is rendered in much darker tesserae than that of the other characters. In the Nea Paphos mosaic (Cat. no. 19, Fig. 85) the captive kneeling before Dionysus has a reddish-brown colour, while the other captives are a dark grey. Although

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Age (Lund 1957).

<sup>15</sup>Aethiopian identification: Snowden, Blacks 149-150 and n(s). 39-40; A. M. McCann, Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York 1978) 86-91, following Snowden.

<sup>16</sup>See discussion of the literary evidence *infra* Part II of this chapter.

we are not told what colours make up the complexions of the Indians in the mosaic from Sétif (Cat. no. 21, Fig. 84, 84a) the monochrome photographs clearly show that they are uniformly darker than any of the other characters in the scene. It is not possible to be certain in the case of the captives in the mosaic from El Djem (Cat. no. 20, Fig. 81) as not enough information is provided in the publication.<sup>17</sup>

The treatment of the hair surface is another means for somatic distinction used by the mosaicists. The Indians in the Sétif mosaic are depicted with black curly hair that is clearly different from the loose flowing locks of the somatic norm type figures. The surface of the hair in the figures of the Indians is given a textured treatment created by numerous smallish curls and a rough scallopy outline. The hair of the female prisoner in the mosaic from El Djem (Cat. no. 20, Fig. 81) is rendered in a similar manner, whereas in the Nea Paphos mosaic (Cat. no. 19, Fig. 86) there is no significant difference between the treatment of the hair of the Indians and that of the somatic norm figures. The curly hair of the Indian captives in the mosaics from Sétif and El Djem should be considered to be iconographically related to the corkscrew locks hairstyle of the Indians on the sarcophagi.<sup>18</sup>

The barbarian captives portrayed without corkscrew locks on the Cliveden (Cat.

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<sup>17</sup>G. Ch. Picard, "Un triomphe Dionysiaque sur une mosaïque de Thysdrus," *BAC* n.s. 20-21 (1989) 101-104.

<sup>18</sup>This treatment may be compared to that of the personification of India or Africa from Piazza Armerina. See discussion *supra* Chapter 2, and Appendix 3.



no. 41, Fig. 76) and Rospigliosi sarcophagi (Cat. no. 38, Fig. 73),- appear to be composite figures composed of iconographical elements derived from conventional portrayals of Germanic, Parthian and Dacian captives of Roman military imperial art.<sup>19</sup> This composite type makes use of the bareheaded, hirsute Germanic with shaggy hair and full beard, as well as the Parthian or Dacian with long-sleeved tunic, chlamys and anaxyrides. The portrayal of two types of barbarian captives with and without corkscrew curls, might be an interpretation of the observations in the written sources regarding the differences in skin colour among Indians; southern Indians are darker than northern Indians. The artists may have been attempting to capture this difference by investing the figures that would represent the darker inhabitants with corkscrew curls, and the paler ones with wavy hair and looser curls.<sup>20</sup> But it is also possible, according to the arguments of Turcan, that this duality of representation was merely a result of the artists' desire for a "variété pittoresque" through the multiplication of different barbarian types in any one composition.<sup>21</sup> The variety would also emphasise the 'foreignness' of the captives who are exotic as well as barbarian, recalling in the ancient viewer the barbarians who constantly threatened the Roman peace.

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<sup>19</sup>For the identification of these types of Barbarians see: R. Brilliant, Gesture and Rank in Roman Art (Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 14 [1963]); R. Brilliant, The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum (Rome 1976) 140, 223, 248 and plates, and for description of dress 155, n. 22; Schneider, Bunte Barbaren 123, 163, pls. 36-37, and index s.v. "Orientalen".

<sup>20</sup>See infra section II of this chapter for references in the literary sources to different types of Indians.

<sup>21</sup>Turcan (supra n. 1) 446.



While corkscrew curls identify the Indian as a type of Black barbarian, the turban and diadem worn around the head also allude, together with clothing, to the oriental identity of the captives. The turban can be seen on the heads of the two mounted captives on the sarcophagus in Baltimore (Cat. no. 37, Figs. 72, 72a), which is the earliest in our series. It is the one instance where a turban is clearly shown. The headdress of the captive on foot in the procession on the Belvedere sarcophagus (Cat. no. 44, Fig. 79), may also have been intended as a turban, but unfortunately, considerable damage to the relief prevents a secure identification. All the other mounted captives on the sarcophagi are bareheaded except the pair on the Capitoline sarcophagus (Cat. no. 39, Fig. 74), who are shown with a narrow band around the crown of the head. This band or ribbon appears also on the head of the captive walking behind Silenus on the Sétif mosaic (Cat. no. 21, Fig. 84), where it is most likely a diadem, the headpiece of eastern rulers. In this case the figure might represent one of the Indian rulers captured by Dionysus. Donderer argues for an identification of a more propagandistic nature, in which the captive wearing the diadem is an allusion to Poros, the Indian King put to death after Alexander the Great's demise.<sup>22</sup> Also, the object being proffered by the kneeling captive in the mosaic from Nea Paphos (Cat. no. 19, Fig. 85) should be identified as a diadem, and not a thong or a sack as has been suggested by others.<sup>23</sup> This would allow the kneeling figure to be identified as

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<sup>22</sup>M. Donderer, "Dionysos und Ptolemaios Soter als Meleager - Zwei Gemälde des Antiphilos," in Zu Alexander d. Gr. Festschrift G. Wirth zum 60 Geburtstag am 9.12.86. (Amsterdam 1988) 781-799 esp. p.787.

<sup>23</sup>Kondoleon (supra n. 9) 202, Daszewski (supra n. 11) 21.

an Indian king engaged in an act of submission, handing over his diadem, symbol of his sovereignty, to the victorious Dionysus. It is uncertain, however, that both of the captives on the Capitoline sarcophagus are intended to represent rulers.

The artists and sculptors of scenes of the Dionysiac Indian Triumph on sarcophagi chose to depict the barbarian captives of the god, with few exceptions, with the hairstyle of corkscrew locks. The mosaicists follow a similar convention of portraying the barbarian captives in the procession with elements from the iconography of the Black: dark skin colour and curly hair. The choice of these conventions appears to have been influenced by the medium in which the artists were working. However, an examination of the iconography of Indians in scenes based on other episodes of the myth of Dionysus and the Indians reveals that the iconography of the Indians is influenced as much by the episode being represented as by the medium in which it is represented.

#### I.(ii) Indians in other Dionysiac scenes

GROUP 2: The Battle between Dionysus and the Indians. (Figs. 87-89) and (Cat. nos. 22-23, Figs. 90-91).

On sarcophagi illustrating the battle with the Indians, the Indians are not portrayed with corkscrew locks or any other determinative characteristics of the Black. But just as in the Indian Triumph scenes on sarcophagi, in the scenes of the battle on mosaics, dark skin colour is the distinguishing somatic characteristic of the Indian.

The theme of the battle with the Indians is found on a sarcophagus from Cortona (Fig. 87), sarcophagus fragments from Grottaferrata, and sarcophagi in the Capitoline (Fig. 88) and Chiaramonti museums in Rome (Fig. 89) all datable to about 160-180 A.C.<sup>24</sup> It also appears in a 3rd c. A.C. mosaic from Tusculum (Cat. no. 22, Fig. 90) and a mosaic from Puente Genil in Spain dated to the 4th c. A.C. (Cat. no. 23, Fig. 91).

In the battle scenes on the sarcophagi the Indians are portrayed with loose waves of hair according to the "somatic norm" type, and they may be bearded or unbearded. A shagginess in their hair and beard, nudity in some figures, and oriental dress in others, distinguish the Indians from the other figures. Armed with daggers and shields, the Indians fight satyrs, centaurs, Amazons on horses, and the god who charges at them from the centaur-drawn chariot (Figs. 87, 89). Unlike the other examples, elephants, a camel, and a lion are included in the battle scene on the sarcophagus in the Capitoline museum (Fig. 88). The battle scenes are modelled after conventional Roman imperial ones, designed to convey violent movement indicative of heated battle. But some confusions are evident in the portrayal of some characters in the Dionysiac battle scene: on the sarcophagus from Cortona (Fig. 87) Amazons fight satyrs, although they belong to the same side, and on the Chiaramonti sarcophagus (Fig. 89) an Indian wears conventional

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<sup>24</sup>Sarcophagi depicting the battle between Dionysus and the Indians: Cortona (Museo Diocesano), Matz III, 426-28, no. 237, pl. 258.I; Paris (Louvre), Matz III, 431, no. 240, pl. 251.I, also L. Guerrini, "Un sarcofago dionisiaco del museo di Grottaferrata," *StMisc* 12 (1967) 6 n. 11, pl. II.4; Rome (Museo Capitolino), Matz III, 428-430, no. 238, pl. 259.I; Vatican (Museo Chiaramonti), Matz III, 432-33, no. 243, pl. 258; Grottaferrata (Museo dell'Abbazia), Matz III, 430-31, no. 239, pl. 257.II-III, also L. Guerrini (op.cit.) 4-10, pl.I.I, and Graeven (supra n. 1) 216.

Roman armour.

In the mosaic from Tusculum (Cat. no. 22, Fig. 90) a maenad and satyr battle against two dark-skinned Indians on the banks of a river.<sup>25</sup> One of the Indians has fallen to the ground, under the maenad's attack, while the other confronts the satyr. The standing Indian wears an exomis and a turban with a feather at the crown. In the mosaic from Puente Genil which is very damaged (Cat. no. 23, Fig. 96), one of the god's yoke tigers attacks a fallen dark-skinned Indian. Another very dark Indian, wearing a short tunic and armed with a dagger and shield, does battle with a maenad.

GROUP 3: Procession with *ferculum* and captives; Scenes of *submissio* and *clementia* (Cat. nos. 19, 49, 50, Figs. 85, 92, 93) and (Fig. 89).

The scenes in this group deal with the aftermath of the Dionysiac battle with the Indians, and with probably only one exception in mosaic (Cat. no. 19, Fig. 85), are found mainly on sarcophagi. Some sarcophagi show captured Indians in a procession, and a *ferculum* laden with trophies and booty carried by satyrs (Cat. nos. 49-50, Figs. 92-93). There are also scenes of *submissio* and *clementia* in which the defeated Indian kneels at the feet of the seated Dionysus to plead for mercy, that may be combined with the *ferculum* procession (Cat. no. 50, Fig. 93), with the battle (Fig. 89), or with the Triumph (Cat. no. 19, Fig. 85). The procession and the *clementia* are clearly derived from Roman

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<sup>25</sup>Gasparri (supra n. 1) no. 233 identifies the figures as Dionysus and a Maenad, but the iconography is



imperial military iconography of barbarians seeking clemency at the feet of the emperor.<sup>26</sup>

The iconography of the barbarian captives in the scenes of *submissio*, *clementia* and procession with *ferculum* differs according to which of the two events is represented. On the sarcophagus in Salerno (Cat. no. 50, Fig. 93), for example, the procession with *ferculum* culminates in a *submissio* scene in which the captive kneeling at the feet of Dionysus wears oriental attire and has the hirsute aspect of Germanic barbarians. A similar captive appears also in the scene of *submissio* combined with the battle on the Chiaramonti sarcophagus (Fig. 89).<sup>27</sup> None of those figures has any of the determinative characteristics of the Black. But in the scenes showing a procession with *ferculum* on sarcophagi in Salerno and Frankfurt (Cat. nos. 49-50, Figs. 92-93), barbarians with corkscrew locks are included. The scene on the sarcophagus fragment from Frankfurt (Cat. no. 49, Fig. 92) shows a small group of captives with two women, one of whom has corkscrew locks. Both women on the Frankfurt fragment wear a long chiton with the right breast exposed.

These types of scenes are not represented in the mosaics, with the exception perhaps of the mosaic from Nea Paphos (Cat. no. 19, Fig. 85), which seems to show an abbreviated scene of *submissio* with an Indian ruler surrendering his diadem to

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unusual for Dionysus who is usually depicted heroically nude or in long feminine robes.

<sup>26</sup>For captives at the feet of the emperor, see Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank* (supra n. 19) 189 and n. 1.

<sup>27</sup>References supra n. 24.

Dionysus.<sup>28</sup>

In composing scenes of Dionysus' battle with the Indians, the procession with *ferculum*, and the submission, artists were drawing heavily from a repertoire of motifs belonging to the iconography of Roman imperial military battles and triumphs.<sup>29</sup> The iconography of the Indian in these scenes is influenced by that of the traditional Roman enemies of the empire: Germanic, Gallic, Dacian and Parthian barbarians.<sup>30</sup> But the inclusion of barbarians with somatic characteristics of the Black in some scenes reveals that the iconography of the Indian was changeable. Differences in the portrayal of Indians in themes of the battle and the Triumph stem from their derivation from two different traditions. The Triumph scenes derive primarily from the Dionysiac repertory, where the emphasis is on exotic barbarians whom the artists have chosen to portray with some somatic characteristics of the Black, whereas the battle scenes and aftermath are derived from Roman imperial military iconography, which relies on conventional portrayals of traditional barbarian enemies.

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<sup>28</sup>See previous discussion *supra* pp. 193-194.

<sup>29</sup>See also Turcan (*supra* n. 1) 446-448.

<sup>30</sup>Further discussion in L. Guerrini, "Brevi note su alcuni rilievi," *StMisc* 20 (1971/72) 68-69.

I. (iii). The grand procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus as a possible influence on the iconography of the Indian Triumph.

According to some researchers, the iconography of Dionysus' Indian triumph, and ultimately the iconography of the Indians in it, was influenced by the section of Ptolemy Philadelphus' grand procession, which had as its theme Dionysus' return from India.<sup>31</sup> The description of the procession quoted from Kallixeinos' account by Athenaeus (Deipnosophistae 5. 200D-201C), includes a cart containing a statue of Dionysus reclining on an elephant's back, accompanied by a young satyr sitting on the neck of the animal.<sup>32</sup> The procession which followed the cart included Indian women and others dressed as prisoners, seated under tents; Aethiopian tribute-bearers carrying elephant tusks, ebony, and kraters full of gold, silver, and gold dust; little girls wearing gold himatia and armed with light shields and thyrsos-lances; little boys dressed as charioteers; Silenoi; Satyrs; and a great number of beasts including several Aethiopian and Indian ones, Indian hunting dogs, Aethiopian birds, Indian and Aethiopian cows, and oryxes, hartebeest, ostriches and a giraffe.

According to Donderer, who argues that the procession was a source for the motifs of the Indian Triumph, the portrayal on sarcophagi of Indians with the hairstyle of corkscrew locks may have resulted from an anomaly in the "Indian Triumph" section of

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<sup>31</sup>Donderer (supra n. 22) 781-99.

<sup>32</sup>For a discussion of the various problems associated with the excerpt from Kallixeinos, see E.E. Rice, The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus (Oxford 1983).

the procession in which, due to a lack of real Indians, Aethiopians played the part of Dionysus' captives.<sup>33</sup> In this case the established iconography of Aethiopians would be appropriate even if it continued to generate an inaccurate portrayal of the Indian. Donderer argues also that the motif of the giraffe, which appears in no Dionysiac thiasos other than the Indian triumph, is derived from the procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus, where it was included among the animals in the "Return of Dionysus from India" section. According to Donderer, the giraffe appeared in Ptolemy's procession, not because it was an Indian animal, but because the Ptolemies had a passion for exotic animals.<sup>34</sup>

But Donderer's arguments are problematic. The argument for real Aethiopians acting as Indian prisoners is theoretically plausible, since a number of Aethiopians is reported to have marched in Ptolemy's procession. However, it is not specified that these Aethiopians dressed as Indians or carried out any function other than bearing tribute of ebony, gold, and silver. In fact, Indian women acting as prisoners are specifically mentioned in the account (Ath. Deipn. 201A). The portrayal of the Indian with somatic characteristics of the Black should be linked not to Aethiopians in the parade who may have been substituted for Indians, but rather to the tradition, to be discussed below, of

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<sup>33</sup>Donderer (supra n. 22) 789, n. 46.

<sup>34</sup>For the Ptolemies' interest in animals and for ancient knowledge about giraffes: Rice (supra n. 32), 86-87, 97-98; J. M. C. Toynbee, Animals in Roman life and art (London 1973); O. Keller, Die Antike Tierwelt (Leipzig 1909-13).



confusions about the two peoples in Antiquity.<sup>35</sup>

It is possible that the Grand Procession did generate the iconography of the Dionysiac Indian Triumph, for indeed many of the motifs in scenes of the Triumph occur in Kallixeinos' account of the Grand Procession. For example, Indian women dressed as captives occur as the dark-skinned female captive with black curly hair and hands bound in the mosaic from Sétif (Cat. no. 21, Fig. 84a) and women with corkscrew curls who ride camels on the sarcophagus from the Palazzo Albani Del Drago (Cat. no. 46, Fig. 86). Also, the giraffe which is specifically mentioned as an exhibit in the procession, occurs frequently in scenes of the Indian Triumph.

Donderer's argument, which posits the grand procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus as the source for the theme and motifs of the Dionysiac Indian Triumph, hinges on the concept of a post-*pompe* original which would act as a 'Zwischenquelle' between the procession and the artistic manifestations of the theme on Antonine and Severan sarcophagi, as well as the 2nd-3rd c. A.C. mosaic from Nea Paphos and the 4th century mosaic from Sétif. He argues that the Hellenistic prototype could have been taken by Augustus from Alexandria, where it would have been created after the procession, to Rome.<sup>36</sup> The argument for a prototype on which later representations are based is one frequently advanced in the study of iconography when there is consistent recurrence of

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<sup>35</sup>See discussion of the literary evidence *infra* Part II of this chapter.

<sup>36</sup>Donderer (*supra* n. 22) 790.

specific motifs and compositional formats in a particular theme. Donderer does not specify in what medium he believes the prototype to have appeared, but according to other scholars the model for the sarcophagi and the Sétif mosaic may have been a painting.<sup>37</sup> The similarities in compositional format and the very close repetition of details, as well as the inconsistencies in the scenes on the sarcophagi and in the Sétif mosaic, suggest that the dissemination of the theme and its motifs would very likely have occurred through the use of pattern-books based on an original model.<sup>38</sup> Even the peculiarities of the mosaic from Nea Paphos appear so only because motifs from the repertoire have been assembled in a manner different from that of the sarcophagi and the Sétif mosaic.<sup>39</sup>

## II. The literary tradition

Accounts from ancient geographers, historians, and poets, constitute a literary tradition characterised by confusions and conflation between Indians and Aethiopians and their respective lands. This literary tradition presents a parallel for the iconographic

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<sup>37</sup>Kondoleon (supra n. 9) 219 and Lehmann and Olsen (supra n. 1, p. 72) believe that the sarcophagi were derived from a painting, and that the Baltimore sarcophagus copies the prototype most accurately based on the "complexity of planes which recede far into the background" of the relief and the presentation of the ground over which the procession passes. They place the prototype in the early Antonine period; Matz II, 228-230, argues for a Hellenistic original.

<sup>38</sup>For discussion of this phenomenon, see Dunbabin (supra n. 1) 61-65, esp. 64-65.

<sup>39</sup>Kondoleon (supra n. 9) 220, notes that the Nea Paphos Triumph mosaic "reflects a process, known in sculpture, whereby the artist combines conventional figure types rather than follows a single model".

tradition which has been seen to reveal similar confusions and conflation in the portrayal of Indians.

Many of the descriptive comparisons between Indians and Aethiopians in the sources are *topoi* created by repetitions of descriptions in the accounts of earlier writers by later commentators. The prevalence of *topoi* in accounts about India might be attributed to the fact that the majority of commentators on India had never visited India, and were therefore not in a position to add any new information to an existing store of knowledge composed of factual observations, hearsay evidence, and mere fabrications.<sup>40</sup> Only a few writers like Nearchos, who served as admiral in India under Alexander, Onesikritos, the pilot of Alexander's fleet, (both of whom are quoted by Arrian), and Megasthenes, sent from the Syrian court as ambassador, had been in India.

The somatic appearance of Indians is described in most of the ancient accounts. In the descriptions the most remarked upon characteristic is the skin colour of the Indian which is frequently compared with that of the Aethiopian. The frequent comparisons between the skin colour of the two peoples becomes a *topos*. The same adjectives “*melas*”, “*kuaneoi*”, “*melanochroes*”, and *niger* are often used to describe the skin colour of Indians as well as Aethiopians.<sup>41</sup> Other somatic traits like hair and facial features are

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<sup>40</sup>For an overview of problems in the use of some ancient sources, and problems of historical interpretation related to India, see A. B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander* (Oxford 1988), and for a collection of accounts of India in the sources, see J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature* (Amsterdam 1971).

<sup>41</sup>For further references see Snowden, *Blacks* 258, n. 10.

also the subject of comparison between the two peoples. According to Strabo (15.13), quoting Eratosthenes and Onesikritos, southern Indians were like Aethiopians in colour, but in hair and face were like other people (i.e. peoples of the Mediterranean somatic norm), since their hair does not curl on account of the moistness of the atmosphere, whereas northern Indians were like Egyptians.<sup>42</sup> A century later Arrian (Ind. 6.9) also notes that “the appearance of the inhabitants is not very different in India and Aethiopia: the southern Indians are rather more like Aethiopians as they are black to look on, and their hair is black; only they are not so snub-nosed or woolly-haired as the Aethiopians; the northern Indians are most like the Egyptians physically”. Pliny (N.H. 6. 22, 70) says that the south Indians are brown and not as black as Aethiopians, yet the closer one gets to the Indus the darker they are. Philostratus (V.A. 2.9) is of the opinion that the Indians seem to favour the colour black because it is their own colour. But Callistratus (Descriptions 4) describes the statue of an Indian which was portrayed with black skin and woolly hair, two characteristics which taken together are more typical of ancient descriptions of Aethiopians. In the 5th c. A.C. Nonnos refers to the Indians as Αἰθιοπεὶς Ἰνδοῖ (Dionysiaca 15.1) and μελαρρίνου γενέθλης (14. 395).<sup>43</sup> Another topos is

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<sup>42</sup>Environmental theories about the effect of climate on physiology of various peoples including Aethiopians and Indians is also a topos, cf. Strabo 24 and references supra chapter 1.

<sup>43</sup>Nonnos (Dionysiaca 17. 385-397) relates an interesting legend in which Blemys, described as the woolly-haired chief of the Erythraian Indians, was lifted up away from the Indians to Arabia, whence Blemys came to the mouth of the Nile to be king of the Aethiopians who were dark-skinned like himself. This legend reveals a

comparison between the geography of India and Aethiopia, and, for example, just as is the case for Aethiopia, there is a similar vagueness in earlier sources about the geographical location of India. According to Herodotus, for example, India lay at the world's most distant eastern limit (3.106). Centuries later, Aethiopia is also described vaguely as being situated from the east to the west (Pliny N.H. 6.197). India is connected even more closely with Aethiopia in certain accounts. According to some writers, Alexander the Great first thought on seeing crocodiles and Egyptian beans in the Hydaspes (Strabo 15.1.25) and the Indus (Arrian Anab. 6.1.2), that he had found the source of the Nile, but he discarded this notion after Nearchos' expedition. Yet in the Augustan period Virgil also refers to the Nile sweeping down from the coloured Indians (Georg. 4.293). Virgil's statement, even if it is only a poetic conceit, suggests that to many the two regions shared a geographical proximity. Arrian (Ind. 6.8) also mentions the similarity of the geography of the two regions, as does Philostratus (V.A. 2.19).

The approximation of India and Aethiopia can also be seen in the frequent comparisons between their climates, flora and fauna. Comparisons are made between the great rivers of each and the effect their fluctuating levels have on the environment (Strabo 15.16, Arrian Ind. 6.4-7), and Pliny (N.H. 8.10) notes the similarities between the fauna of the two lands.<sup>44</sup>

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conflation of Indians and Aethiopians that is given a measure of authority by being part of the mythological tradition.

<sup>44</sup> The chapters in Strabo's *Geography* deal with the following topics: 13, flora and fauna; 16, the two rivers;

### Concluding remarks

Some traditions that present Dionysus as conqueror of India do so in their accounts of Alexander's conquests, and it is suggested by some modern scholars that the triumph of Dionysus was actually modelled on the victories of Alexander.<sup>45</sup> But the connection between Dionysus and Alexander seems to have been of particular political importance for the Ptolemies who presented themselves as the heirs of Alexander.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps one of the most telling expressions of this association is the grand procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus. And it is most probably to the procession that many of the more exotic motifs of the Dionysiac Indian Triumph may be traced.

The revival of the Dionysiac religion under the Antonines and Severans contributed to the creation of a climate suitable for the proliferation of Dionysiac themes, and particularly the Indian Triumph theme, on sarcophagi of those periods.<sup>47</sup> But the influence of the triumphal imagery of Roman imperial art is also present in the iconography of the Dionysiac Indian triumph. Barbarian captives, booty, and exotic

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18, the effect of the rivers on agriculture; 24, effect of climate on peoples; 25 - 26, general comparison of the two lands.

<sup>45</sup>The comparisons between Dionysus' and Alexander's conquests in India are a topos in many ancient sources. For discussion of this subject see Donderer (supra n. 22) 781-799; P. Goukowsky, Essai sur les origines du mythe d'Alexandre (336-270 av. J.-C.) II (Nancy 1981); Rice (supra n. 32) 83-86.

<sup>46</sup>Rice (supra n. 32) 42-43.

<sup>47</sup>See Turcan (supra n. 1) 441-472.



animals, as well as processions with a *ferculum* and scenes of submission, are included. Scenes of the Dionysiac Indian Triumph with captives occur most frequently on sarcophagi where the processional format was well suited to the elongated rectangular shape of the sarcophagi. Some of the somatic characteristics associated with the Black- the hairstyle of corkscrew locks, curly hair, and dark skin colour, are used by the artists to identify the Indian in scenes of the Dionysiac Indian Triumph. This extension to the Indian of the iconography originally developed for the Aethiopian to the Indian is evidence that the ancient artists did not always have a clear mental distinction between the various dark-skinned peoples.

## CONCLUSIONS

Previous research on Greek and Roman representations of Blacks has approached the subject as a study in “race relations”. In the studies conducted by Beardsley and Snowden the figural representations are used as evidence to support arguments concerning the status of Blacks in Greco-Roman antiquity, and the presence or absence of racism towards Blacks in Greek and Roman society. Thompson’s study includes references to some representations (without illustrations) to support the theory that Roman society may have been xenophobic but not racist. Desanges’ approach differs slightly; he argues for the existence of an indigenous Black population in North Africa, and attempts to identify representations of such peoples in the iconography.<sup>1</sup>

My approach has been different. I have focussed primarily on the figural representations, analysing that which the artists have chosen to depict. The question guiding my research has not been “is this a representation of a Black?”, but rather “what has the artist chosen to portray in this image, and what makes it different from other images?” We have seen figures depicted with darker skin colour, curlier hair, broader noses, and fuller or thicker lips, compared to figures rendered according to the “somatic norm”. By isolating these somatic characteristics it becomes possible to identify them

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<sup>1</sup>See literature review supra Chapter 1.



whenever they occur in the artistic repertoires. It has not been my intention to document all instances in which these somatic characteristics occur. Rather, I have provided a selective overview in Chapter 2 and discussed themes and problems in chapters 3 – 6.

My approach to the iconography has led to conclusions that sometimes differ from those of previous researchers. For example, contrary to arguments of some earlier researchers, including Snowden and Thompson, that Blacks are portrayed as charioteers, I argued in Chapter 5 that no recognisable images of the Black occur in that context. The main monographs also appear to have overlooked representations of athletes with somatic characteristics of the Black, representations that should be seen as having some significance since Black athletes are rarely mentioned in the literary sources. Similarly, the ithyphallic and swimming figures in the group of black-and-white mosaics in private baths in Pompeii, and their relevance to the early development of the execution of the human figure in Roman mosaics has not been noted in the monographs.

Also, whereas previous scholars have argued that the representations are generally accurate depictions of Blacks, I argue that in spite of variations from the “somatic norm” that are evident in the iconography, artists were attempting to convey difference frequently without any real knowledge of what the precise nature of that difference was. The representation of North Africans, for example, posed problems for the artist. For although there was an awareness, present also in the literary sources, of the various different dark-skinned peoples of North Africa like Moors and Libyans, conveying the

differences between those peoples and *Aethiopes* in artistic representations was problematic. Consequently the Moorish cavalry depicted on Trajan's column in Rome are portrayed with corkscrew locks and prognathous faces, somatic characteristics originally attributed to the *Aethiops*.<sup>2</sup> Confusions about the physical appearance of North Africans are probably best illustrated by the representations of the personification of Africa. Identifiable by her attributes, especially the elephant-scalp headdress, she is variously depicted as a "somatic norm" figure or with varying combinations of dark skin colour, a broad nose, full lips, and corkscrew locks. But we should consider that perhaps some of the confusion about the physical appearance of North Africans may have been linked to the differences in skin colour and morphology that are evident in the people at least in modern times. If these variations were evident in antiquity the artists might have been trying to accommodate the variations. These mitigating factors in the North African problem notwithstanding, representations of Indians with somatic characteristics of the Black in scenes of Dionysus' Indian Triumph are also evidence of an artistic (and more general) lack of mental distinction between various dark-skinned peoples.

The issue of the role of Blacks has been a major focus in the studies by Beardsley, Snowden, and Thompson, where it has been linked to their discussion of racism in antiquity. A serious discussion about the racism issue is outside the scope of this thesis. I have, however, addressed the roles in which artists have chosen to depict the Black,

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<sup>2</sup>For Moorish cavalry, see discussion *supra* Chapter 2.

noting where the iconographic and literary testimonies converge or diverge. I have noted that the largest number of figures with somatic characteristics of the Black occur in scenes of domestic activity. The scenes are found in the group of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.C. sarcophagi from Rome and on mosaics of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. A.C. from North Africa and Sicily. In these scenes the Black is portrayed in several roles: as a wine-server in outdoor picnics; attending to the preparation of *calda* at the picnic; carrying a jug of water and a towel for diners to wash and dry their hands; carrying platters of food; as a *cursor* accompanying the master on excursions; as a *capsarius*; and as a bath attendant. I have attempted also to show that these representations are not merely “snapshots” of real life, for their execution might have been influenced by popular beliefs, and in the case of the mosaics, also by the physical space for which they were created to adorn. A case in point is the macrophallic *fornacator* carrying a shovel in the mosaic from Timgad (Cat. no. 7, Fig. 36), who, though he might have been based on the reality of Black bath attendants, might also have been intended as an apotropaic figure on the basis of his exaggerated phallus and position on the threshold.

It is obvious, from the evidence of early portrayals in Attic vase-paintings of the 6<sup>th</sup> c. B. C. to 4<sup>th</sup> C. A.C. North African and Sicilian mosaics, that the image of the Black has been a source of continual fascination for artists of the Greek and Roman periods. It is the artists of the Roman period, however, who transform the iconography of the Black, not by radically altering their style, but by extending the applications of the iconography

beyond the original *Aethiops* to include other dark-coloured peoples.

The Indian is portrayed with the hairstyle of corkscrew locks on sarcophagi of the Antonine and Severan periods in scenes of Dionysus' triumphant return from India. In mosaics with the same theme from North Africa and Cyprus, dark skin colour and curly hair are the features that distinguish the Indian from the other figures in the scenes. The Moorish cavalry with corkscrew locks on Trajan's column in Rome are indicative of the artists' perception of the Moor as a type of Black. Other figures that may have been intended to represent other North African non-Aethiopian types are the *cursores* and table servants with corkscrew locks depicted on sarcophagi of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.C. from Rome.

I argued also that in the Roman period the figure of the Black is frequently inserted into "narrative contexts". Dining scenes, excursion and other biographical scenes on 3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.C. sarcophagi from Rome are some of the "narrative contexts" in which youths with corkscrew locks are depicted. Other such contexts are the picnic scenes, scenes of athletic competition, and events from the arena depicted on mosaics of the late 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.C. from North Africa that show figures with various combinations of somatic characteristics associated with the Black. Mythological narrative contexts, particularly the Dionysiac Indian triumph, are another major source of figures with some somatic characteristics of the Black.

We may finally conclude, on the evidence of the numbers of figures from Rome and North Africa showing somatic characteristics associated with the Black, that those

two regions were the major disseminators of the Image of the Black in the Roman era.

Rome maintains her status as major producer, but North Africa supersedes Egypt after the Hellenistic period, especially in the dissemination of figures in scenes of daily life.



## APPENDIX I (Chapter 5, n. 40)

Although not of the Roman circus, the one representation of a charioteer that can clearly be identified as a Black appears on a marble relief from Herculaneum, now in the Museo Nazionale in Naples.<sup>1</sup> The iconography of the scene is unusual and difficult to interpret, but is deserving of close examination.

The scene shows a charioteer at the reins of a *biga*, and a male figure of the somatic norm type walking in front of the horses, leading them by the bridle. The charioteer is dressed in a long, sleeveless chiton, girdled about the waist. A flap of his chiton flutters above the chariot wheel. He leans forward to rein in the horses, one of which wears a gorgoneion breastplate. The other man is clad only in a kilt-like garment belted at the waist, with his torso left bare. He wears a head-piece decorated with a recumbent winged griffin, and he cradles a sword or baton in the crook of his arm.

The identification of the man at the reins as a Black is secure. Except for skin colour (which does not appear on the relief in its present monochrome state), he has the full range of determinative features of the Black: tightly curling hair worn short and close to the scalp, full lips, and a prominent jaw. His charioteer's costume of full-length sleeveless chiton is more consistent with the iconography of Greek charioteers than it is with Roman. A 5th or 4th c. B.C. chalcedony scaraboid from Athens in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston presents a good parallel.<sup>2</sup> On the gem a charioteer wearing a sleeveless full-length chiton is driving a *biga* at full gallop. The lower part of his chiton flutters behind him above the wheel of the *biga*. The Roman charioteer's costume consisted of a short tunic in the colour of the faction, leggings, and a helmet. He wound the reins of his horses around his torso and carried a short whip.

Several interpretations, none of which are entirely satisfactory, have been put forward for the figure leading the horses. Reinach suggested a connection with the Busiris myth, but, as Beardsley rightly observed, the figure has no attributes of Herakles that might suggest an association with that myth.<sup>3</sup> Beardsley's own interpretation was that he is Memnon attended by one of his Aethiopian servants.<sup>4</sup> According to Snowden, the

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<sup>1</sup>Beardsley, *Negro* 103, no. 227; A. Ruesch, *Guida del Museo Nazionale di Napoli* (n.d.) 570, no. 6639.

<sup>2</sup>For this gem and another with similar motif see J. Boardman, *Greek Gems and Finger Rings. Early Bronze Age to Late Classical* (New York 1970) pls. 561, 563.

<sup>3</sup>S. Reinach, *Repertoire des reliefs grecs et romains* III (Paris 1909) 94, no. 1; Beardsley, *Negro* 103, no. 227.

<sup>4</sup>Beardsley, *Negro* 103, no. 227.

figure represents a soldier.<sup>5</sup> But it is unlikely that the figure represents Memnon, since the mythology and iconography of Memnon contain no references to the attribute of the gorgoneion. And neither is the figure likely to be a soldier leading his chariot, for he does not have sufficient military attributes.

I would suggest, cautiously, a connection with the Perseus myth on the basis of the cap with the winged griffin and the gorgoneion.<sup>6</sup> According to the myths, before Perseus went on his quest to obtain the head of the gorgon Medusa, he was given the winged cap of Hades that rendered the wearer invisible. He also received winged sandals, a shield, a sickle, and a bag. Various combinations of these attributes appear in the iconography. The designer of the Herculaneum relief chose the cap and the sickle, but seems to have misunderstood the attribute of the sickle (or sword as it appears in some representations of the hero), and therefore he renders it as a baton with a sword hilt.

The only impediment to a secure identification of the figure leading the horses as Perseus is the fact that the figure is clothed, for heroic nudity is the norm in the iconography of heroes. If not for this problem the scene might have been interpreted as Perseus guiding a charioteer to a race at the hippodrome. Then it would be possible to read an Aethiopia/Perseus connection into the scene: Perseus rescued Andromeda, a princess of Aethiopia, from being sacrificed to a sea-monster. A black charioteer might have considered the legendary prince of Aethiopia a beneficent divine patron, and might even have belonged to one of the cults of Perseus that flourished in antiquity.<sup>7</sup> Therefore Perseus guides a charioteer's horses in the race, while the gorgoneion provides protection against the evil spells which were common in the rivalry of the races.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Snowden, *Blacks* 167.

<sup>6</sup>*LIMC* 7 (1994) 332-348, s.v. Perseus (L. Jones Roccas).

<sup>7</sup>For evidence of cults of Perseus at Seriphos and Athens, see Paus. 2.18.1; also L. A. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford 1921) 337, 412.

<sup>8</sup>For evidence of spells against rival charioteers *ILS* 8753; A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris 1904) nos. 159-187, 232-245, 272-295. Late evidence for the belief in magic at the races is an ordinance of A.D. 389 that forbade the use of magic by charioteers (*CI* 9,18,9). See also J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in ancient Rome* (London 1969) 318-319.

## APPENDIX II (Chapter 5, n. 61)

In addition to the literary evidence cited, which associates Blacks with elephants as trainers or mahouts, and the Pompeii statuette (Cat. no. 45, Fig. 71) which is one artistic expression of that theme, there is also an animal frieze dated to before the end of the 3rd c. B.C. The frieze comes from a tomb at Marissa (Mareshah) in Palestine and shows an elephant and a black male figure.<sup>1</sup> The word "Aethiopia" is inscribed beside the elephant and the male figure. It is possible that the figures were intended as an allegory of Aethiopia.

Associations between Blacks and elephants are also found on Italian bronze coinage from Etruria in the Chiana (Clanis) valley through which Hannibal marched in 217 B.C. on his way to Lake Trasimene. These coins carry the image of the head of a Black on the obverse and the figure of an elephant with a bell hanging from its neck and an Etruscan letter under its belly on the reverse.<sup>2</sup>

It has been suggested that the coins were inspired by Hannibal's Italian campaigns and that they are evidence of Blacks in his army.<sup>3</sup> According to other scholars, the coins were issued after the Roman defeat of the Carthaginians at Panormus (Palermo) in 250 B.C. when the Romans captured a large number of war elephants.<sup>4</sup> Snowden argues that the heads on the obverse commemorated the Black mahouts of Hannibal's army.<sup>5</sup> Scullard suggests that they might have been inspired by a Black slave attending Hannibal.<sup>6</sup> But Scullard's argument is unconvincing, for it is quite unlikely that one black slave would have made such an impact. If one follows the Hannibalic connection it would

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<sup>1</sup>Meyboom, Nile Mosaic 282, n. 5; E. R. Goodenough, Jewish symbols in the Greco-Roman period The archaeological evidence from Paelestine I (Bollingen series 37, New York 1953) 68; J. P. Peters and H. Thiersch, Painted tombs in the necropolis of Marissa (Mareshah) (London 1905) 26.

<sup>2</sup>R. S. Poole, A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum: Italy (London 1873) 15, nos. 17-21; Snowden, Image 212 and figs. 271-274.

<sup>3</sup>Snowden, Blacks 130-131; H. H. Scullard, "Hannibal's Elephants," NC 8 (1948) 158-168; W. Gowers and H. H. Scullard, "Hannibal's elephants again," NC 10 (1950) 279-80; H. H. Scullard, The Elephant in the Greek and Roman World (London 1974) 173.

<sup>4</sup>Snowden, Image 212 and n(s). 220-221, the opinion of F. Panvini Rosati, "La monetazione annibalica" in Studi Annibalici, Atti del Convegno svoltosi a Cortona, Tuoro sul Trasimeno, Perugia, ottobre 1961 5, n.s. (1961-64) 178-80 (non vidi).

<sup>5</sup>Snowden, Blacks 130 also Silius Italicus Punica 3.265-69 for Aethiopians in the Carthaginian army.

<sup>6</sup>Scullard (supra n. 3) 173.



seem more likely that the heads were a generic 'African' label for the mahouts, the elephants and the Africanness (foreign aspect) of the Hannibalic expedition. Whatever position one may take, the connection between Blacks and Elephants was present in the mind of the ancient artists.

But while a mosaic from the Aventine containing a scene of a mounted elephant fighting with a bull is an example of the appearance of elephant and rider in themes generated by the spectacles, what about the tower-bearing elephant and rider?<sup>7</sup> The tower-bearing elephant was essentially a war animal that was later included in public spectacle. The literary sources contain references to the military function of the elephant. According to Juvenal (12. 109-110), Caesar's elephants were used "...*dorso ferre cohortes, partem aliquem belli, euntem in proelia turrem.*"<sup>8</sup> These towers, like the one depicted in the statuette from Pompeii, provided mobile structures from which offensive and defensive manoeuvres could be conducted.

The theme of tower-bearing elephant appears as early as the Hellenistic period. On a terracotta statuette of a rider and elephant from Myrina, can be seen a tower with crenellations also reinforced this time by two round shields.<sup>9</sup> From the 3rd c. B.C. comes a Campanian plate on which is depicted a war elephant also carrying a tower.<sup>10</sup> The theme is repeated on a silver phalera in the Hermitage.<sup>11</sup> Armed figures present in the tower on the Campanian plate and on the silver phalera clearly illustrate the purpose of the tower. In all cases, just as in the Pompeii example, a mahout rides on the neck of the elephant.

The tower-bearing elephant and rider belonged to the war machine during the Hellenistic period, whereas during the empire the elephant appeared frequently in public spectacles. For the arena elephants were usually trained to perform tricks, and less often as part of *venationes* they were killed.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Mosaic from the Aventine, see Blake, *MAAR* 13 (1936) 174, pl. 42.2.

<sup>8</sup>"...to carry cohorts on their backs, some part of the war, whole towers going into battle".

<sup>9</sup>M. Rostovtzeff, *The social and economic history of the Hellenistic world I* (Oxford 1941) pl. 52, fig. 2.

<sup>10</sup>J. M. C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman life and art* (Ithaca 1973) fig.2.

<sup>11</sup>Rostovtzeff (supra n. 9) pl. 53, fig. I.

<sup>12</sup>Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte* IV 268-269; Scullard, *The Elephant in the Greek and Roman world* (supra n. 3) 250-254.

APPENDIX III (Chapter 6, n. 18).

A 6th century A.C. gilded silver and niello plate from Lampsacus shows a seated female figure identified on the basis of her attributes as a personification of India.<sup>1</sup> The scene on the plate shows a seated woman with a formal wig-like corkscrew locks hairstyle, crowned with a turban decorated by two slim cylindrical protuberances that may be stylized feathers. She is dressed in a sarong that leaves one breast exposed.<sup>2</sup> Niello is used for the flesh parts to give the appearance of dark skin. She is seated on a throne supported by elephant tusks. She carries a bow, and is surrounded by animals native to India: two monkeys, a tiger, a parrot, and a guinea fowl. Beneath her feet are two small figures in sarongs and feathered headdresses leading a tiger and a leopard on a leash.

Although no exact parallel has been found for this personification, she may be compared to the seated personification with dark skin and curly hair in the mosaic from Piazza Armerina that has been identified as India or Africa.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>LIMC 5 (Zurich 1990) 654-55, s.v. India (J. Ch. Balty).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. the female captive with corkscrew locks on the sarcophagus fragment from Frankfurt, wearing a robe that leaves one breast exposed (Cat. no. 49, Fig. 92).

<sup>3</sup>Discussion of Piazza Armerina figure supra Chapter 2.

## CATALOGUE AND ILLUSTRATIONS

The catalogue lists and describes only the 56 objects that constitute the principal iconographic evidence for the thematic discussions in Chapters 3-6. The entries are grouped according to media: Mosaics; Relief sculpture/ sarcophagi; and Small-scale sculpture in the round. Within each medium the arrangement is thematic and chronological. For each entry the relevant information is organised as follows: catalogue number; illustration number with a brief description of the scene and figure(s) that may be identified as Blacks; title of the object (where applicable); medium; dimensions; provenience; present location, museum and inventory number; date; select bibliography; description of figure(s) in more detail.

The catalogue does not include iconographic evidence discussed in Chapter 2. Those are described and references provided in the text.

Illustrations accompanying the catalogue entries appear after the catalogue. Illustrations to some of the iconographic evidence discussed in Chapter 2 are included. Information provided in the captions to the illustrations is organised as follows: object; provenience (if known); present location; brief description of image; catalogue number (where applicable). In scenes with multiple figures where it is not immediately obvious which figure may be identified as a Black, arrows are used to point out the relevant figures.

CATALOGUE

MOSAICS

No.1.

Fig. 28. Ithyphallic swimmer in composition of marine motifs and man attacking a sea-monster with a trident.

Medium: Mosaic (Black-and-white with polychrome touches).

Dim.: 2.83 x 2.30m.

Prov.: Pompeii, I.10.4, Casa del Menandro, *caldarium*.

Pres. loc.: *in situ*.

Date: 40-20 B.C.

Biblio.: Clarke, Black-and-White 59-61, fig. 14; Maiuri, Casa del Menandro 145-146, figs. 56, 69, 70 .

**DESCR.:** Around a central medallion containing a vegetal motif and a bird are scattered several marine motifs; dolphins, fish, and a crab. In the upper left corner of the field a male figure with a trident and spear battles a sea creature. In the lower right corner is an ithyphallic swimmer.

No. 2.

Fig. 29. Ithyphallic swimmers.

Medium: Mosaic (Black-and-white).

Dim.: 2.37 x 1.8m.

Prov.: Pompeii, I.6.2, Casa del Criptoportico, *sudatio*.

Pres. loc.: *in situ*.

Date: 40-20 B.C.

Biblio.: Blake, MAAR 8 (1930) 76, 80; Clarke, Origins 669, fig. 10; Pernice, pl. 20.3.

**DESCR.:** Two ithyphallic swimmers flank a broken amphora streaming with water. They each hold one handle of the vessel. The left arm and complete head of the swimmer to the left of the amphora are modern restorations.

No. 3.

Fig. 30. Heraldic ithyphallic swimmers.

Medium: Mosaic (Black-and-white).

Dim.: 2.55 x 2.18m.

Prov.: Pompeii, VII.1.40, Domus Caesi Blandi, *caldarium*.

Pres. loc.: *in situ*.

Date: 40-20 B.C.

Biblio.: Blake, MAAR 8 (1930) 123, n. 7; Clarke, Origins 669-670, fig. 12; Pernice, 54.

**DESCR.:** Two pairs of ithyphallic swimmers occur on either side of a Hellenistic rosette motif. The pair of ithyphallic swimmers on the left flank a large *askos*. The two swimmers have their backs to the vessel, reaching in a high stroke the one with his right arm and the other with his left. Opposite them the other ithyphallic pair of swimmers flank a central arrangement of strigils hanging from a string.

No. 4.

Fig. 31. Swimmers.

Medium: Mosaic (Black-and-white).

Dim.: 2.07 x 0.67m.

Prov.: Este, Veneto.

Pres. loc.: Este Museum.

Date: Probably Early Augustan.

Biblio.: Blake, MAAR 8 (1930) 80, pl. 48, fig. 3; Clarke, Origins 670, fig. 7.

**DESCR.:** The pavement is quite damaged but two swimmers are visible. They flank a central arrangement of dolphins confronting each other and a covered crater.

No. 5.

Fig. 32. Swimmers, ships, and eagle motif.

Medium: Mosaic (Black-and-white, and polychrome).

Dim.: 750 x 510cm.

Prov.: Constantine, Algeria.

Pres. loc.: Constantine Museum.

Date: 1st or 2nd c. A.C.

Biblio.: A. Berthier, "Une mosaïque solaire trouvée à Constantine" Mélanges d'archéologie, d'épigraphie, et d'histoire offerts à J. Carcopino (Paris 1966) 113-124;

Desanges, Image 258-259, figs. 356-357; G.-Ch. Picard, "Une mosaïque pompéienne à Constantine et l'installation des Sittii à Cirta," RA (1980/81) 185-187.

**DESCR.:** Two rectangular panels appear on either side of a square panel with geometric designs within a circle. In the centre of the circle is an eagle with outstretched wings. Two ships laden with trophies confront each another in one panel. In the other panel are two black silhouettes of swimming figures. The profiles show snub noses and full lips.

No. 6.

Fig. 33. Macrophallic bath attendant carrying *askoi*.

Medium: Mosaic (Black-and-white with polychrome touches).

Dim.: 100 x 60cm.

Prov.: Pompeii, I.10.4, Casa del Menandro, threshold to *caldarium*.

Pres. loc.: *in situ*.

Date: 40-20 B.C.

Biblio.: Clarke, Black-and-White 59-61, fig. 13; Maiuri, Casa del Menandro 120-122, 146, fig. 56; Pernice, 30; Snowden, Blacks 272-273; Snowden, Image 221, fig. 284, n. 258.

**DESCR.:** The male figure wearing a laurel wreath strides to the right. He is shown wearing a brief loincloth that fails to conceal his large erect phallus. He has a curious lump under his right arm. In each hand he carries an *askos*. In the foreground is depicted an arrangement of an *ampulla* and strigils.

No. 7.

Fig. 36. Macrophallic bath attendant with shovel.

Medium: Mosaic

Dim.: 82 x 70cm.

Prov.: Timgad, Algeria, northwestern Baths at entrance to room between two *tepidaria*.

Pres. loc.: Timgad, Musée Archéologique, #89.

Date: Probably 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Cèbe, Caricature 351 n. 9; Desanges, Image 256, 260, fig. 347; S. Germain, Les mosaïques de Timgad: étude descriptive et analytique (Paris 1969) 94, pl. XLII fig. 129; S. Gsell, Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord I (Paris 1921) 302 n. 2; F. G. de Pachtère, Inventaire des mosaïques de la Gaule et de l'Afrique III; Afrique Proconsulaire, Numidie, Maurétanie (Algérie) (Paris 1911) 22, no. 86.

**DESCR.:** A nude male figure strides to his right. With his right arm he carries a shovel across his right shoulder, with his left hand he holds his large phallus and discharges onto the ground.

No. 8.

Fig. 67. Wrestling scene with dark wrestler.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 240 x 136cm.

Prov.: Thina, Tunisia. Great Baths, Rm. A. 9.

Pres. loc.: Sfax, Musée Archéologique.

Date: 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Desanges, Image 260, 263 fig. 362; M. Yacoub, Guide du Musée de Sfax (Tunis 1966) 45, pl. XV. fig. 1.

**DESCR.:** The composition is in three registers. In the top register is a table with garlands, and near the table, a palm branch. In the second register, two naked athletes look at two others wrestling. In the third register, two sets of athletes wrestle. The pair on the left are locked in combat. The dark-skinned athlete down on one knee grips his opponent around the left upper thigh with his right arm.

No. 9.

Fig. 66. Athletes running a foot race in a composition showing several athletic events.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 4.65 x 4.65m.

Prov.: Batten Zammour, near Gafsa, Tunisia.

Pres. loc.: Musée Archéologique, Gafsa.

Date: Beginning of 4th c. A.C.

Biblio.: M. Khanoussi, "Un spectacle de jeux athlétiques et de pugilat figuré sur une mosaïque de la région de Gafsa (Tunisie)," CRAI (1988) 543-561, figs. 2-3; Blanchard-Lemée et al., MRA 190-196, & pls. 137, 139.

**DESCR.:** The mosaic is badly damaged in parts. The composition is set out in four registers containing thirteen scenes of athletic events including boxing, wrestling, a torch race, foot races, and discus-throwing. The contest is mediated by officials. In the middle of the second and the fourth registers are victory scenes of athletes crowned and holding palm branches. Prizes of money bags are shown. The scene to the left in the uppermost register shows two naked dark-skinned athletes in full course. Another dark-skinned athlete with a prognathous profile waits with other athletes (mostly destroyed) behind the starting bar. All the runners have the athletic top knot (*cirrus*).

No. 10.

Fig. 68. Wrestler.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim: n.av.

Prov.: Vienne, France.

Pres. loc.: Musée Archéologique, Vienne.

Date: c. 220 A.D.

Biblio.: S. Tournenc, "La mosaïque des Athlètes Vainqueurs," CMGR II, 135-145.

**DESCR.:** The composition consists of a circle containing eight octagons around a central octagon. The central octagon contains a scene with Hercules wrestling the Nemean Lion. One of the surrounding octagons contains the figure of a nude dark-skinned wrestler with *cirrus*. He is shown in full figure profile with arms held out as if ready to engage an



opponent. He has a prognathous profile. Representations of victorious wrestlers, boxers, and other athletes occupy the other octagons.

No. 11.

Figs. 39, 39a. Small Hunt mosaic showing a boy in a picnic scene blowing on flames issuing from a water-heater.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 7.30m x 5.90m (Overall dim.).

Prov.: Villa at Piazza Armerina, Sicily. Room north of peristyle.

Pres. loc.: *in situ*.

Date: c. 310-330 A.C.

Biblio.: A. Carandini, A. Ricci, M. de Vos, Filosofiana. La Villa di Piazza Armerina (Palermo 1982) 176-87, fig. 94, pl. XXIV, 53; K. M. D. Dunbabin, "Wine and water at the Roman convivium," JRA 6 (1993) 133-136.

**DESCR.:** A hunters' picnic takes place under an awning in the open. Several scenes of hunting surround the central picnic. In the central picnic scene a little dark-skinned boy crouches in front of a water-heater blowing on flames. Near him to the right stands another servant holding up a cup. A wicker basket beside the servant contains amphorae. Another servant retrieves food from a picnic hamper.

No. 12.

Fig. 40. Picnic scene with a boy blowing on flames issuing from a water-heater.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 6.40m x 6.20m (Overall dim.).

Prov.: Tellaro, Sicily. Villa del Tellaro, Room 1.

Date: After mid-4th c. A.C.

Biblio.: K. M. D. Dunbabin, "Wine and water at the Roman convivium," JRA 6 (1993) 133-136, fig. 24; G. Voza & P. Pelegatti eds., Archeologia nella Sicilia Sud - Orientale (Napoli 1973) 173-179 pl. LIX; G. Voza "Aspetti e problemi dei nuovi monumenti d'arte musiva in Sicilia" in R. Farioli Campanati ed., III Colloquio internazionale sul mosaico antico, Ravenna 1980 (Ravenna 1983) 5-18 esp. fig. 5.

**DESCR.:** A picnic scene is shown at the bottom of the composition, with episodes of the hunt covering the rest of the figured pavement. In the picnic scene several diners are gathered round a *stibadium*-cushion, being waited upon by servants. At the left corner of the scene a dark-skinned servant crouches and attends to the flames in an *authepsa* hanging from a tree. On the other side of the tree a servant skins a boar carcass. Another servant approaches the diners with flask and cup, while a fourth pours water over the hand of one of the diners.



No. 13.

Fig. 38. Servant holding cup and pitcher (detail from Mosaic of the Large Hunt).

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 375 x 670cm.

Prov.: Hippo Regius, Algeria, Maison d'Isguntus.

Pres. loc.: Annaba, Musée d'Annaba.

Date: ca. 310-330 A.C.

Biblio.: Desanges, Image 265, fig. 361; Dunbabin, MRNA 55, pl. 29; F. G. de Pachtère "Les nouvelles fouilles d'Hippone," MEFRA 31 (1911) 334-335, pls. XIX-XXX.

**DESCR.:** In the lower right portion of a detailed hunt scene a group of hunters enjoy a picnic around a *stibadium*-cushion. In the foreground a dark-skinned man wearing a white tunic is shown beside a water-heater. He holds up a cup in his right hand and a flask in his lowered left hand. Episodes of the hunt take up the rest of the pavement. Lions, leopards, antelope, ostrich, and boar are being hunted.

No. 14.

Fig. 56. Black horseman (detail from Mosaic of the Horses).

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 60 x 60cm.

Prov.: Carthage, Maison des chevaux.

Pres. loc.: Carthage, Antiquarium.

Date: Early 4th c. A.C.

Biblio.: Salomonson, La mosaïque aux chevaux 95-96, pl.I.4, fig. 8, and pl. LVIII, 2.

**DESCR.:** In this somewhat damaged composition, a dark-skinned horseman stands beside a horse, holding it by the bridle. He is dressed in a tunic (of which only the shoulder area survives). The horse has decorations on its head, tail, and left hind leg.

No. 15.

Fig. 57. Charioteer

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 1.50 x 1.50m.

Prov.: Seville.

Date: Probably 4th c. A.C.

Biblio.: J. M. Blasquez, Mosaicos Romanos de Sevilla, Granada, Cadiz y Murcia (CMEsp IV, Madrid 1982) 19, no. 2, pl. 40.2.

**DESCR.:** A chariot race is in progress. One of the competitors is a dark-skinned man riding a *quadriga*. He controls the reins with his left hand, and holds aloft a short whip with his right. A *sparsor* (not shown in my illustration) stands to the right with one arm

raised.

No.16.

Fig. 58. Statues in circus race scene.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 470 x 340cm.

Prov.: Gafsa, Tunisia.

Pres. loc.: Tunis, Musée National du Bardo # A19.

Date: 6th or 7th c. A.C.

Biblio.: Desanges, Image fig. 349; Inv. Tun. II 108-109 no. 321.

**DESCR.:** A chariot race is in progress at the circus. At the top of the composition a seating area is shown filled with spectators. The figures of four nude dark-coloured youths are shown in archways that represent the *carceres*.

No. 17.

Figs. 59, 65. Gladiator mosaic with amphitheatre scenes and barbarians.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: n.av.

Prov.: Zliten, Tripolitania, House of Dar buc Ammera.

Pres. loc.: Tripoli, Archaeological Museum.

Date: Late 1st c. A.C.

Biblio.: Aurigemma, Mosaici, 131-201; Aurigemma, 1960, pls. 136-159; Desanges, Image 247, 268, figs. 339, 366; Dunbabin, MRNA.

**DESCR.:** Scenes of gladiatorial combats, wild beast hunts, and executions of condemned men by wild animal attacks in the arena. The events are unfolding to the accompaniment of music played by men and women. Two condemned men tied to stakes on small wheeled wagons are attacked by leopards. Another condemned man with yellow skin colour is whipped into the path of a springing lion, while another yellow-skinned man appears to be intervening in a fight between a bull and a bear.

No. 18.

Fig. 64. *Bestiarius* in a *damnatio ad bestias* scene.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 1.13 x .85m.

Prov.: Silin, Tripolitania, Villa du Taureau.

Pres. loc.: n.av.

Date: Possibly c. 212-217 A.C.

Biblio.: J. M. Blasquez, A. Martinez, et al., "Pavimentos Africanos con espectaculos de

toros. Estudio comparativo a proposito del mosaico di Silin (Tripolitania),” AntAf 26 (1990) 155-204; A. Mahjoubi, in R. Farioli Campanati ed., III Colloquio internazionale sul mosaico antico, Ravenna 1980 I (Ravenna 1983) 299-306; G. Picard, "La villa de Taureau à Silin, (Tripolitaine)" CRAI (1988) 236-240, fig. 5.

**DESCR.:** The mosaic carries an inscription- FILOSERAPIS COMP. Below the inscription is a scene with a man holding a staff in the upper right section of the composition, looking at the spectacle of two men tossed into the air by a white bull. In front of the bull a dark-skinned attendant wearing a fringed skirt is holding a prisoner who is on all fours. The three condemned men wear long-sleeved tunics and trousers. The prisoner held by the attendant has a head-dress.

No. 19.

Fig. 85. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: n.av.

Prov.: Nea Paphos, Cyprus, House of Dionysus, threshold of *triclinium*.

Pres. loc.: *in situ*.

Date: Possibly Antonine, with a terminus a.q. of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.C.

Biblio.: C. Kondoleon, Domestic and Divine (Ithaca 1995) 191-221; W. A. Daszewski, D. Michaelides, Mosaic floors in Cyprus (Ravenna 1988) 18-22; Foucher, CMGR II (1975) 61 n.3; G. Hellenkemper Salies, review of C. Kondoleon, Domestic and Divine in JRA 10 (1997) 524-536; K. Nicolaou, Ancient Monuments of Cyprus (Nicosia 1968) 9, pls. XXXVII-XLIV.

**DESCR.:** In the middle of the composition Dionysus sits in a leopard-drawn chariot holding a *thyrsos*. A satyr balances a large crater on one knee and advances towards the god. Beside the satyr Pan brandishes a *pedum*. A naked Indian with his hands bound behind him walks beside Pan. Two maenads follow the one holds a *thyrsos* and a cult object, the other pours a libation. Silenus guides the leopards drawing Dionysus' chariot. A dark-skinned Indian kneels in front of the felines holding out a diadem(?). Between another maenad and a satyr blowing pipes walks a third Indian captive. His hands are bound and he wears a spotted skin on his shoulders.

No. 20.

Fig. 83. Captives on elephant.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: n.av.

Prov.: El Djem, Tunisia.

Pres. loc.: n.av.

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> half of 3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.C.

Biblio.: G. Ch. Picard, "Un triomphe Dionysiaque sur une mosaïque de Thysdrus," BAC n.s. 20-21 (1989) 101-104; Blanchard-Lemée et al., MRA 97, 287 fig. 68.

**DESCR.:** The scene appears in one of several medallions containing subjects related to the Dionysiac triumph set in a background of vine scrolls. This medallion contains representations of two captives riding on an elephant. The female captive wears a long robe and a necklace, and has very curly hair. The male captive has the shaggy hair and appearance of Germanic captives. He is dressed only in a pair of anaxyrides (trousers). The elephant is laden with a booty of tusks and a shield.

No. 21.

Fig. 84. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives (detail).

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: n.av.

Prov.: Sétif, Algeria.

Pres. loc.: Musée de Sétif.

Date: 4th c. A.C.

Biblio.: M. Donderer, "Dionysus und Ptolemaios Soter als Meleager - Zwei Gemälde des Antiphilos" in Festschrift G. Wirth (Amsterdam 1988) 781-799; C. Kondoleon, Domestic and Divine (Ithaca 1995).

**DESCR.:** Dionysus, wearing his long robes and *nebris* and holding a *thyrsos* in his right hand, guides his tiger-drawn chariot by the reins in his left hand. A Victory rides beside him, to his right runs a maenad. Beside the tigers walk a satyr and a maenad who carries a cult object on her head. Two elephants, a giraffe, a lion and two camels are included in the procession. One camel carries two dark-skinned; curly-haired Indian prisoners. A satyr leads the tigers by a leash held in his right hand, with his left he holds the chains of a female Indian captive. Two maenads can be seen behind her. Directly before her walks another Indian captive wearing a mantle and a diadem, his hands bound behind him. A Silenus, wearing a tunic and mantle, looks back at him. The other camel carries two craters on its back. Landscape is indicated by a tree in the background. The procession proceeds from left to right.

No. 22.

Fig. 90. Dionysiac battle with the Indians.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: n.av.

Prov.: Tusculum.

Pres. loc.: Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano.

Date: 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: M. Donderer, "Ein verschollenes römisches Mosaik und die Gattung des Wandemblemata," Mosaïque. Recueil d'hommages à Henri Stern (Paris 1983) 125, pl. LXXV.1; H. Graeven, "Die Darstellungen der Inder in antiken Kunstwerken," JdI 15 (1900) 195-218.

**DESCR.:** Mosaic is extensively restored. A maenad wielding a thyrsus attacks a dark-skinned Indian fallen to the ground. He wears a short exomis. A male figure, bare-chested, wearing a leopard skin loincloth, and carrying a *pedum*, attacks another Indian. The Indian stands holding up a small round shield in defence. He is dark-skinned, and wears an exomis and a turban.

No. 23.

Fig. 91. Dionysiac battle with the Indians.

Medium: Mosaic.

Dim.: 290cm x 107cm.

Prov.: Puente Genil, Cordoba, Spain.

Pres. loc.: *in situ*.

Date: 4th c. A.C.

Biblio.: J. Lancha, Mosaïque et culture dans l'occident romain (I<sup>er</sup>-IV<sup>e</sup>s) (Rome 1997) 209-212, pls. I, XCVII; M. P. San Nicolás Pedraz, "Mosaicos y espacio en la villa romana de Fuente Alamo (Córdoba, España)," L'Africa romana 10 (1994) 1289-1304.

**DESCR.:** Heavily damaged pavement. Dionysus, maenads, and satyrs are doing battle with Indians. A panther attacks a fallen Indian. Beside the fallen Indian, to the right, another Indian, dressed in a short tunic, is fighting a maenad. He is armed with a sword. Both Indians are armed with small round shields, and are portrayed with dark skin colour and a jagged hair outline.

## II

### RELIEF SCULPTURE: SARCOPHAGI

No. 24.

Fig. 37. Youth in toilette scene carrying a swallow-tailed object.

Medium: Sarcophagus lid.

Dim.: L. 193cm H. 35cm D. 4.5cm.

Prov.: Isola Sacra.

Pres. loc.: Ostia, Storeroom of the Soprintendenza.

Date: Last quarter of the 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, Vita 136, no. 86, pl. 107, figs. 2,3.

**DESCR.:** A shopping scene with fish and chicken vendors and a butcher is portrayed on the left end of the sarcophagus lid. On the right end is a toilette scene with a seated woman is being groomed by servants. Two men with towels over their shoulders, and a young child carrying a towel and patera move towards the right. Behind them is a youth with corkscrew locks carrying a curious swallow-tailed object and a towel.

No. 25.

Fig. 44. Youth carrying towel and long-handled patera.

Medium: Sarcophagus fragment.

Dim.: L. 21cm H. 76cm.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Bodenheimuseum. Frühchristlich-Byzantinische Sammlung, #3061.

Date: 3rd quarter of 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, *Vita* 124, cat. no. 20, pl. 23.1-2.

**DESCR.:** A youth with long corkscrew locks stands with head slightly bent and turned towards his left shoulder. He wears a long-sleeved belted tunic and holds a patera in his left hand. There is a towel draped over his left shoulder.

No. 26.

Fig. 45. Youth carrying pitcher.

Medium: Sarcophagus fragment.

Dim.: L. 45cm H. 47cm.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Naples, Museo Nazionale.

Date: 270 A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, *Vita* 134, cat. no. 77, pl. 23.6;

**DESCR.:** Damaged fragment. On the right a youth with long corkscrew locks carries a pitcher. The face is mostly damaged. He walks behind a long-haired youth of the "somatic norm" type who carries a platter of poultry.

No. 27.

Fig. 46. Youth carrying towel and pitcher(?).

Medium: Sarcophagus fragment.

Dim.: H. 0.38m.

Prov.: Anacapri, Italy.

Pres. loc.: Anacapri, Villa S. Michele.

Date: 280 A.C.



Biblio.: Amedick, Vita 122, cat. no. 6, pl. 23.5.

**DESCR.:** Very damaged fragment with two figures. The head of the figure to the left is damaged but corkscrew locks are evident. The youth is dressed in a tunic and wears a towel on his left shoulder. He carries an object that might be a pitcher in his left hand. The other figure is of the "somatic norm" type. He has long wavy hair, wears a tunic, and carries a platter of poultry.

No. 28.

Fig. 47. Youth carrying platter of food.

Medium: Sarcophagus relief.

Dim.: L. 178cm H. 52cm W. 54cm.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, #1299.

Date: Last quarter of the 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, Vita 130, cat. no. 57, pl. 48; M. Lawrence, AJA 66 (1962) 289, pl. 77.1.

**DESCR.:** Three ships being manned by crew are sailing in turbulent waters. On the left end of the composition, a youth stands in the open doorway of a building. He has corkscrew locks, wears a short tunic and is holding a platter of food. Another person stands outside the door and two others occupy the upper balcony of the building.

No. 29.

Fig. 42. Youth serving drinks at picnic.

Medium: Sarcophagus lid.

Dim.: L. 0.60m H. 0.31m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Naples, Museo Nazionale.

Date: End of 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, Vita 134, cat. no. 78, pl. 34.5.

**DESCR.:** A youth wearing a short tunic moves towards a group of diners around a *stibadium*-cushion. He holds out a cup in his right hand to a diner, in his other hand he carries a pitcher.

No. 30.

Fig. 43. Youth carrying long-handled patera and jug.

Medium: Sarcophagus fragment.

Dim.: n. av.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Ostia, Museo Nazionale.

Date: End of 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, *Vita* 137, cat. no. 90, pl. 20.5;

**DESCR.:** Damaged fragments. A youth with long corkscrew locks wearing a tunic carries a patera in one hand and a pitcher in the other. He walks behind another person (head and shoulders damaged) carrying a platter of poultry.

No. 31.

Fig. 49. *Cursor* running before carriage.

Medium: Sarcophagus lid fragment.

Dim.: L. 55cm H. 33cm.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Turin, Museo di Antichità, #595.

Date: End of the 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, *Vita* 162, cat. no. 254, pl. 41.1.

**DESCR.:** Two passengers ride in a carriage drawn by a pair of horses. Another person guides the carriage and a youth with corkscrew locks runs in front of the horses. In the background a tree and a building are evident.

No. 32.

Fig. 50. *Cursores* in front of horses.

Medium: Sarcophagus lid fragment.

Dim.: n.av.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Ostia, Casale del Principe Aldobrandini.

Date: End of 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, *Vita* 135, cat. no. 83, pl. 44.4.

**DESCR.:** Three youths are walking in front of two horses. The two closest to the horses are looking back at them, while the youth ahead of them looks forward with his head bent. They have corkscrew locks.

No. 33.

Fig. 51. *Cursor*.

Medium: Sarcophagus lid fragment.

Dim.: n.av.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Rome. Museo Nazionale Romano #56936.

Date: End of 3rd c. A.C.



Biblio.: Amedick, *Vita* 153, cat. no. 192, pl. 40.1.

**DESCR.:** Two long-haired youths are walking in front of horses. The youth nearer the horses has corkscrew locks. He wears a belted knee-length tunic and holds a baton. The other youth who is of the "somatic norm" type is dressed in similar fashion, has a towel over his left shoulder, and a fan or patera in his right hand.

No. 34.

Fig. 52. Excursion scene with *Cursor*.

Medium: Sarcophagus lid fragment.

Dim.: L.53cm. H.58cm.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Stockholm. Nationalmuseum.

Date: 300 A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, *Vita* 161, cat. no. 247, pl. 39.2.

**DESCR.:** Two persons riding in a two-horse carriage are accompanied by a retinue of attendants. Among these is a man with corkscrew locks. Only his head is visible. One attendant drives the carriage, another runs beside it, and a third runs before it. An outrider is also present. The carriage moves through the city that is indicated by an arch topped with sculptures and trophies. A woman shakes out linen at an open window in a building.

No. 35.

Fig. 48. *Cursor* running behind carriage.

Medium: Sarcophagus lid fragment.

Dim.: L. 48cm H. 37cm.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Rome, Catacombe di S. Callisto, #469.

Date: Tetrarchic.

Biblio.: Amedick, *Vita* 148, cat. no. 163, pl. 40.2.

**DESCR.:** A youth with corkscrew locks runs behind a carriage. He wears a belted tunic and carries a jug. One occupant of the carriage is visible but quite damaged.

No. 36.

Fig. 53. Detail from biographical scenes on a sarcophagus. Youth holding a basket in a lesson scene .

Medium: Sarcophagus front side.

Dim.: L. 157cm H. 38cm

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Paris, Musée du Louvre, #Ma 319.

Date: First quarter of 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Amedick, Vita 140, cat. no. 115, pl. 56.2, 57.1; P. Grimal, La civilization romaine (Paris 1964) 104, fig. 29; N. B. Kampen, AJA 85 (1981) 54, pl. 10,15.

**DESCR.:** At the right end of the composition a newborn child is being bathed. The mother, who is seated, is assisted by a group of women. In the centre of the composition there is a mourning scene with the deceased laid out on a couch, with his parents grieving beside it. Other grieving figures are shown also. On the left end of the composition, a lesson is in progress. A youth with short corkscrew locks, carrying a basket, stands behind a boy reading from a scroll to a seated teacher.

No. 37.

Figs. 72, 72a. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L. 2.34m H. 0.98m

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery #2331.

Date: c. 170-190 A.C.

Biblio.: K. Lehmann-Hartleben & E. C. Olsen, Dionysiac Sarcophagi in Baltimore (Baltimore 1942) 10.12.26-28.72; Matz II, 231, no. 95, pls. 116-120; A. M. McCann, Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York 1978) 86-91, Figs. 101-102; A. M. McCann, "Two fragments of sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art illustrating the Indian triumph of Dionysus," JWalt 129-131, fig. 10; Snowden, Blacks 149-150, fig. 87.

**DESCR.:** A Dionysiac procession moves through an area with trees. At the left end of the scene Dionysus, wearing a long-sleeved robe and carrying a *thyrsos*, rides in his panther chariot.\* Two little boys with corkscrew locks ride the panthers. Both boys look back at the god. The panthers are led on a leash by a satyr wielding a *pedum*. The god is accompanied by a cortege of women playing instruments, and an assortment of male and other female followers. Also in the procession is a prisoner with corkscrew locks, his hands bound behind his back, riding on an elephant. There is another prisoner behind him who also has corkscrew locks. A lion, a cub, elephants, a giraffe, and snakes are included in the menagerie of animals in the procession.

\*The direction of the procession is left to right on the sarcophagi (Cat. nos. 37-48).

No. 38.

Fig. 73. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L. 2.25m H. 0.87m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Rome, Casino Rospigliosi, Salla delle Colombe #81a.

Date: 190-200 A.C.

Biblio.: Matz II, 233-236, fig. 96, pl. 122.

**DESCR.:** The composition is packed full with moving figures. The god rides in his panther chariot. He is accompanied by various persons playing music and several of his satyr and human followers. Two children ride the panthers. The heads of the children are improperly restored and do not appear to have corkscrew locks. Two bound prisoners are riding on an elephant. The prisoner in the foreground does not have corkscrew locks, but the other prisoner who is only just visible in the background does. Other animals carrying persons are a lion and a camel. Beside the camel rider at the right end of the composition, walks a figure with corkscrew locks. Only his head is visible and the lower portion of his face is obscured by a garment that extends up to the face.

No. 39.

Fig. 74. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L. 2.26m H. 0.88m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Rome, Museo Capitolino.

Date: 190-200 A.C.

Biblio.: Matz II, 236-237, no. 97, pl. 122.

**DESCR.:** In this densely packed composition, Dionysus rides in his usual panther chariot. Two little boys ride the panthers. One of them who is nude has corkscrew locks. He turns his head back to look at the god. Women making merry, satyrs and other figures make up part of the procession. Two bound prisoners, both of whom have corkscrew locks, are riding on an elephant. They appear to be wearing diadems. Two camels can be seen beside them. A drunken Hercules leads the procession.

No. 40.

Fig. 75. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L. 2.02m H. 0.59m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Pozzuoli, Antiquario Flegreo.

Date: 1st quarter of 3rd c. A.C.

Biblio.: Matz I, 166, no. 58A, pl. 76.

**DESCR.:** Due to the damage on the sarcophagus the figure of Dionysus can only be identified by the long-sleeved robe with a hand holding the reins of the panther chariot. Two little boys with corkscrew locks are riding the panthers. They both turn their heads to

look upon the god. A pan leads the panthers. Some baby satyrs and human children make up part of the procession. Also present are women and other male figures. Two prisoners, hands bound behind their backs, are riding an elephant. They both have corkscrew locks.

No. 41.

Fig. 76. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L. 2.31m H. 1.03m.

Prov.: Rome

Pres. loc.: Cliveden, Buckinghamshire.

Date: c. 210 A.C.

Biblio.: Matz II, 238-239, no. 99, pl. 124.

**DESCR.:** Dionysus rides in his panther-drawn chariot. Two little boys without corkscrew locks ride the panthers. There is the usual accompaniment of merry-makers, satyrs and other followers of the god. A bound prisoner rides an elephant. He does not have corkscrew locks but another prisoner, barely visible in the background, does. The prisoner in the background appears to be riding a camel. Hercules leads the procession.

No. 42.

Fig. 77. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L. 2.43m H. 1.12m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire.

Date: 210-220 A.C.

Biblio.: Matz II, 239-241, no. 100, pl. 126.

**DESCR.:** The god rides in his panther-drawn chariot, accompanied by a Victory, a maenad and a satyr. Two boys with corkscrew locks are riding the panthers. Just beneath the elephant's trunk is a child with corkscrew locks wearing a chlamys. A naked child with corkscrew locks rides a horse. He is just visible beneath the Victory's trumpet. Several women accompany the god, some making music. Also in the procession are two prisoners riding on an elephant. They both have corkscrew locks and the one who can be seen in full wears a long-sleeved tunic, a chlamys, and anaxyrides. A satyr draws Hercules in a chariot.

No. 43.

Fig. 78. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L. 2.26m H. 1.06m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Lyon, Musée St. Pierre (Palais des Arts).

Date: 220-230 A.C.

Biblio.: Matz II, 241-243, no. 101, pl. 127.

**DESCR.:** The god Dionysus rides in his panther-drawn chariot, accompanied by a Victory, a maenad and a satyr. Two little boys ride the panthers. Their heads are missing. Several women and satyrs accompany the god. A small child with corkscrew locks is just visible beside the elephant's foreleg. Two prisoners with corkscrew locks are riding on an elephant. The prisoner in the background is just visible. It is not quite certain if he is riding on the elephant or on the camel near him.

No. 44.

Fig. 79. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L. 2.05m H. 0.76m

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Vatican, Belvedere.

Date: c. 220-230 A.C.

Biblio.: Matz II, 248-249, no. 105, pl. 133.

**DESCR.:** This sarcophagus is quite badly damaged but several figures can still be identified. Dionysus rides in a centaur-drawn chariot, accompanied by Victory, a maenad and his usual retinue of satyrs and women. One elephant is preserved well enough to be identified but the captives riding on it are not. Only their torsos have survived. In the middle of the procession a man with a mantle covering only his neck and one shoulder walks with bowed head. He wears a turban (?) over his corkscrew locks. His hands are bound behind his back.

No. 45.

Fig. 80. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: n.av.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Rome, Villa Doria Pamphili.

Date: Early Severan.

Biblio.: Matz II, 278-279, no. 141, pl. 158.

**DESCR.:** Dionysus rides in an elephant-drawn chariot, accompanied by a Victory, a

maenad, and a satyr. The elephants are being ridden by two youths who turn their heads in the god's direction. Both youths are wearing only mantles around their shoulders and they have corkscrew locks. The god is accompanied by satyrs, women and children. Two prisoners, both of whom have corkscrew locks, their hands bound behind their backs, are riding on a camel.

No. 46.

Fig. 86. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus relief.

Dim.: L.1.85m H.0.50m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Unknown. Previously in Palazzo Albani-Del Drago.

Date: Early Antonine.

Biblio.: Matz II, 271-272, no. 131, pl. 159.

**DESCR.:** Dionysus appears at the centre of the composition, riding in his chariot, drawn by elephants. He is supported by a satyr. Several satyrs, some riding horses, accompany the god. A male figure rides a mule at the left end of the composition behind Dionysus. Silenus rides a lion, and two erotes ride the yoked elephants. At the head of the procession are two female captives with corkscrew locks riding camels. They wear short-sleeved long robes.

No. 47.

Fig. 81. Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L.2.10m H.0.90m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano.

Date: Early Severan.

Biblio.: Matz II, 275-277, no. 139, pl. 160.

**DESCR.:** Dionysus appears at the left end of the composition in his elephant-drawn chariot. He is accompanied by a Victory. Two youths ride the elephants. The youth in the foreground is naked, and his head is broken off. The one in the background wears a chlamys, and has corkscrew curls. The rest of the thiasos is composed of the usual merry-makers.

No. 48.



Fig. 82. Triumph of Dionysus with captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus.

Dim.: L.2.00m H.58m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Rome, Villa Doria Pamphili.

Date: Severan.

Biblio.: Matz II, 277-278, no. 140, pl. 161.

**DESCR.:** Dionysus appears at the rear of the procession in his elephant-drawn chariot. Two youths with corkscrew locks, in short tunics and holding pedums, ride the elephants. The rest of the thiasos is composed of the usual merrymakers and a drunken Hercules.

No. 49.

Fig. 92. Dionysiac Triumphal procession with *ferculum* and captives.

Medium: Sarcophagus lid fragment.

Dim.: L.0.83m H.0.23m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Frankfurt, Liebighaus #343.

Date: After 190 A.C.

Biblio.: Matz II, 273-274, no. 135, pl. 166.

**DESCR.:** A procession with satyrs carrying a *ferculum* loaded with trophies. Behind the *ferculum* walks a group of captives in chains. Two female captives wearing long robes with one breast left bare, precede a male figure (damaged). The female captive in the background has corkscrew locks.

No. 50.

Fig. 93. Procession with *ferculum* and captives; Dionysiac *clementia*.

Dim.: L.2.24m H.0.60m.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: Salerno, Cathedral (south nave).

Date: c. 161 A.C.

Biblio.: Matz III, 433-444, no. 244, pl. 259.

**DESCR.:** A procession of satyrs carrying a *ferculum* moves to the right. It is preceded by a group of barbarian captives and armed satyrs. The captive in front of the *ferculum* group has corkscrew locks. He wears a headdress. At the right end of the composition, Dionysus is shown sitting in judgement over the barbarian captives. A shaggy-haired barbarian touches the god's foot in a gesture of supplication. A female captive stands beside the kneeling supplicant, and a small child appears behind him.

## III

SMALL SCALE SCULPTURE IN THE ROUND

No. 51.

Fig. 69. Boxer.

Medium: Terracotta statuette.

Height: 103/8"

Prov.: Italy

Pres. loc.: London, British Museum, #D84.

Date: Late Hellenistic.

Biblio.: Beardsley, Negro 85, no. 170; Snowden, Image 77, fig. 49.

**DESCR.:** Boxer wearing loin cloth, and hands and wrists bandaged for protection. He has short curly hair, and is balding. His arms are raised in a fighting position.

No. 52.

Fig. 70. Boxer (companion piece to above), #D85.

Height: 95/8"

Biblio.: Beardsley, Negro 85, no. 171.

**DESCR.:** Youthful boxer. Traces of dark colour on face.

No. 53.

Fig. 60. Gladiator.

Medium: Terracotta statuette.

Height: 21cm.

Prov.: Egypt.

Pres. loc.: Alexandria, Greco-Roman Museum #23241.

Date: Roman period.

Biblio.: Snowden, Image 234, fig. 317.

**DESCR.:** A gladiator stands with his shield held close to his left side and his short sword in the right hand. He seems to be wearing over his head a cowl that extends to cover his neck and shoulders. He is also wearing a short coat of mail(?). His short curly hair is rendered in closely set small round balls, and he has a large flat nose.

No. 54.



Fig. 63. Acrobat on a crocodile.

Medium: Marble statuette.

Height: 75cm.

Prov.: Rome.

Pres. loc.: London, British Museum, Dept of Greek and Roman Antiquities #1768.

Date: Probably Roman.

Biblio.: Beardsley, Negro 104, no. 229; Snowden, Image 229, n(s). 274-275, fig. 299.

**DESCR.:** A naked youth with corkscrew locks balances in a handstand position on the back of a crocodile. He supports himself on his hands, and his legs are straight up in the air. Several restorations include: head, tail, and forepaws of crocodile; right leg, left knee, feet, and both elbows of acrobat.

No. 55.

Fig. 71. Mahout riding tower-bearing elephant.

Medium: Sculpture. Terracotta statuette.

Height: n.av.

Prov.: Pompeii.

Pres. loc.: Naples, Museo Nazionale #124845.

Date: Before A.D. 79.

Biblio.: Snowden, Blacks 224-225, fig. 82.

**DESCR.:** A male figure in a short tunic rides a draped elephant. He appears to be feeding the animal which has its trunk curled upwards to receive the morsel. The elephant is carrying a small tower fastened to its back by chains around its body.

No. 56.

Fig. 62. *Retiarius* and *Secutor*.

Medium: Ivory. Knife handle.

Prov.: Avenches, France.

Pres. loc.: n.av.

Date: 2nd c. A.C.

Biblio.: J. Pearson, Arena (Norwich 1973) 96, and plate.

**DESCR.:** Two gladiators in combat clinch. The *retiarius* has short curly hair, a broad nose, and full lips. The features of the *secutor* are not visible since he wears a helmet.



Fig.1. Hydria, Cerveteri. Vienna. Armed men.



Fig. 2. Black-figure amphora, Orvieto. Philadelphia. Detail, Menelaos slaying Amasos.



Fig. 3. Polychrome lekythos, Cumae. Naples. Male figure in hoplite armour.



Fig. 4. Attic white-ground alabastron. Cambridge, Mass. Warrior.

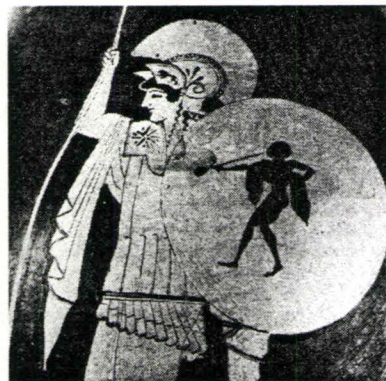


Fig. 5. Red-Figure amphora, Cerveteri. Vienna. Detail, trumpeter on hoplite shield.



Fig. 6. Attic black-figure kantharos.  
Boston. Male head.



Fig. 7. Intaglio on ring bezel. Boston.  
Female head.

Fig. 8. Gold pendant, Canusium. London.  
Male head.



Fig. 9. Bronze statuette,  
Chalon-sur-Saône. Paris.  
Nude Youth

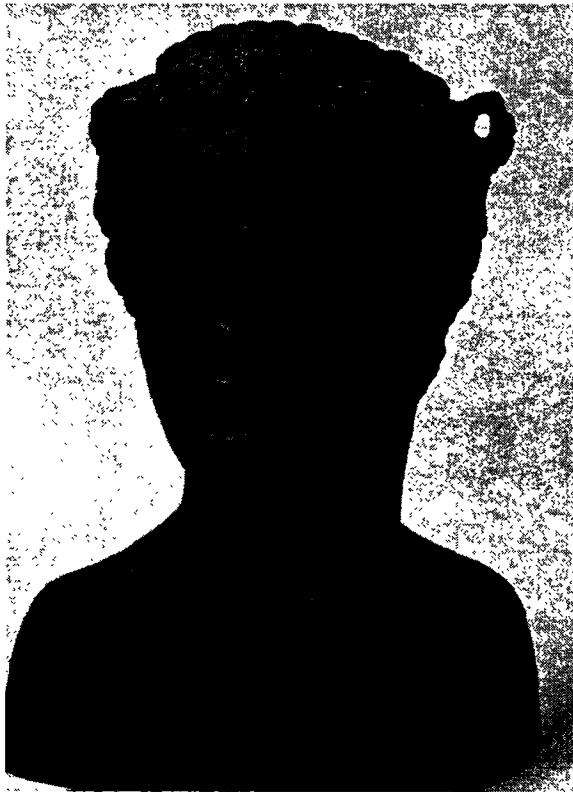


Fig. 10. Bronze balsamarium, Sammanud, Egypt. Providence, Rhode Island. Bust of a youth.



Fig. 11. Bronze statuette, Memphis. Paris. Nude standing youth with hands bound behind back.





Fig. 12. Bronze statue, Bodrum. Bodrum. Boy clad in tunic, with arms outstretched.



Fig. 13. Mosaic of the Nile, Praeneste. Palestrina. Scenes of Egypt in flood, and Black hunters in Upper Egypt/Aethiopia.

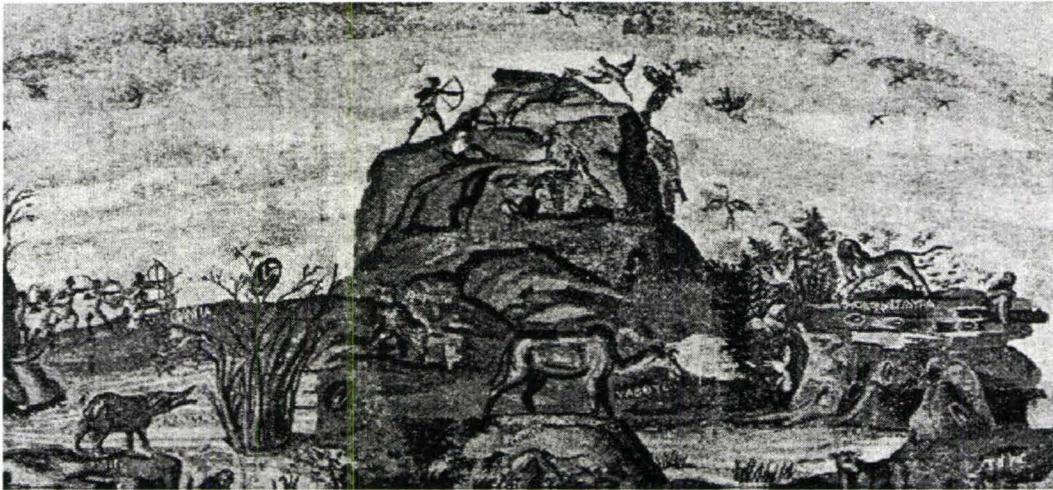


Fig. 13a. Mosaic of the Nile, detail of hunters.

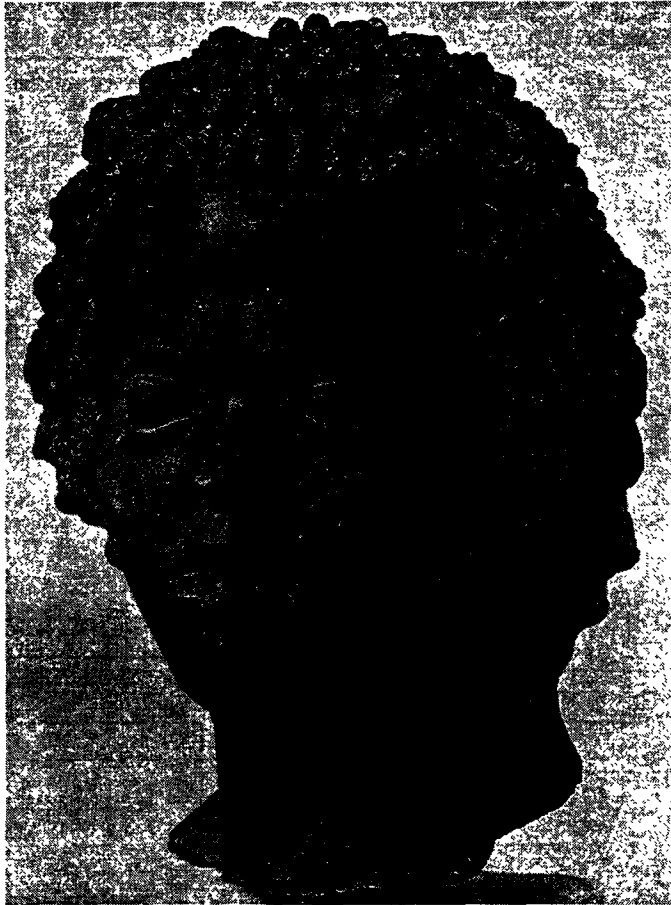


Fig. 14. Fragment of statue in grey marble, Southern Asia Minor. Brooklyn. Head of a youth.



Fig. 15. Footstool of wood overlaid with gilt stucco, Thebes. Cairo. Detail of Black and Asiatic captives.



Fig. 16. Grey marble statuette, Aphrodisias. Versailles. Youth carrying situla.



Fig. 17. Wall fresco, Herculaneum. Naples. Isiac celebration.

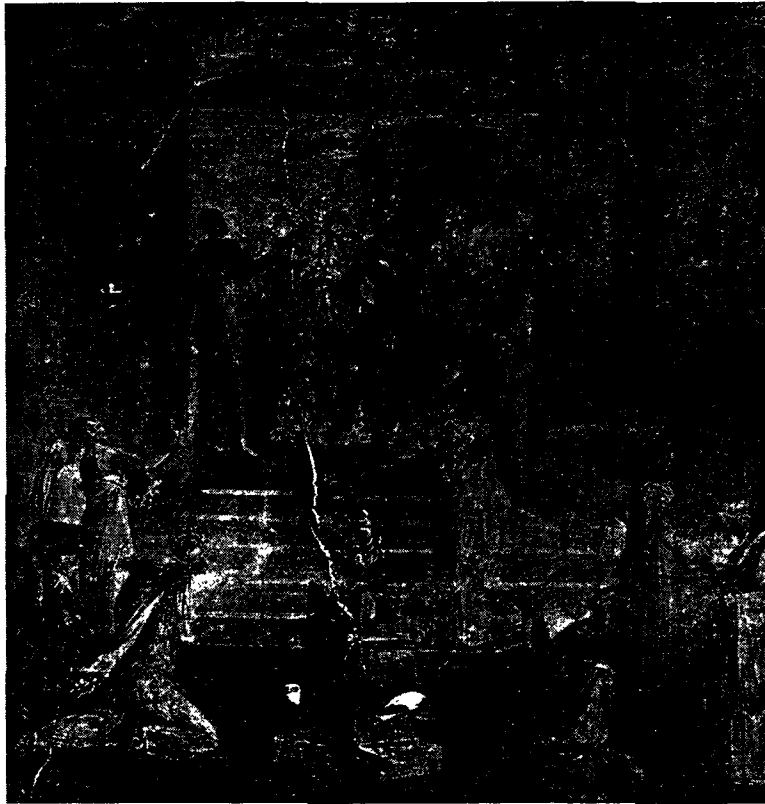


Fig.18. Wall fresco, Herculaneum. Naples. Isiac celebration with dance.



Fig. 19. Detail from relief on Trajan's Column, Rome. *In situ*. Moorish cavalry.





Fig. 20. Black limestone herm, Carthage. Tunis. Head of a youth.



Fig. 21. Black marble statuette, Sousse. Sousse. Nude boy holding a bird to his chest.



Fig. 22. Bronze bust, Berrouaghia.  
Algeria. Personification of Africa.



Fig. 23. Detail, Mosaic of Africa and the Seasons,  
El Djem. El Djem. Personification of Africa.



Fig. 24. Wall fresco, Pompeii. Naples. Three personifications.



Fig. 25. Mosaic panel, Piazza Armerina, Sicily.  
*In situ*. Personification of Africa or India.

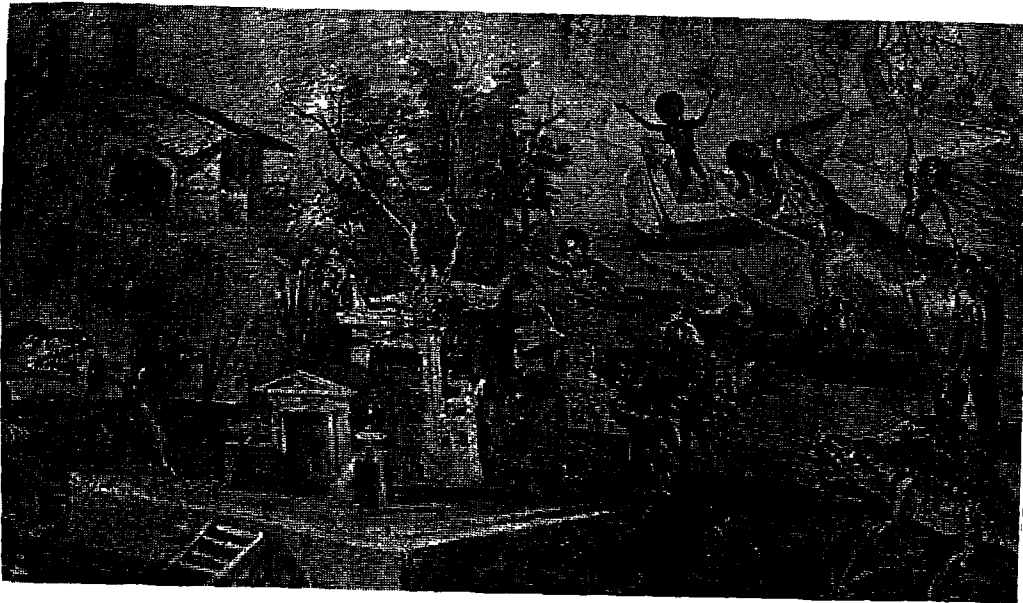


Fig. 26. Wall fresco, Pompeii, Naples. Pygmies fighting Nilotic creatures.



Fig. 27. Marble funerary relief, Ariccia. Rome.  
Sacred dance during Isiac celebration.

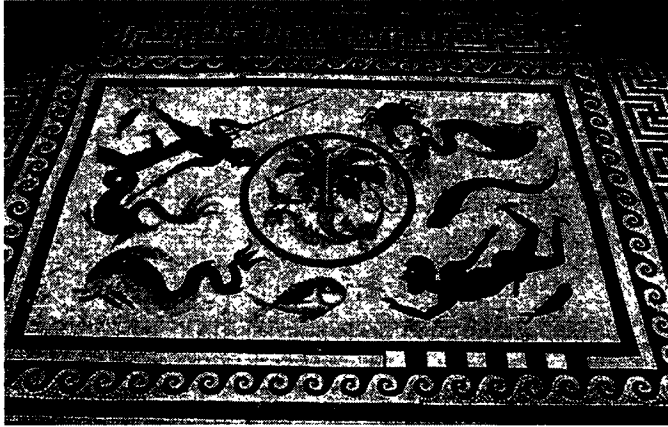


Fig. 28. Black-and-white mosaic, Pompeii. *In situ*. Ithyphallic swimmer, man with trident attacking a sea-monster, marine motifs. (1)

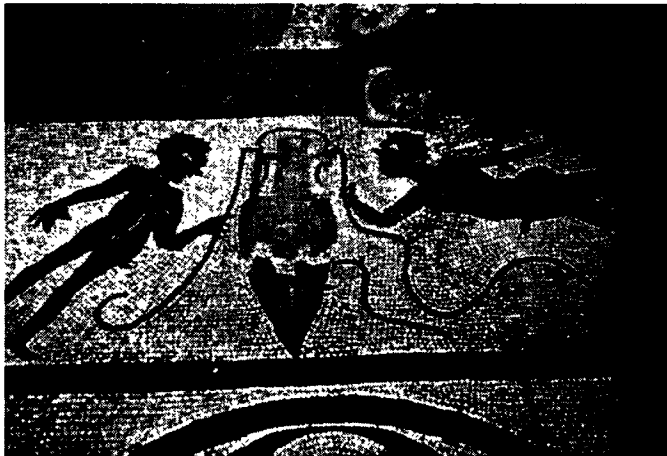


Fig. 29. Black-and-White mosaic, Pompeii. *In situ*. Ithyphallic swimmers. (2)



Fig. 30. Black-and-White mosaic, Pompeii.  
In situ. Ithyphallic swimmers. (3)

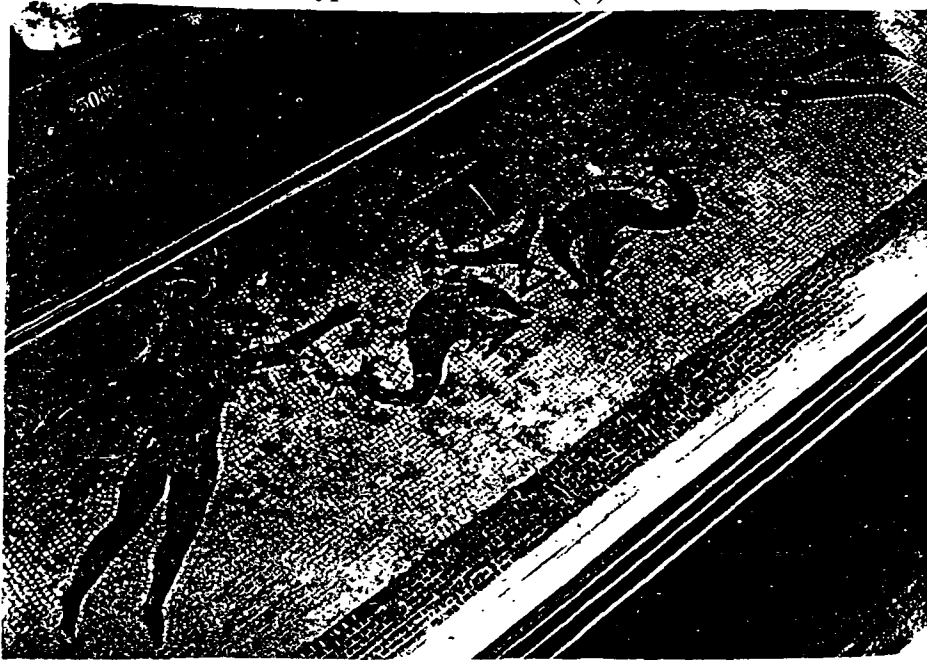


Fig. 31. Black-and-White mosaic, Este.  
Este. Swimmers. (4)



Fig. 32. Black-and-White mosaic,  
Constantine. Constantinian. Swimmers  
and ships laden with trophies. (4)

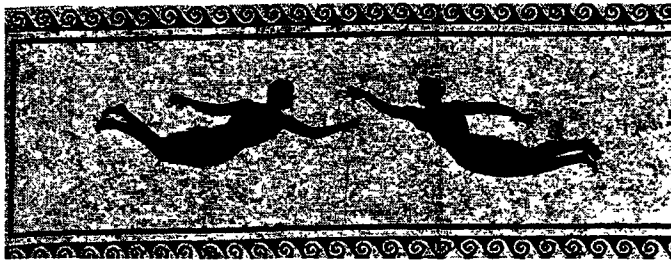


Fig. 32a. Detail of above.





Fig. 33. Black-and-White mosaic, Pompeii. *In situ*.  
Macrophallic bath attendant carrying *askoi*. (6)

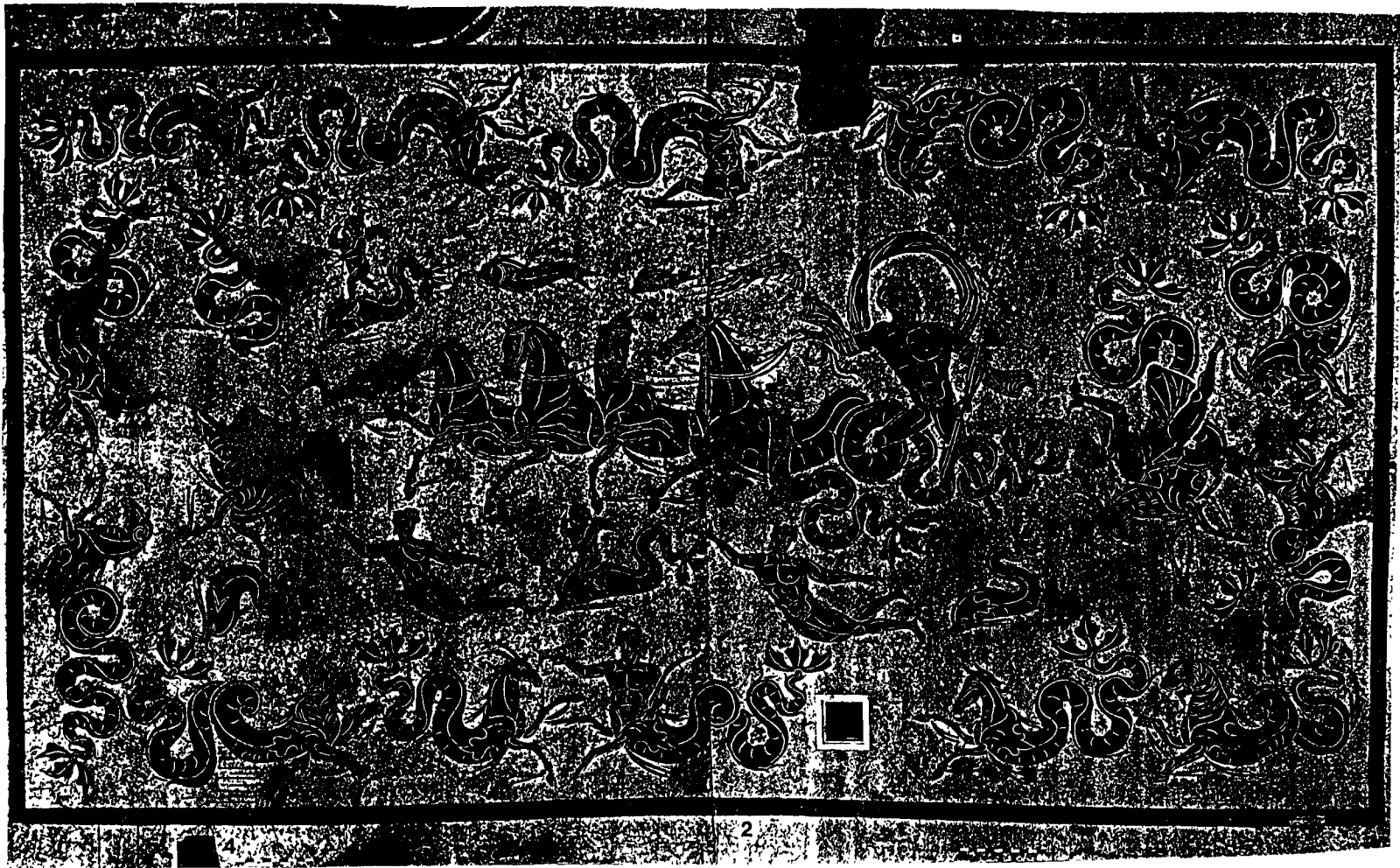


Fig. 34. Black-and-White mosaic, Ostia, Terme di Nettuno. In situ. Neptune mosaic.

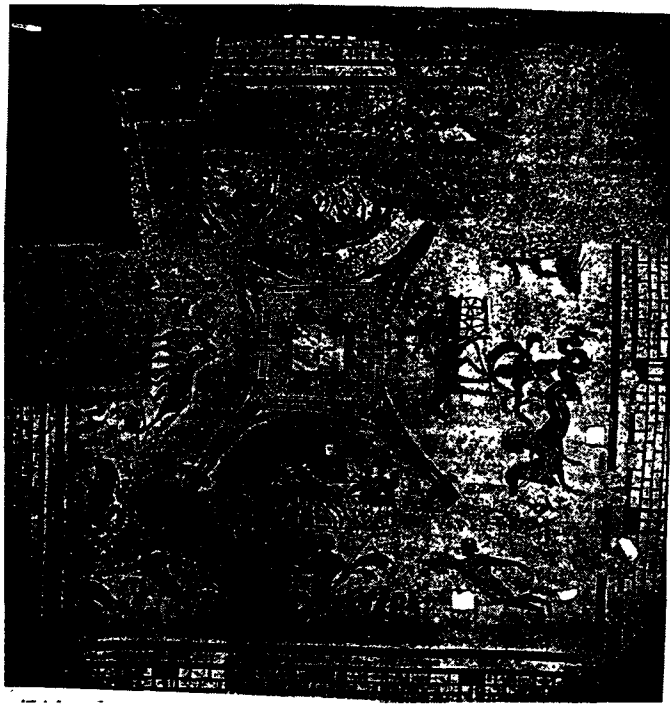


Fig. 35. Black-and-White mosaic, Ostia, Terme dei Cisiari. *In situ*. Swimmers, Atlantean figures, excursion and marine motifs.

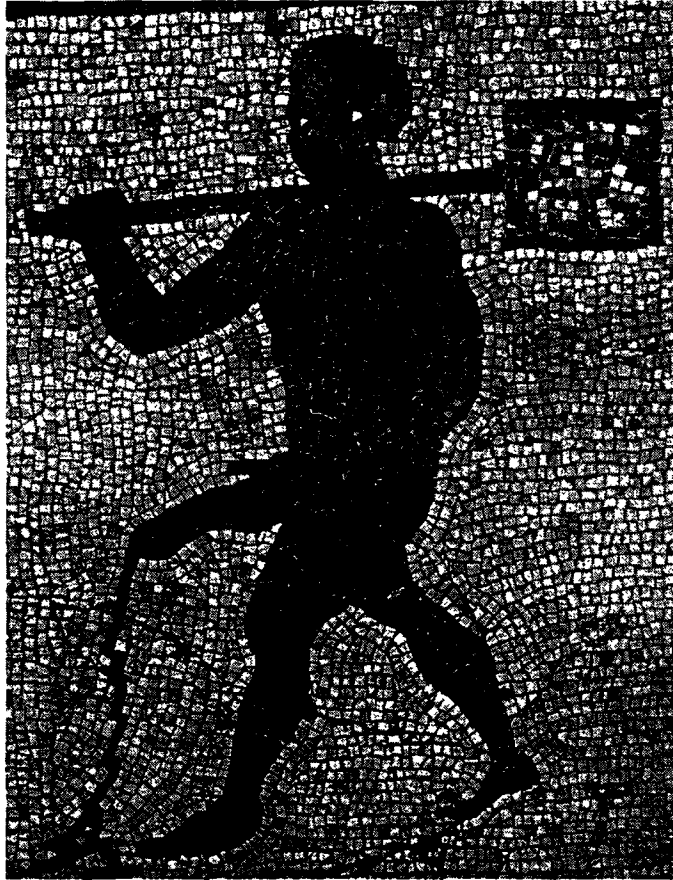


Fig. 36. Polychrome mosaic, Timgad. Timgad.  
Macrophallic bath attendant with shovel. (7)



Fig. 37. Detail of relief, Sarcophagus, Isola Sacra, Ostia.  
Ostia. Youth in toilette scene carrying unidentified object.(24)



Fig. 38. Detail, Mosaic of the Large Hunt, Hippo Regius.  
Annaba. Servant holding cup and pitcher. (13)



Fig. 39. Mosaic of the Small Hunt, Piazza Armerina.(11). In situ.



Fig. 39a. Detail of above. Boy blowing on flames. (11)

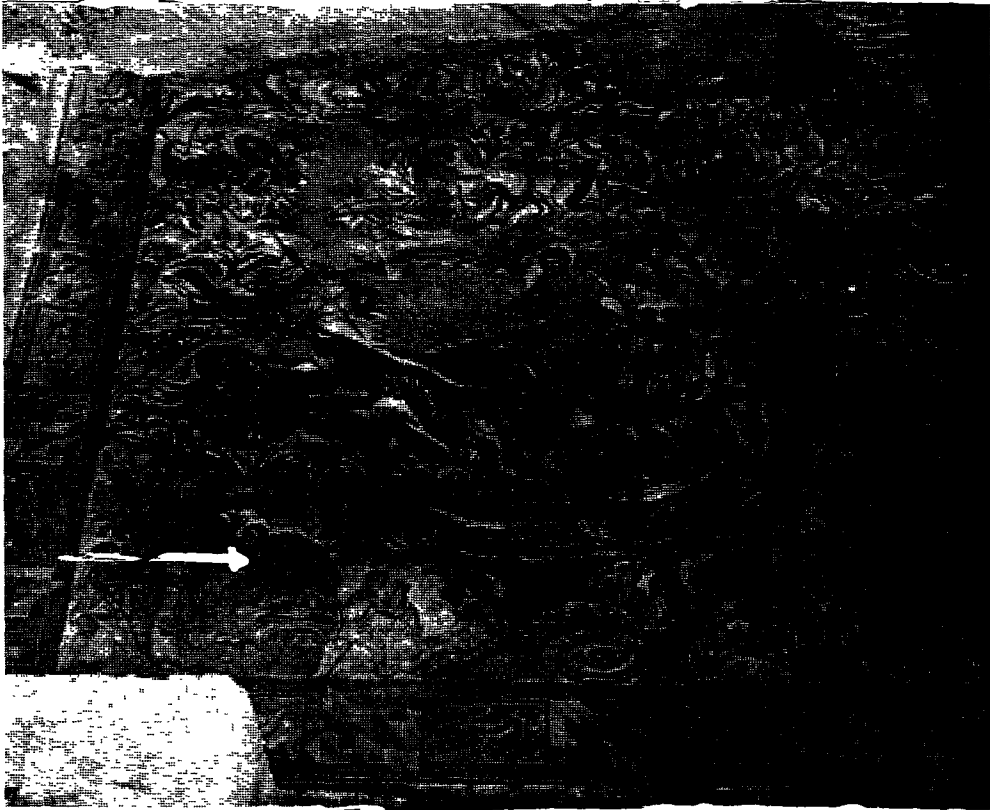


Fig. 40. Mosaic, Tellaro. In situ.  
Hunting scenes picnic with youth blowing on flames. (12)



Fig. 41. Bronze authepsa, Kayseri, Turkey.  
Kayseri. Spigot in the form of a head of the Black.



Fig. 42. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Naples.  
Picnic scene with servant handing out drinks. (29)



Fig. 43. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Ostia.  
Youth carrying patera and pitcher. (30)





Fig. 44. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Berlin. Youth carrying patera and towel. (25)



Fig. 45. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. (26)



Fig. 46. Fragment relief, sarcophagus, Anacapri. Anacapri. Youth carrying towel and patera. (27)



Fig. 47. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Copenhagen.  
Shipping scene with youth carrying platter of food  
in doorway. (28)



Fig. 48. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Rome.  
*Cursor*. (35)



Fig. 49. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Turin. *Cursor.* (31)



Fig. 50. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Ostia. *Cursor.* (32)



Fig. 51. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Rome. *Cursor.* (33)



Fig. 52. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Stockholm. *Cursor.* (34)



Fig. 53. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Paris. Scenes of a life, with youth carrying a basket. (36)

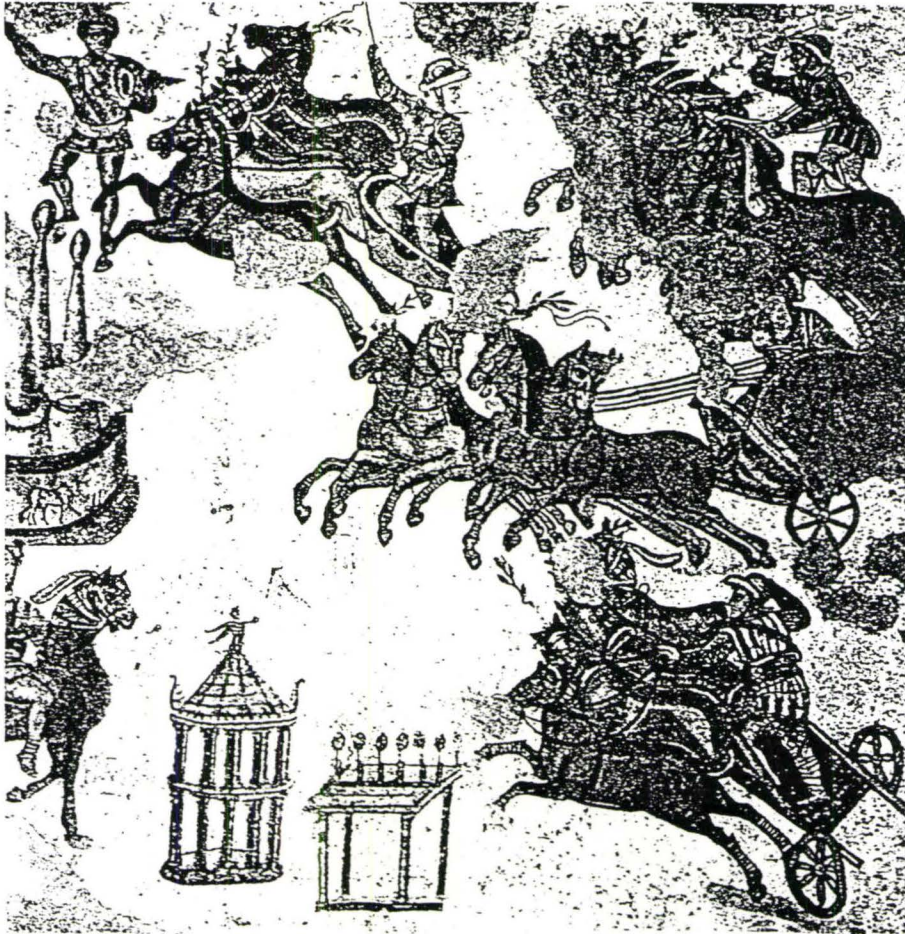


Fig. 54. Detail of Mosaic of the Great circus, Piazza Armerina. In situ.  
Circus race.



Fig. 55. Mosaic of the Circus Factions, Sousse. Sousse. Horses and attendants.



Fig. 56. Detail from Mosaic of the Horses, Carthage. Carthage. Black hoeseaman. (14)

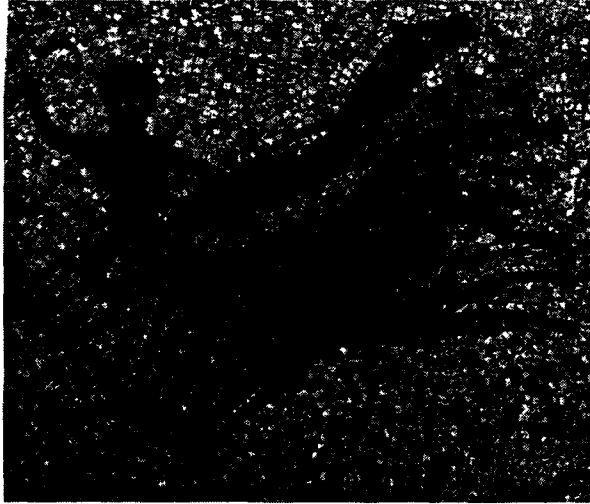


Fig. 57. Fragment, mosaic, Seville.  
Charioteer. (15)



Fig. 58. Fragment, mosaic, Gafsa. Tunis. Circus scene  
with four nude figures in *carceres*





Fig. 59. Mosaic of Gladiators, Zliten. Tripoli. Amphitheatre scenes. (17)



Fig. 60. Terracotta statuette,  
Egypt. Alexandria. Gladiator.  
(53)

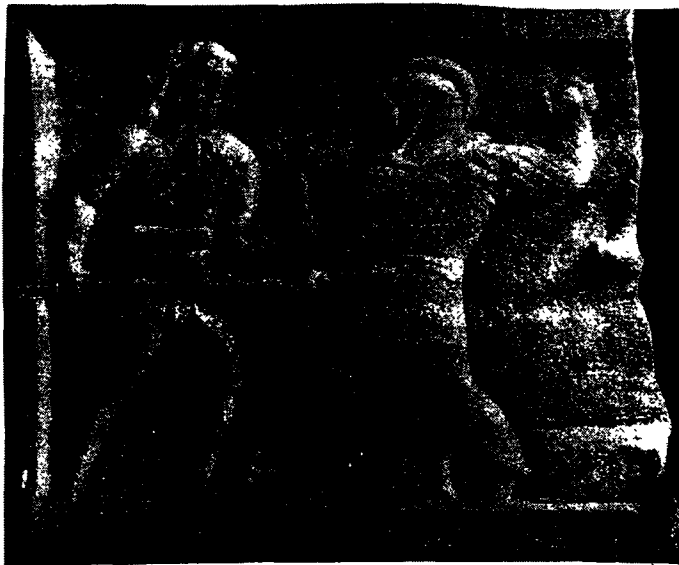


Fig. 61. Fragment of marble sculptural relief, Tomis.  
Romania. Gladiators.



Fig. 62. Sculptured ivory knife-handle, Avenches. Avenches. *Retiarius* and *secutor*. (56)



Fig. 63. Marble statuette, Rome. London. Acrobat on a crocodile. (54)

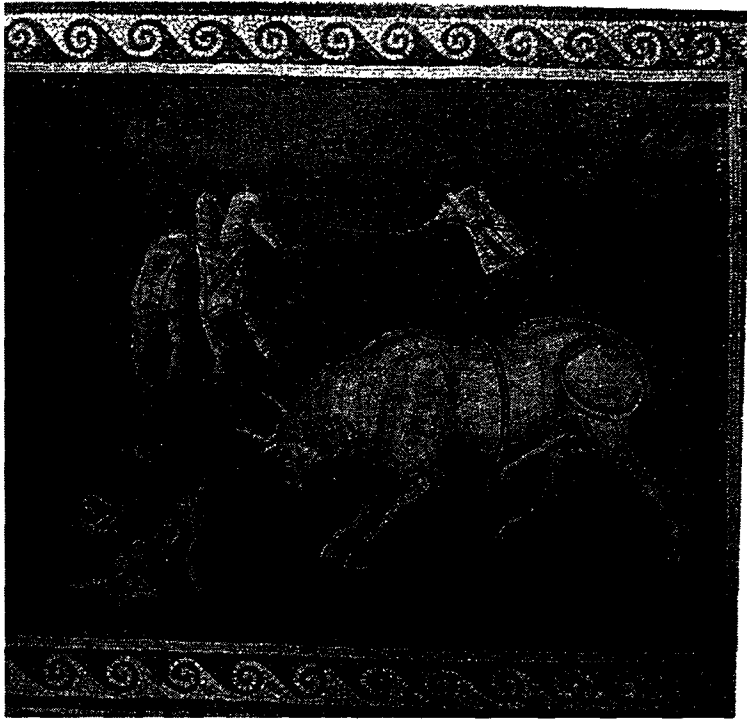


Fig. 64. Mosaic, Silin, Tripolitania. Scene of execution in the arena with dark-skinned *bestiarius* in left corner. (18)



Fig. 65. Detail, Mosaic of Gladiators, Zliten. Tripoli. Man with prod moving towards a pair of fighting animals. (17)



Fig. 66. Mosaic, Batten Zammour, Tunisia. Gafsa. Scenes of athletic competitions with athletes running a foot-race. (9)



Fig. 67. Mosaic of Wrestlers, Thina. Sfax. Scenes of wrestling and prizes. (8)



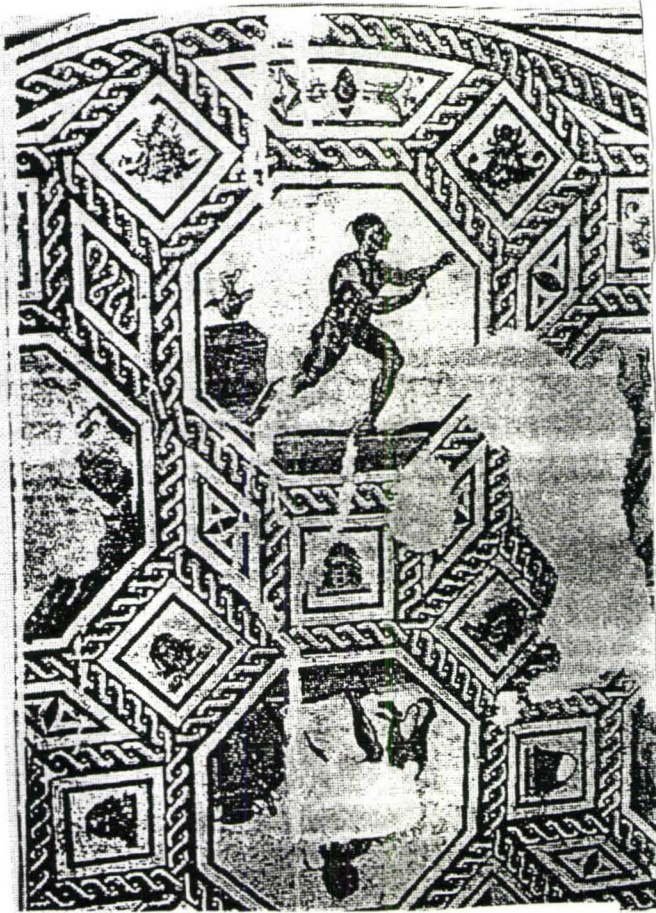


Fig. 68. Mosaic of Victorious Athletes, Vienne.  
Vienne. Black wrestler. (10)



Fig. 69. Terracotta statuette, Italy.  
London. Mature boxer. (51)

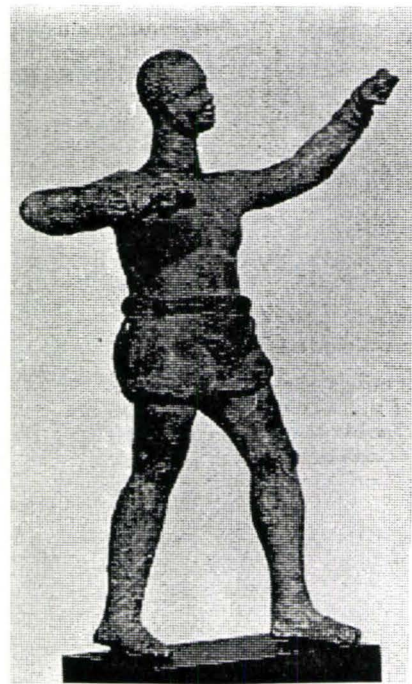


Fig. 70. Terracotta statuette, Italy.  
London. Youthful boxer. (52)

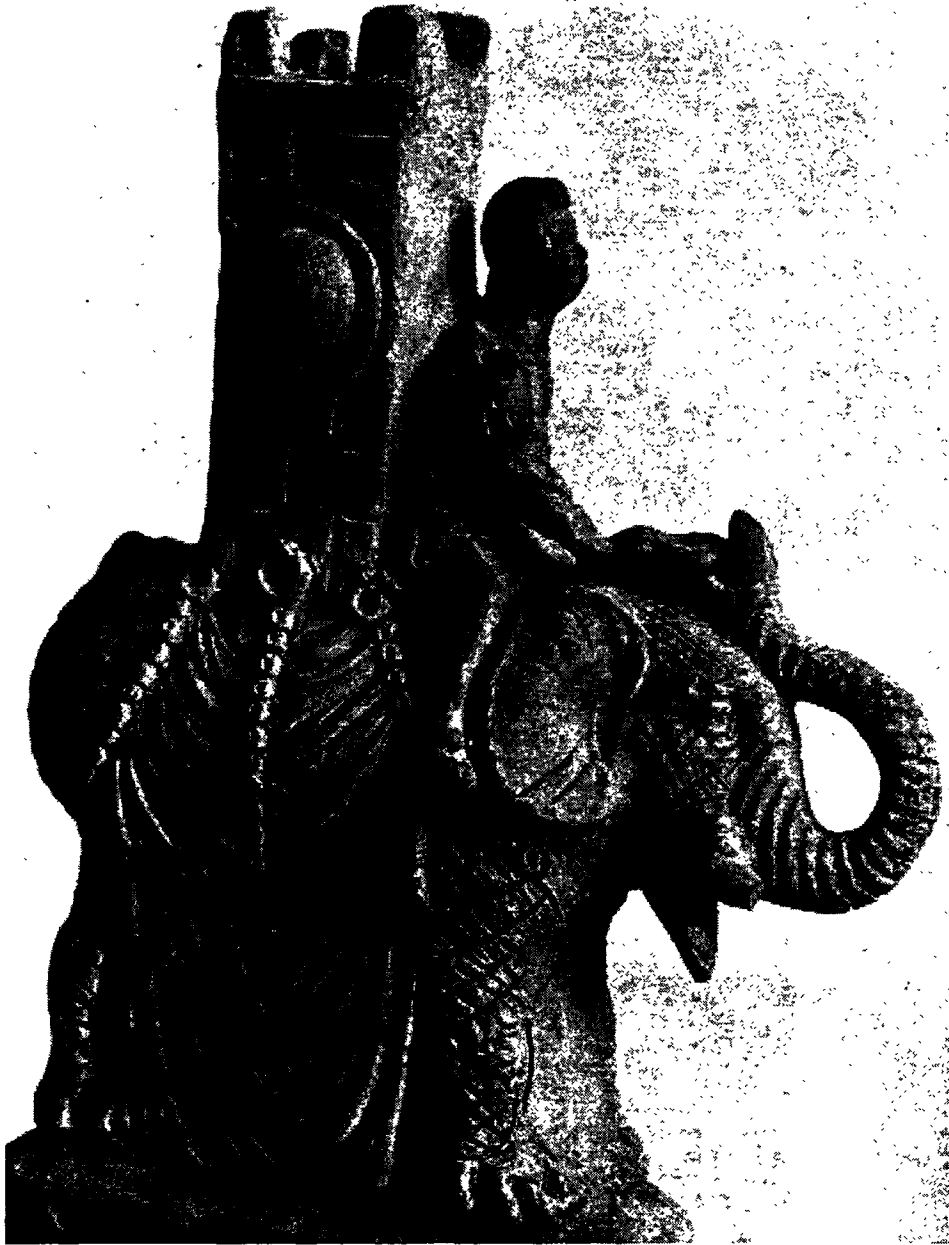


Fig. 71. Terracotta statuette, Pompeii. Naples. Mahout riding tower-bearing elephant. (55)



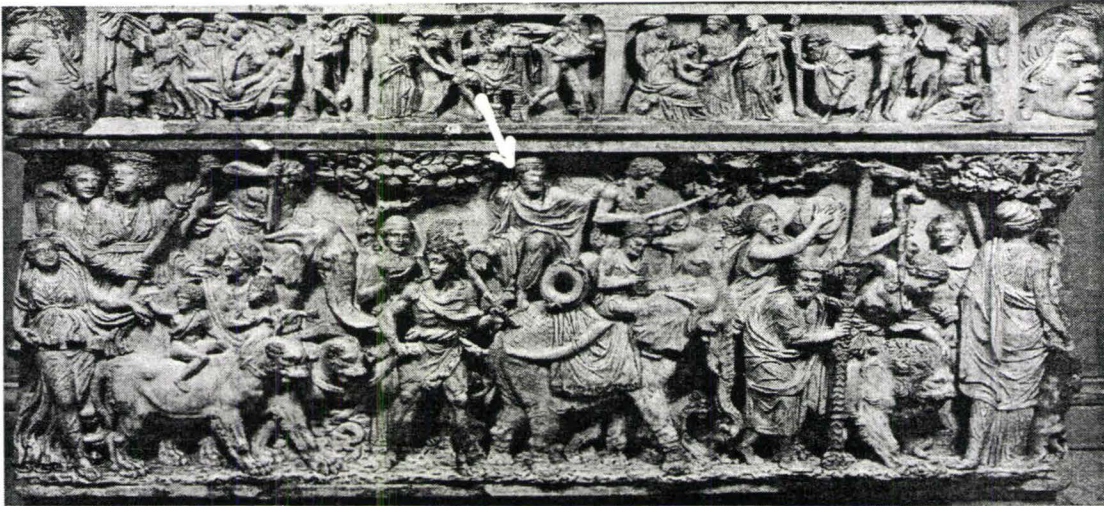


Fig. 72. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Baltimore. Indian Triumph of Dionysus with captives. (37)



Fig. 72a. Detail of sarcophagus in Baltimore, (captives).(37)





Fig. 73. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Casino Rospigliosi. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (38)



Fig. 74. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Museo Capitolino. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (39)



Fig. 75. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Pozzuoli. Indian triumph of Dionysus. (40)

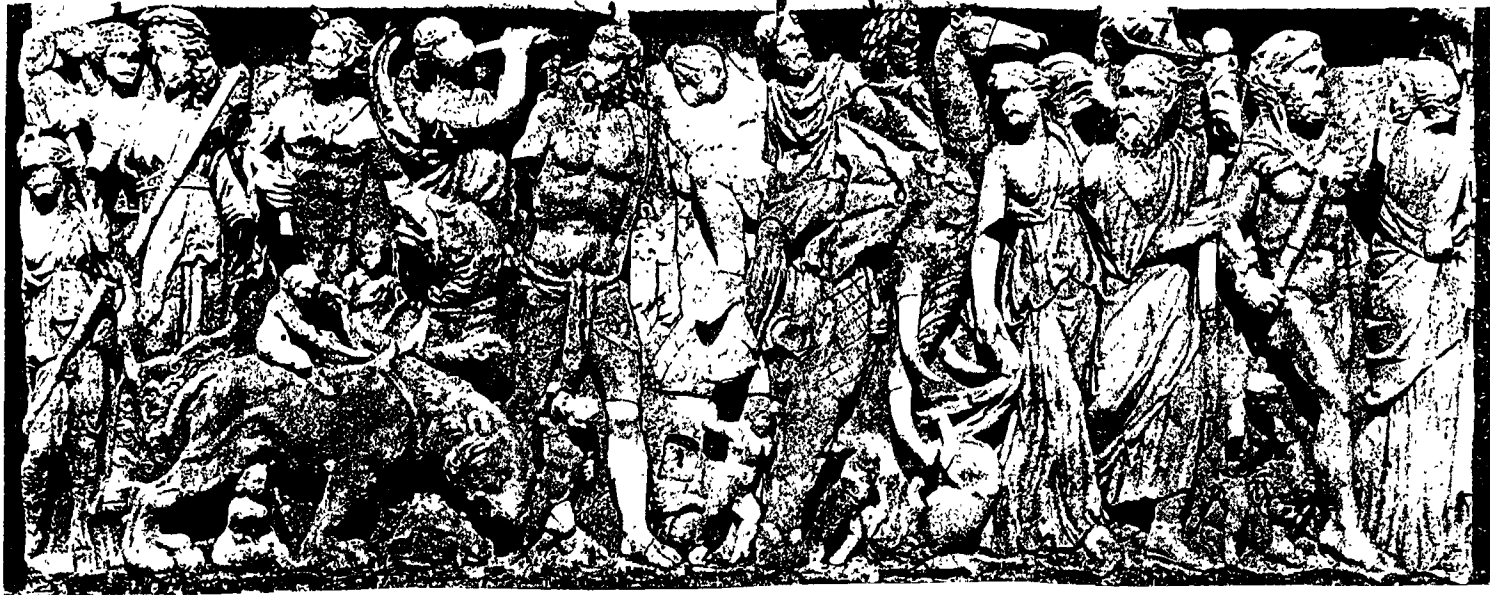


Fig. 76. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Cliveden. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (41)



Fig. 77. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Woburn Abbey. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (42)





Fig. 77a. Detail of sarcophagus in Woburn Abbey. (42)



Fig. 78. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Lyon. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (43)



Fig. 79. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Vatican. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (44)

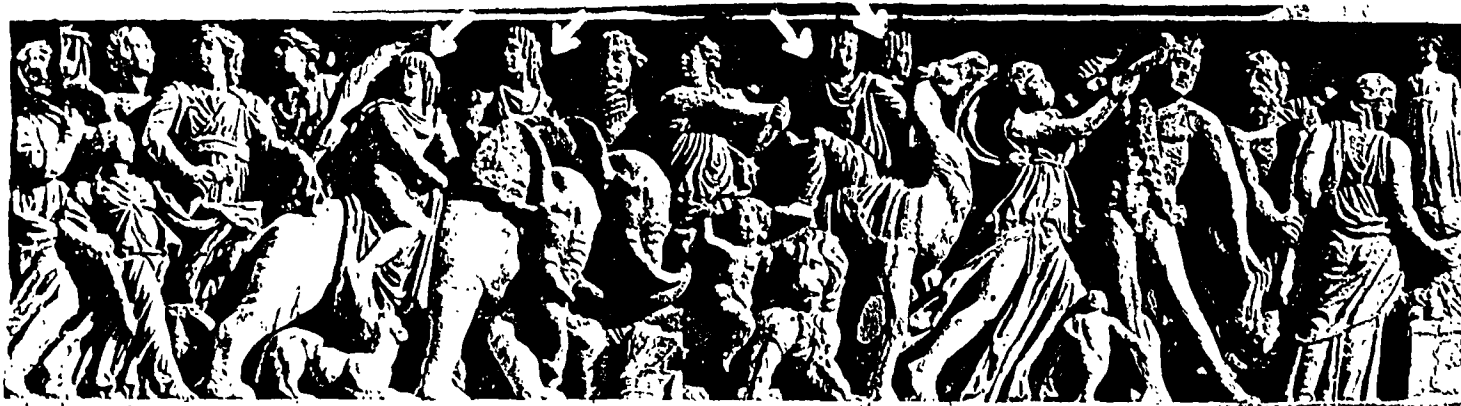


Fig. 80. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Villa Doria Pamphili. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (45)



Fig. 81. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Vatican.  
Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (47)



Fig. 82. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Villa Doria Pamphili.  
Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (48)



Fig. 83. Detail, mosaic with Dionysiac scenes, El Djem.  
Indian triumph of Dionysus. (20)



Fig. 84. Mosaic, Sétif. Sétif. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (21)





Fig. 85. Mosaic, Nea Paphos. In situ. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (19)

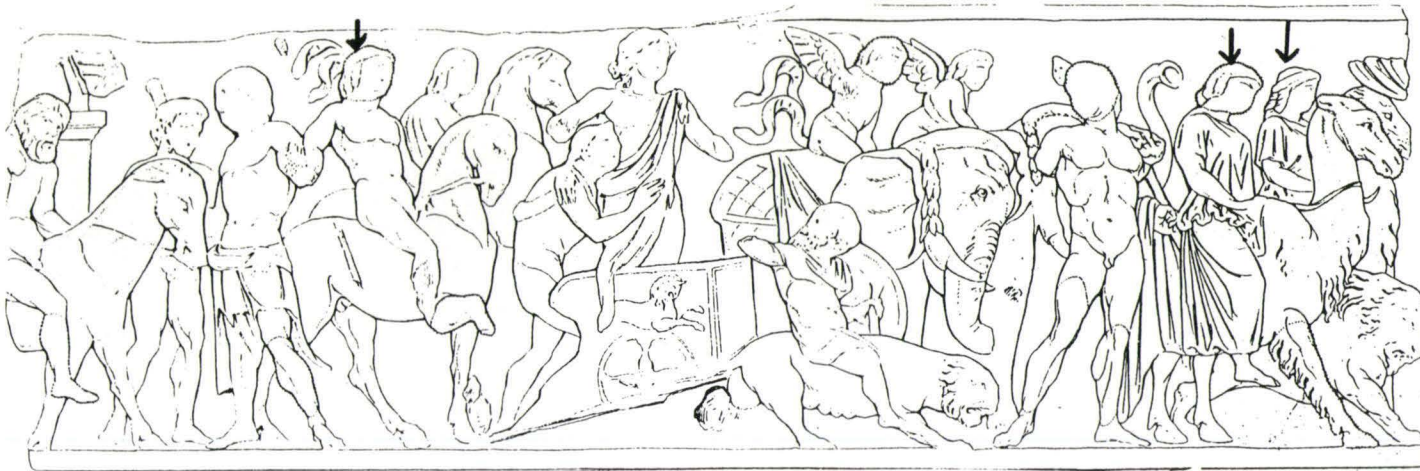


Fig. 86. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Indian Triumph of Dionysus. (46)



Fig. 87. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Cortona.  
Battle between Dionysus and Indians..



Fig. 88. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Museo Capitolino.  
Battle between Dionysus and Indians.



Fig 89. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Chiaramonti.  
Battle between Dionysus and Indians; submission..



Fig. 90. Mosaic, Tusculum. Rome.  
Dionysiac battle with Indians. (22)



Fig. 91. Mosaic, Puente Genil. In situ.  
Battle between Dionysus and Indians. (23)

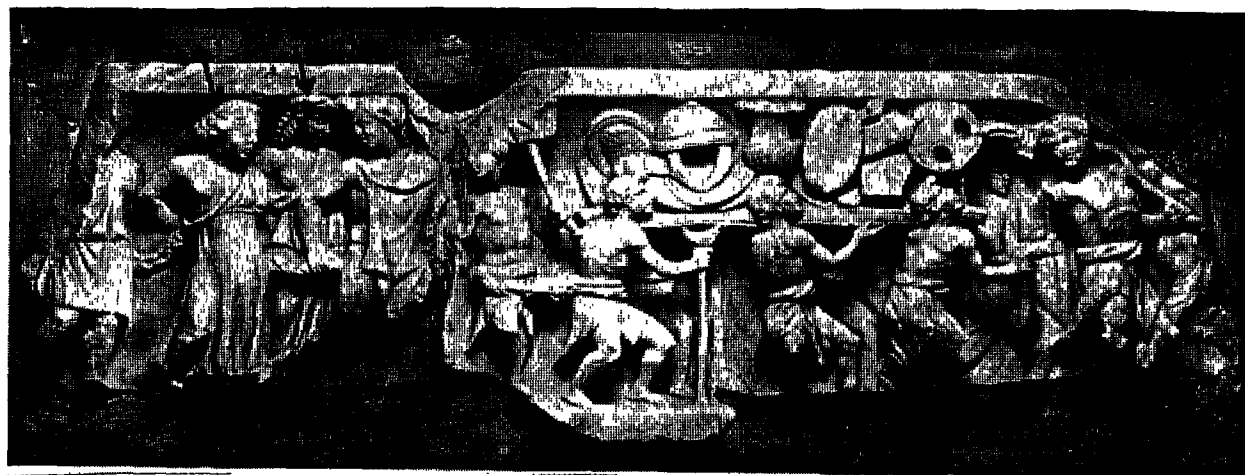


Fig. 92. Fragment, relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Frankfurt am Main.  
Procession with *ferculum* and captives; submission. (49)



Fig. 93. Relief, sarcophagus, Rome. Salerno.  
Procession with *ferculum* and captives; submission. (50)

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